

GULF COUNCIL

DATA COLLECTION COMMITTEE

Hilton Tampa Airport Westshore Tampa, Florida & Virtual

June 1, 2026

VOTING MEMBERS

Michael Allen.....Florida
Kevin Anson.....Alabama
Kesley Banks.....Texas
Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
Troy Frady.....Alabama
Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
Johnny Marquez.....Mississippi
John Sanchez.....Florida
Chris Schieble (designee for Ryan Montegut).....Louisiana
Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi
Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS
C.J. Sweetman (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida

NON-VOTING MEMBERS

Brenda Ballard.....Texas
Gregg Bray.....GSMFC
J.D. Dugas.....Louisiana
Lt. Jackson Morton.....USCG
Jason Osborne.....Mississippi
Anthony Overton.....Alabama
Ed Walker.....Florida

STAFF

Alyssa Clift.....Administrative Assistant
Assane Diagne.....Economist
Leonardo "Leo" Egula.....Fishery Outreach Specialist
Matt Freeman.....Economic Analyst
John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
Sarah Gardiner.....Fishery Biologist
Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
Jessica Matos.....Administrative Document Editor & IT Coordinator
Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist & SEDAR Liaison
Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
Kathy Pereira.....Meeting Planner & Travel Coordinator
Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director
Anabelle Suitor.....Social Scientist

1	<u>OTHER PARTICIPANTS</u>	
2	Hannah Hart.....	MAFMC
3	Jessica McCawley.....	SAFMC
4	John Walter.....	SEFSC
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6		
7		

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1 The Data Collection Committee of the Gulf Council convened at The
2 Hilton Tampa Airport Westshore in Tampa, Florida on Monday morning,
3 June 1, 2026, and was called to order by Chairman Ed Walker.

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

9 **CHAIRMAN ED WALKER:** I call to order the Data Collection Committee,
10 the members of which are myself, Mr. Anson, Dr. Allen, Dr. Banks,
11 Mr. Broussard, Captain Frady, Mr. Marquez, Dr. Sweetman, Mr.
12 Schieble, Mr. Geeslin, Mr. Sanchez, Mr. Burris/Spraggins, and Mr.
13 Strelcheck.

14
15 First off, the adoption of today's agenda. Are there any additions
16 to today's agenda for Data Collection? I think -- I suppose we
17 have for-hire on the agenda, and so it's not an addition, but there
18 is some new news on that front regarding funding that we'll get to
19 when we get to that part of the meeting, and so can I get a motion
20 to adopt the agenda, if there are no edits? Dr. Sweetman. Second
21 by Dr. Banks. Thank you.

22
23 Next up is approval of the minutes from the previous meeting. Are
24 there any edits to the meeting? Dr. Sweetman? No? A motion to
25 adopt? Dr. Sweetman. Dr. Banks seconds. Thank you all. Okay.
26 First up is the action guide, and Dr. Hollensead is going to take
27 us through that, and then into a public hearing draft of the
28 generic amendment. Dr. Hollensead.

29
30 **PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT OF GENERIC AMENDMENT: MODIFICATIONS TO GULF**
31 **FOR-HIRE DATA COLLECTION PROGRAM**
32

33 **DR. LISA HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you Mr. Chair. The first item on our
34 docket here is to review the public hearing draft of Generic
35 Amendment: Modification to Gulf For-Hire Data Collection Program,
36 also sort of known as SEFHIER 2.0.

37
38 The developments for this document has been the additions of
39 Chapters 3 and 4. Chapters 1 and 2 generally were just sort of
40 reviewed by the IPT, but the committee and the council have
41 selected preferreds for each of the four actions, and, when we
42 pull up the document, I'll review these, just to jog everybody's
43 memory and make sure everything is aligned and answer any questions
44 anybody has.

45
46 What staff would be looking for here, in this case, is sort of a
47 thumbs-up that the document is now ready to go out for public
48 hearings, and so I be interested in that, and we can discuss sort

1 of the approach for that. We would need a motion to that end, and
2 so that's what I would be requesting at the end here. Bernie, if
3 you wouldn't mind pulling up the document, please ma'am.

4
5 While she is pulling it up, just very generally, and so, you know,
6 I'll kind of run through this document. As I said, you saw this
7 back in January, and so not anything has changed with the actions
8 and alternatives, but I'll just sort of run through it as we might
9 do, for example, giving a little bit of a public hearing of some
10 of the key points that might be interesting to the public.

11
12 The introduction section is pretty involved. It gives a lot of
13 rationale of, for example, why the program is being developed. It
14 also goes into some detail about the data fields that are going to
15 be required, and the rationale behind those, and certainly, in the
16 first iteration of the program, there were some questions about,
17 hey, why am I being asked this, and how might this be used, that
18 sort of thing, and so we want to make sure that that is clear, and
19 exactly what everybody would be asked, and what would be sort of
20 expected of them, so they can ask pointed questions and also have
21 some idea, again, of how this these data might be used for managing
22 within their sector.

23
24 We definitely wanted to showcase that, and so that's why that
25 section is a little larger than maybe conventionally, but I
26 certainly want to make that point across to everybody and introduce
27 any modifications that they may have had from the old program.

28
29 Bernie, if you wouldn't mind going to Section 1.4 for the purpose
30 and need, and so, again, the purpose of this amendment is just to
31 improve the accuracy, precision, and timeliness of landings,
32 discards, and fishing effort data specific to the Gulf reef fish
33 and CMP fisheries, and so those folks holding a for-hire permit
34 for any of those species would be affected by this.

35
36 Additionally, looking to another purpose is to collect some
37 economic information related to the operational costs and earnings
38 a federally-permitted for-hire vessels participating in those
39 fisheries, and so that's what this is, and the need here is to
40 improve management and monitoring for these species here in the
41 Gulf and to prevent overfishing, while also achieving, on a
42 continuing basis, the optimum yield. That's sort of a review of
43 the purpose and need. Does anybody have any questions on that,
44 and I'll move through.

45
46 Okay. Not seeing any, Bernie, if you don't mind just going to
47 Action 1 for me, please, and so, again, Action 1 is going to
48 establish -- This Action 1 pertains to vessels issued a valid Gulf

1 for-hire permit for reef fish or CMP species that do not
2 participate in the Southeast Regional Headboat Survey, and,
3 basically, this would require them filling out the logbook, which
4 is detailed in the introduction, those fields there, for each trip,
5 each trip they undergo.

6
7 When we had the AP meet to discuss this, they had mentioned that
8 filling out the logbook after each trip was helpful in memory
9 retention, than rather maybe taking two trips a day and then trying
10 to parse out what you caught in the morning, when it's now in the
11 evening, and you're exhausted, and that it's a little bit easier
12 for memory retention, and it would actually help them fill out the
13 logbook quicker if they did it after every trip, and so that's why
14 that was selected, and selected as preferred by the council. Any
15 questions there?

16
17 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Andy.

18
19 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** Yes, and so a couple of things my staff has
20 brought to me I think for discussion, which would be good. One is
21 the requirement to -- Where is it essentially required to report
22 prior to offloading fish, and so I don't know if this is so much
23 a problem with our dockside validation that was occurring a few
24 years ago, or with the reporting timeframe, but, most of the times
25 where we were intercepting vessels at the dock, we were actually
26 gathering information on the catch prior to the logbook being
27 submitted, right, which is a problem, because then it kind of
28 breaks the independence between the logbook report and validating
29 that that was accurately submitted.

30
31 My team has told me that a lot of those dockside validations
32 occurred within thirty to sixty minutes of intercepting the vessel,
33 and so I wanted to at least discuss, and maybe get some input from
34 Ed and Troy in particular, about kind of your general operations,
35 and how quickly you're able to report once you get to the dock,
36 because what we want to do is have that independence between the
37 validation that occurs and when you submit that logbook, but
38 recognize you need some time, once you get back to the dock, in
39 order to complete the paperwork, or the electronic logbook.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** I'm raising my hand to myself, and so you're
42 talking about -- You're not talking about pre-landing intercepts,
43 right? You're talking about at the dock timing? Dr. Banks.

44
45 **DR. KESLEY BANKS:** So I'll just say, to ours, Andy -- For those
46 that don't know, my husband is a charter captain, and so we've
47 been a part of this SEFHIER, the first SEFHIER, program, and, yes,
48 he was often intercepted prior to getting that landing report,

1 because it is unsafe in our area, going through the jetties, to be
2 filing that report.

3
4 We often have rough seas around the jetties, and so the customer
5 safety is usually more important, and so he would dock and then
6 fill that out. However, he was intercepted immediately upon
7 docking. They are docking at a fuel dock, and a fish cleaning
8 station, and so the agent was usually already there, and so, no,
9 they are not independent sampling, because they stood there while
10 he filled out the report, and so that's just how ours works, just
11 because you cannot -- Also, with cell service, and it was prior to
12 Starlink, I will say, but, with cell service, he did not have cell
13 service until he got in the jetties, and so he had maybe five
14 minutes prior to getting to the dock.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Andy, and then Troy.

17
18 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Kesley, I think that's exactly how it should be
19 done, right, and so we're saying prior to offload, and we're not
20 saying prior to reaching the dock, right, and so I think here's
21 the added challenge then, is that, if you have a port agent that's
22 going ahead and quickly sampling the catch, you're breaking that
23 independence.

24
25 That's why I led with the caveat of that is this something that we
26 need to train our port samplers to give some time for the logbook
27 to be submitted, or is it kind of a combination of two things,
28 which is maybe an overly ambitious port sampler on occasion, but
29 also sometimes the charter captain is not submitting logbooks in
30 a timely fashion, and then you have a port sampler that comes along
31 to sample that catch, and breaking that independence, and so we
32 just are trying to strengthen the program as much as we can, and,
33 the more we can ensure that independence, the better for
34 validation.

35
36 **DR. BANKS:** Yes, and I think my point was just that, for the
37 record, they're not able to do it prior to getting to the dock,
38 and he was being -- That independence was being not maintained,
39 because he was getting intercepted prior to having the chance to
40 fill that out.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Captain Frady.

43
44 **CAPTAIN TROY FRADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Having experienced the
45 data collection before, when we had the electronic ELB program, it
46 always worked best for us to enter our data prior to arriving at
47 the dock, because, if a port sampler was there, it made their job
48 easier to validate the catch.

1
2 I've had people tell me that, no, I don't want to do it until I
3 get back to the dock, and it's certainly advantageous for someone
4 who is in a small boat, exposed to the weather and stuff like that,
5 and I understand, but prior to getting to the dock, and just, if
6 that port agent is there, you want their job to be easy, and you
7 don't want to delay your customers from being harassed, or
8 intercepted, or interviewed in any way, and so, the more
9 streamlined we make this, and the more uniform we have it for
10 everybody, the better it's going to be for everyone. Thank you.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Mr. Anson.

13
14 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** I certainly appreciate Andy's comments, or the
15 concern that some may have about the independence of that. I mean,
16 but, you know, the other issue that you would have to consider is,
17 if those samplers are wearing uniforms, I mean, they're easily
18 identified, even before you pull up the dock, that they can be
19 walking around the docks, and they can be observed by the captain,
20 and that can trigger the response to file too, and so there's other
21 things to think about too, and it is an issue that we've dealt
22 with with ours. We set up a window, if you will, where they can
23 report, and that they would be still valid, and that occurs pre
24 and post-interview.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Okay. I know that, in the commercial fishery,
27 operators are required to give three hours' notice before landing,
28 and so, while my personal opinion of this is, you know, I don't
29 love it, I can see the value of it. I think I can find a moment
30 in my trip to report before I get to the dock, and that may
31 alleviate clients feeling kind of strange when the guy comes up in
32 a uniform as they're getting ready to get off the boat. I looked
33 at you, but I didn't say your name. Sorry, Dr. Sweetman.

34
35 **DR. C.J. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Captain Walker, and so, I mean, I
36 guess if -- Like, the dockside samplers, it's not like they're
37 getting the fish and like going onto the boat. They're sitting on
38 the dock, and waiting until the fish are offloaded before they can
39 sample them, and so -- Not in your area? It's different? They're
40 actually getting onto the boat?

41
42 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Banks.

43
44 **DR. BANKS:** They're not getting on the boat, but they're standing
45 right there, and waiting for that report to be filed, and already
46 starting the interview process prior to that report being filed,
47 and so that's where the independence problem is.

1 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Okay. Then it just seems like a simple order of
2 operations there, where we just talk to our samplers, and just
3 change up how we're doing that, if that's the case, and so I feel
4 like that's fairly simple, and straightforward, in my opinion.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Andy.

7
8 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, Ed, and I wasn't suggesting that you need to
9 file the report before you get the dock, for some of the reasons
10 Kesley has identified, in terms of safety-at-sea. I think it was
11 more of just, if there's delays, significant delays, in reporting,
12 right, it's not so easy for a port sampler just to wait around for
13 a long period of time, right, and so, you know, if we wanted to be
14 more restrictive, or put a timing requirement between when you
15 kind of hit the dock and when you have to report, we could consider
16 that. I'm not suggesting that at this point, but that could be an
17 option.

18
19 The other thing, while I have the mic, is we have the did-not-fish
20 reports, and my understanding is that we were requiring them
21 weekly, but you could do it thirty days in advance. At the AP
22 meeting, they were recommending essentially annual do-not-fish
23 reports.

24
25 We've been working with ACCSP, with eTRIPS, and we think that
26 there's a compromise where we probably -- It would be good to
27 accept a ninety-day window for did-not-fish reports, just to
28 accommodate a little bit more flexibility, but that's something
29 that the team can, obviously, work on within the text of the
30 amendment.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** So you're saying a ninety-day did-not-fish report
33 is a potential option, because, in our preferred alternative, we
34 have it as weekly, at the moment, and am I misunderstanding?

35
36 **MR. STRELCHECK:** It's weekly, but you can submit it up to thirty
37 days in advance, right, and so it's essentially the window of time
38 that you can submit it in advance is what we're talking about.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** In advance. I got you. Thank you. Captain
41 Frady.

42
43 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. There's a couple of things going
44 on here. The first thing I want to talk about is we just talked
45 about doing a report, or submitting a report, prior to the dock
46 sampler. The procedure that we have in place right now is, when
47 the State of Alabama reps meet us at the dock, they give us a
48 moment to at least introduce our clients, or our customers, to

1 what the port sampler is doing.

2
3 The port sampler standing behind the boat is kind of intimidating
4 for customers, especially if they don't know what's going on. You
5 usually have got the person paying for the charter staying inside,
6 or staying on the boat for a second, while the kids or family
7 members are trying to offload, and go to the bathroom, and goof
8 off, or whatever.

9
10 Anything we can do to streamline it, and use it as an educational
11 tool, to say, all right guys, we're getting ready to be boarded,
12 or we're going to be interviewed, and this is what is going to
13 happen, and they're going to ask you questions about your zip code,
14 et cetera, and what fish did you catch, and so it prepares the
15 customer for the interview.

16
17 Having a few minutes before the port sampler just fully engages
18 everyone, before everybody starts jumping off the boat, for the
19 captain would be a priority for me, instead of just letting people
20 automatically -- Just somebody out of blue, with a blue shirt on,
21 or red, or whatever flavor shirt, to start interviewing and asking
22 questions without telling especially the parents, or the person in
23 charge of the charter, that this person is here to help you, and
24 not to interrogate you, and some people don't like their kids being
25 talked to without their parental presence.

26
27 The other thing is the do-not-fish report. I'm not a big fan of
28 a do-not-fish report thirty days out, or whatever, and, you know,
29 I come from the transportation industry, and, prior to operating
30 a commercial motor vehicle, or a commercial airplane, you have to
31 submit a logbook, but you gave the prior seven days, and so I've
32 seen -- Instead of putting people who do not fish all winter, and
33 they're six months off probably, or five months off, and they're
34 in the hunting woods, and they're out of town.

35
36 You put a do-not-fish report on them, and they're going to forget
37 about it, but my suggestion on the do-not-fish report, is simply
38 to, before they start fishing in the spring, is to issue a did-
39 not-fish report, and not a do-not-fish report, but I did not fish,
40 prior to when they start back up again.

41
42 I mean, you're going to capture the data anyway, but make it
43 required once. If you're off three months before you start fishing
44 again, then issue the days that you did not fish. In the
45 transportation world, before you issue a logbook, before you can
46 go run, you have to have the seven days prior in your presence,
47 and then you can start your new logbook, and so I don't want to
48 complicate this, but I see a lot of people ignoring the do-not-

1 fish report, or that will create a penalty for them. Thank you,
2 Mr. Chair.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** All right. I have Dr. Hollensead, and then Mr.
5 Geeslin.

6
7 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so, just to a couple of
8 those points, the SEFHIER program, the interviewer, the dockside
9 interviewer, would be interviewing the captain, in this case, and
10 so if you did certainly want to -- If a captain knew somebody was
11 coming up, they could mention to their customers that, hey, this
12 is what this is a part of, and this is what you can see. If you
13 would like to stay for the process, and see what we have to say,
14 and what they're collecting, that certainly you can do, but then
15 hopefully that takes the pressure then off of your customer base,
16 and so, you know, you would be the one answering the questions,
17 and educating through that, if you felt like you wanted to on your
18 charter, and that's something you could do.

19
20 Secondly, to the did-not-fish report, the idea that they're trying
21 to get out of here is what is sort of a true zero, right, and so
22 like you did not go fishing, versus I went fishing and I forgot to
23 log it in, for whatever reason, and we're all human beings, and so
24 that helps get at the sort of the true zero there. Troy did not
25 go fishing, and he let us know he wasn't going to go fishing, you
26 know, for example, so that they can actually say.

27
28 One of reasons that is good about having that preemptively is, if
29 you know that your boat has got to go in a dry dock for some work,
30 or you're switching over to hunting, is that we then don't sit
31 there and have to wait for that, and so the idea being that
32 potentially we don't want to delay getting the estimates, or
33 monitoring out, because it's like, well, you know, the fishing
34 season is over, but we're waiting for a slew of did-not-fish
35 reports through that. If those come up, then we have to readjust
36 our estimates of those sorts of things, and so that's what they're
37 trying to get at.

38
39 The did-not-fish report in this case sort of comes in -- If you
40 remember, there's like a list of sort of criteria of what's needed
41 to be able to use this data for -- These data for management
42 things, and one of them is trying to get an idea of what that true
43 zero is, and, in the first iteration of the program, that was the
44 VMS. Hey, we can actually tell you're sitting right there, and so
45 that's a true zero, right, and your boat didn't go, and it's not
46 just that you didn't do that, but, you know, for understandable
47 reasons, that was unpopular, right?

1 This is to get around that, and so it does put a little bit more
2 onerous on the captain to make sure that it's going through and
3 reported, but that gets rid of the VMS, and so it goes ahead and
4 fills that requirement of trying to get at what may be a true zero
5 without putting a VMS on the vessel.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Mr. Geeslin.

8
9 **MR. DAKUS GEESLIN:** Thank you, Captain Walker. Excellent point,
10 Dr. Hollensead. To Captain Frady's point, I'm certainly sensitive
11 to any interaction that would compromise a high-quality fishing
12 experience, and, as Dr. Hollensead laid out, we instruct our
13 dockside creel agents to speak to the captain.

14
15 If there are questions coming from the passengers, our creel agents
16 are happy to entertain those questions, but they are focused on
17 collecting the data from the captain, and now we've added on
18 discard questions as well, to capture some of that information.

19
20 I guess I'm curious as to what other states, what other councils,
21 how they're -- To Andy's point, what is that sweet spot of that
22 time that they're allowed to fit -- That they're allowed to submit
23 the landings information? I guess I'm less concerned about the
24 non-fishing trips, the did-not-fish trips, but, for those other
25 trips that -- Do they get a few days, a week, and what is that
26 right -- Because I hear what you're saying, Troy, about, you know,
27 submit the data before you get to the dock, but I'm also sensitive
28 to what -- You know, different conditions around the Gulf and so
29 Dr. Banks' point about, you know, the conditions at that specific
30 jetty, and so a question maybe to Andy, or others, of how much
31 time have other states, or councils, utilized there.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Banks first, and then Mr. Anson.

34
35 **DR. BANKS:** I had a -- Well, I'll answer partly to Dakus' question,
36 and then I just wanted to get in the queue. We just fished in
37 Alaska, and they had a week to submit their fish reports, and so
38 they had to fill each of the cards out, and then they had a week.
39 Each week they have to log in and submit each of those catch
40 reports. I'm going to look at J.D., and you talked to somebody in
41 the Mid-Atlantic, and they have a different --

42
43 **MR. J.D. DUGAS:** Twenty-four hours.

44
45 **DR. BANKS:** Twenty-four hours to submit theirs after landing, but
46 then I'm just going to get back in the queue, because I have two
47 questions, and not to this point.

1 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Got you. Mr. Anson, and then Captain Frady.

2
3 **MR. ANSON:** Our regulations for Snapper Check, the regulation
4 requires that they be reported before they're landed, the fish are
5 actually landed, and so that's brought onto shore. If the fish
6 are in the vessel, they stay in the vessel, and, if the vessel is
7 trailered, that's when the vessel is put on a trailer, and the
8 trailer is, you know, brought on land, and so that's a landing.

9
10 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Getting back to this here, Mr.
11 Geeslin, I appreciate your thoughts on that, but, you know, having
12 experienced this firsthand, most boats, when they come in from the
13 pass, it's not a one-minute ride from inside the pass to their
14 house. It's usually ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty minutes of them
15 unwinding and getting ready to unload, and so, even when we did
16 the ELB pilot program, a ten to fifteen-minute window was more
17 than enough. It never took more than two or three minutes to do
18 it.

19
20 I am vehemently, and I don't know how to spell it, and that's a
21 big word, but vehemently opposed to self-reported data a whole
22 week later, or twenty-four hours later, because the whole purpose
23 is the self-reported data is -- Everybody knows it's going to be
24 a guess.

25
26 If you do it when it's fresh on your mind, that gives you accurate
27 numbers, and it gives people an opportunity not to pencil-whip it,
28 because I will be honest with you. If you ask me to remember what
29 I caught after six trips in a row, I'm going to sit there, and I'm
30 going to go, well, thirty of these, ten of these, and five of
31 these, and you just kind of just whip it, and so make it to where
32 it encourages people to do it, you know, and let's do it before.

33
34 I mean, it may take you fifteen minutes, but you may be able to
35 sit there in the pass, and, if you're right there at it, take a
36 couple minutes to do it.

37
38 Getting back to the do-not-fish report there, don't box them into
39 the thirty-day. If I see -- If you've got someone like myself,
40 who shuts down in October, the end of October, and I'm likely not
41 going to fish again until March the 3rd, or whenever the first week
42 of spring break is, give me the opportunity to do a pre-do-not --
43 A planned do-not-fish report that covers, you know, four months.

44
45 Then, the moment you start fishing, or you do get a trip, then you
46 can go in there and amend it and do a -- Say, hey, look, we just
47 fished today, and then do another that we're not going to fish
48 again until March the 3rd, but that's just for me in the northern

1 Gulf. It may not be right for someone in south Florida, but I
2 just -- I mean, there's -- 90 percent of the people we are, at the
3 end of October, don't touch their boats again until March. Thank
4 you.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** All right. As a charter boat captain, I agree
7 with Captain Frady. As most of us know, a lot of the charter boat
8 guys have been pushing to bring SEFHIER back, and one of the
9 primary drivers of that is to accurately quantify our landings. I
10 would say, to most of us, that's the primary goal here, and so I
11 can't speak for everyone, but I also support reporting the fish
12 prior to offload, for the same reasons Captain Frady said.

13
14 If you said how many, you know, Spanish mackerel did I have a week
15 ago on one trip, my answer is going to be more accurate the same
16 day than it would be a week later, and so, in that aspect, I'm
17 certainly supportive of the Preferred Alternative 2 as it's written
18 right now. Mr. Strelcheck.

19
20 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I'm certainly supportive of, you know, a
21 timeframe, or a requirement that they have to, obviously, report
22 prior to offloading. I think the challenge here is it's ambiguous,
23 right, and that time period could be days, or hours, or minutes,
24 right, depending on how quickly they moved those fish off the boat.

25
26 What I was trying to raise is whether or not there was potentially
27 appetite to change this requirement to something that would be a
28 little bit more specific, that, you know, there would be a certain
29 timeframe after landing that you would have to report your fish.

30
31 It kind of gets at what you and Captain Frady were indicating,
32 which is, the shorter that time period, the more closely you are
33 to remember what you actually caught, and the more accurate that
34 report is going to be, as well as the validation can link up more
35 closely with the report that has actually been submitted, right,
36 and so that's really what I was trying to emphasize, based on some
37 of the data and information we learned from SEFHIER 1.0.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** So are you saying that it could be different
40 than this, and it doesn't have to be prior, and it could be within
41 a certain timeframe after? Is that what you're saying?

42
43 **MR. STRELCHECK:** The suggestion from my team was, rather than
44 saying something like prior to offloading, that you could say is
45 required within X period of time of landing, right, and we would
46 define landing similar to what we've done for the commercial
47 fishery, right, thirty minutes, an hour, whatever that timeframe
48 is, but, you know, there is -- To me, there's multiple issues here.

1
2 There's, one, the timeframe it takes for the captain to actually
3 report, but then there's also how quickly is the port sampler
4 actually there to actually sample the catch, right, and so I think
5 that's the challenge in what's also reasonable, given passengers
6 coming off the boat, the number of trips you're taking in a day,
7 you know, the turnaround time for trips. All of that has to be
8 considered, and I know that it's not necessarily consistent across
9 the Gulf, in terms of how charter boats operate.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Banks.

12
13 **DR. BANKS:** To that point, Andy, I like the idea of that in our
14 area. Maybe an hour and the port sampler could be there, and I'll
15 float that out, but, to help streamline some of this as well, maybe
16 there's an avenue with the apps to have some of the fields
17 defaulted.

18
19 The last app round didn't have necessarily all of the defaults, or
20 like they could preload, and so like we have snapper trips, and
21 we're only going to go for snapper. They can go back in and add
22 other species if they had a bycatch species, but you know you're
23 targeting snapper and so maybe some of that can be done ahead of
24 time, a default, and then the captain can change it, and that would
25 streamline some of the like trying to fill in last-minute stuff
26 prior to offloading, or within the hour, or whatever we end up
27 deciding here.

28
29 Then, while I have the mic, I have a second question, and so HMS
30 is going through this reporting process as well, and, at the AP,
31 they discussed that they were told these programs are going to be
32 considered regulatory. Is that the same for us? Do we know yet?

33
34 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and there's, obviously, a regulatory burden
35 associated with these. With that said, the administration is
36 highly supportive of improving recreational data collection, and
37 so, you know, we will have to, obviously, look at this carefully,
38 in terms of the overall costs, and any sort of costs that would
39 have to offset this if this was approved by the Secretary to move
40 forward.

41
42 I'm also aware of congressional language, at least in the House
43 mark right now, for funding for the program, and so there's
44 certainly potentially proposed budgetary language to support
45 aspects of the program going forward as well.

46
47 **DR. BANKS:** Okay, and that was going to be my follow-up question,
48 because I know their program is getting hung up, and so I didn't

1 know if there was something we needed to do in this document to
2 help push it through that process.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Mr. Anson.

5
6 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Andy, you made the comment about
7 the interdependence of this, and the timing of the interview, the
8 validation, and the time of report, and so I'm just wondering why
9 to give more time for them to report after the fish and the boat.
10 The fish potentially have been landed, or at least the boat is at
11 the dock, and I'm just curious to why you would want added time
12 for that action to occur, the reporting to occur.

13
14 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So, right now, there isn't a specific time. It's
15 just whenever they offload the fish, right, and so that could be
16 two hours, ten hours, you know, ten minutes, right, and so the
17 alternative is you provide a very specific time from when you land
18 to when that report has to be submitted.

19
20 I mentioned sixty minutes, but that likely could be too long, if
21 you have a port sampler there, because that then challenges the
22 interdependence of the reporting, and then the port sampler having
23 to wait a full hour, potentially, before that report actually comes
24 in, but I'm just trying to at least offer up some ideas here, and
25 maybe we could bring this back at Full Council for further
26 consideration.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Mr. Anson.

29
30 **MR. ANSON:** A follow-up up to that. I mean, if the issue is
31 interdependence, and the example you provided is that the port
32 sampler is there standing at the vessel, the interdependence issue
33 is gone. I mean, the sampler is there, and the captain knows, and
34 captain is probably going to realize that I've got to report, and
35 so that's why I'm questioning that extra time, you know, if that
36 is just the issue.

37
38 Now, if the issue is just to give captains more time, because they
39 need to, you know, get the vessel in safely, and make sure the
40 passengers are unloaded safely, all that, I understand that, but
41 the interdependence issue could go away immediately when the port
42 sampler is standing there at the dock and the captain sees it.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Andy.

45
46 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, and the other thing is we're not going to
47 have, obviously, vessel monitoring systems as a tool, right, and
48 so we will have time when we would expect landing, and we can,

1 obviously, match that up as well to then when we would expect a
2 report to come in, and, if reports are missing, because they didn't
3 come in in a timely fashion, then that's our way to validate, as
4 well as ensure that reports are being completed, so that we can
5 have as accurate reporting as possible.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** All right. I have Captain Frady, and then Mr.
8 Dugas.

9
10 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I see two scenarios unfolded
11 here. In the charter fishing world that we live in in the northern
12 Gulf, when we come in, there's usually forty or fifty charter boats
13 at one marina, trying to unload at one time, and those guys aren't
14 messing around.

15
16 They're going to unload their fish, tell their customers goodbye,
17 and then they're going to go clean fish for a little while. They're
18 not going to be needing to wait on a port sampler, and so, by
19 having the data entered before they offload, it doesn't hold them
20 up when they can be productive. They can go to the cleaning table,
21 and get their customers out, and maybe even turn around and do a
22 second trip.

23
24 The second group of people are the private anglers, or the person
25 who runs a charter boat out of his own home, that is independent
26 of a large marina. It's totally opposite, a total opposite
27 situation.

28
29 Where they come in, and they may not have a second trip, or don't
30 have to do a quick turn, if the port sampler were to come to their
31 private location, they may sit there and wait an hour, or two
32 hours, and drink a -- Have a lot of spirits, and good times, before
33 they decide to start cleaning their fish, and so don't lock people
34 in.

35
36 If we just did a simple prior to unloading your fish, that would
37 do it, because I don't know many port samplers that are going to
38 go into a private dock, unless they have intel, or some kind of
39 special information, but I do see a port sampler, one port sampler,
40 at a large marina, with forty or fifty charter boats, and those
41 guys are turning and burning twice a day, or one time a day. To
42 make sure we don't put a burden on the reporting person, or the
43 captains, just get it done before you offload your fish, and it
44 will be fine.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Mr. Dugas. Dr. Hollensead.

47
48 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** So I guess I just have a question just for my own

1 edification here. I guess what we are suggesting then is to go
2 through the alternatives here, and, where it says prior to offload
3 fishing, we would put something like prior to within an hour, or
4 some time period of landing.

5
6 I guess my question is does then that become like a regulatory
7 thing, where, if you don't do it within an hour, there's some
8 penalty, or you're in violation, or -- I guess what I would want
9 to avoid is certainly we want to keep the independence, as Mr.
10 Strelcheck had mentioned, and I guess I'm wondering if one of the
11 best ways to potentially do that is through either sampler
12 training, where, you know, they do -- If they see somebody come
13 in, and they start a clock for whatever, half an hour, and maybe
14 they know their dock and their captains better than anybody.

15
16 They know who is a quicker offloader, or who would be ready, or
17 who has got the chance, and so I would leave that to their
18 discretion, rather than putting something in here where it's one
19 hour, where, potentially, I guess, you know, somebody could be in
20 violation of the program, when really what we want to do is keep
21 independence of the program, and not accidentally have some
22 sampling mix-up, or some protocol where then that logbook is now
23 invalid, because basically you have a sampler standing there, and
24 now we're not sure if the person reported based on what they knew
25 or because there was a sampler sitting there. I guess that's my
26 general question, is how we would handle that, and so I guess I
27 would ask the Regional Office their thoughts on that.

28
29 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I view -- Yes, it would be a regulatory violation
30 if you did not report beyond whatever window is specified, but,
31 similarly, if you take the fish off the boat, and don't report,
32 you know, during the offload, then that's a violation, and we don't
33 have a timeframe associated with it.

34
35 I don't think there's going to be a one-size-fits-all solution
36 here, right, but I think it was important to have this
37 conversation, and we've been able to benefit, and learn, from the
38 data that we collected in 2022 and earlier on the program.

39
40 I want to give some thought to this. I mean, I am concerned about
41 if we specify a timeframe, and then, like Kevin has said, you have
42 a dockside port sampler standing there, and, well, the
43 interdependence is broken regardless, right, and so what is
44 something that ensures we get that high level of compliance, that
45 high-level reporting that we can ensure strong validation, so that
46 we have as accurate estimates as possible.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Banks, Mr. Anson, Mr. Anson first, please.

1
2 **MR. BANKS:** Thank you, and Dr. Hollensead brought up the point I
3 was going to make relative to the time, and it would be probably
4 regulatory, and that puts more of an enforcement burden. The
5 hailing-in before you offload I think would be easier, from an
6 enforcement perspective, but, you know, I mentioned about, you
7 know, giving some time. If it's to check for a validation of a
8 trip report, because the port samplers -- At least for Alabama,
9 they are wearing the uniform, and they're easily identifiable, and
10 it's blue shirt and blue shorts, and you can see them from 500
11 feet from the dock.

12
13 We built in, again, a window of time before the time of report, or
14 validation in this case actually, and then a time after the
15 validation occurs, and then, as long as the date, the vessel ID,
16 the number of anglers, and the number of fish that are being
17 reported -- For red snapper, it's, you know, obviously, a little
18 more difficult trying to validate an entire trip with multiple
19 species, but, as long as those other things matched, and then up
20 to a time period after the time of validation, then that was a
21 matching trip.

22
23 If you started to really whittle down that timeframe, and went
24 actually to zero, the time of interview, in those years, the first
25 years that we did it, it just blows up your estimates, and you get
26 an estimate that's just not realistic, and so we identified a
27 window of time to account for some of these issues for captains
28 that, you know, are busy doing other things and such, and they'll
29 eventually report, but it may be much later.

30
31 Now, on the back end of that, you know, if they don't report when
32 they're supposed to, and they wait until the evening, and they've
33 done multiple trips, the time that they report is the time they
34 get on the phone at nine o'clock at night and report it, and so
35 that time is going to be beyond the time our sampler potentially
36 had interviewed them earlier in the for their first trip, and so
37 there will be no trips that will match, potentially, under that
38 scenario, and so they get penalized that way.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** What was your time post landing?

41
42 **MR. ANSON:** It's three-and-a-half before the time of interview and
43 three-and-a-half after. Hours.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Okay, Dr. Banks.

46
47 **DR. BANKS:** The only reason Andy's suggestion really intrigues me
48 about giving them some time after -- Letting this report come after

1 offloading is, at least in our area, most charter captains are
2 hanging those fish, and so we have a twenty-fish aggregate bag
3 limit for reef fish, not including red snapper.

4
5 Okay, and did I get fifteen vermilion or fourteen, and so, if
6 they're hanging them, there's a picture with their customers, and
7 you can go in and count, and so I like the idea of like the captain
8 -- If we're really looking at accuracy of data, you're also getting
9 the port sampler can watch each of those trips hang fish and
10 confirm as well.

11
12 They've got to pull them off for the customers, and so, in our
13 area, I like that. We use that, at the Sportfish Center, when we
14 have anglers report sharks. They submit a photo to us, and we
15 confirm species ID and all that kind of stuff, and so I just -- To
16 me, that's an extra step that the creeler, or interceptor, could
17 also have. Within an hour, or whatever we just -- Three hours, or
18 whatever it's decided, if you can get it, let them take the fish
19 off, and you can also have someone looking at that fish to confirm.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** So what -- How much time do they have after?

22
23 **DR. BANKS:** I don't know that I have a specific recommendation,
24 but maybe -- I mean, within an hour of you pulling fish off your
25 boat, you ought to be able to put a report in. I don't care if
26 you do it, like Kevin said, at nine o'clock at night. Most people
27 are taking pictures, and they're going to know what each trip had.
28 Phones are timestamped, and I don't know a charter captain that
29 doesn't take pictures, for social media and whatever else, and so
30 I don't know that I have a specific recommendation on time.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Andy, I think the point we're working around
33 here is that does the validation count if it's counted after the
34 port sampler is there, and is that the issue here? Is it any less
35 valid if it's different, or no?

36
37 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I certainly would leave it up to maybe more of my
38 team, and experts, with regard to survey methodology, but, when
39 you break that interdependence of the sampling, right, and so, if
40 we have a port agent that samples the catch prior to the report
41 coming in, the question becomes, well, would the report have been
42 submitted in the first place?

43
44 Second, would it have been submitted with the same level of
45 accuracy as the port agent, right, and so, when we ultimately have
46 to calculate landed catch, we're going to have to account for
47 misreporting, and non-reporting, and, the more you avoid this issue
48 of the port agent sampling before the report is submitted, the

1 better your catch estimates are going to be, right?

2
3 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Thank you. Dr. Sweetman.

4
5 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the discussion.
6 I feel like we're getting into the weeds a little bit here, and I
7 don't think there's necessarily a firm answer, as far as timeline.
8 I mean, I'm still of the perspective of like I don't want to let
9 perfection get in the way of progress here, and so, I mean, I think
10 just prior to offloading, which our AP was supportive of, and they
11 were not supportive of, obviously, you know, reporting it prior to
12 at the dock, but that was kind of a compromise to get to prior to
13 offloading.

14
15 I think the simplest solution here, like what I said in the
16 beginning, is coordinate with our dockside biologists there, and
17 figure that out along those lines, and so it's a different order
18 of operations, and we don't have to navigate this, but I feel like
19 we could talk about hours, or minutes, for a long time here, and
20 I don't necessarily think we're going to resolve it right now.

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

23
24 **MR. GEESLIN:** Just to that point, I think that -- I was unaware of
25 that, Dr. Sweetman, that the AP had come up with that
26 recommendation. I think that's a valuable piece of information.

27
28 I also feel like there's a lot of value in hearing from our charter
29 captains in the public comment period. I do value what we're
30 hearing from Captain Frady, Captain Walker, and Dr. Banks, but
31 maybe we're -- I'm tempted to slide with C.J. We're bogging down
32 here. Ed, you did mention some of the funding information. I
33 wonder if this is the time to maybe move to that piece of
34 information.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Yes, and I don't think we're there yet. That's
37 a different action, is it not? What's the next action? Lisa,
38 that's a different action, is it not, or would that apply here?

39
40 **DR. HOLLENSSEAD:** If you want to go into Action 2, and we can go
41 through the document, if there's some outstanding questions, and
42 we can certainly work through it, but, if we go to Action 2,
43 Bernie, and so, again, this is very similar, in that, you know,
44 this is now applying to headboats that do participate in the
45 Southeast Regional Headboat Survey. You know, they already do
46 reporting, and they're sort of used to this.

47
48 The main change that would sort of happen to their reporting

1 requirements, to sort of fold into the larger SEFHIER 2.0, is that
2 they would be required to submit their fishing reports each trip.
3 Currently, it's weekly, and so that brings it in line.

4
5 No matter if a captain is working, you know, a small center console
6 as a charter one day, and now he or she is working a headboat,
7 it's the same timing, and so that's supposed to help, you know,
8 everybody with sort of consistency of the regulations throughout,
9 and so that's Action 2, if there's any questions on that.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Sweetman.

12
13 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Not a question, but just I'm supportive of this.
14 We certainly have talked about this in great detail, relative to
15 the lack of future utility for the headboat survey and how this
16 could kind of replace some of this, due to the lack of validation
17 components there, and so I just wanted to throw that out there for
18 headboats.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Thank you, Dr. Sleeman. Anyone else? Seeing
21 none. Dr. Hollensead.

22
23 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Okay. Bernie, if you don't mind moving on to
24 Action 3, please, and so Action 3 addresses the trip notification
25 and effort report requirements.

26
27 In this case, the council has selected Alternative 3 as preferred
28 for both the charter vessels and those vessels participating in
29 the Southeast Regional Headboat Survey, to require that the owner
30 or operator of a charter vessel or headboat issued a valid federal
31 for-hire permit for reef fish and CMP species submit a trip
32 declaration for trips that will be engaging in any type of for-
33 hire fishing activity. If you take customers to go for-hire
34 fishing, you would require a trip notification.

35
36 Additionally, as we had talked about before, this also helps with,
37 you know, the validation at the dockside of allowing a sampler to
38 know that, hey, this is about when I would be coming in, so that
39 they can intercept for validation, as needed, and so that sort of
40 fulfills that requirement.

41
42 Again, looking back at some of the basic requirements that are
43 needed for making sure that these data can be used in stock
44 assessments and monitoring, that was one of the sort of caveats to
45 look through that, and so this is what is in this document that
46 should be able to fulfill that requirement.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Sweetman.

1
2 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and, if the council would remember, you know,
3 when we were going through SEFHIER 1.0, this was a very particular
4 conversation that we batted around the axle quite a few times
5 there, and so this is not inclusive of a dolphin sightseeing trip
6 or, you know, going out to catch bait, or getting ice, or
7 refueling, and so I think this kind of checks off all the marks
8 that we were trying to navigate in SEFHIER 1.0. Thanks.
9

10 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** I agree. We've been around and around on this
11 one, and I think we've narrowed it down, and it's time to move
12 forward. Any other discussion on this action? Seeing none, Dr.
13 Hollensead.
14

15 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Okay. Bernie, if you wouldn't mind going to
16 Action 4, please, and so Action 4, if you recall, there's been
17 some discussion. This was discussed not only around the council
18 table, but also at the AP, the importance of economic reporting as
19 part of the survey.
20

21 In the first iteration of SEFHIER, and I don't think this had been
22 talked about at the council table so much, but it is needed to
23 collect information about the fishery, and get some information
24 that way, and so, in this case, for this reiteration of SEFHIER
25 2.0, it is now in this document, so that the public can actually
26 see what's being asked of them.
27

28 The preferred alternative currently selected by the council would
29 require the owner or operator participating in this program to
30 submit economic data as part of the logbook when the vessel is
31 engaged in any type of charter fishing or charter fishing activity
32 if selected, and so this is more of a sampling methodology rather
33 than, hey, you're participating in the program and you have to do
34 this after every trip.
35

36 If you recall, we had lots of discussions with the economic
37 analysts there at the Science Center, and so there was sort of a
38 discussion back and forth, and so this was sort of a general
39 consensus of what would be collected, and, again, it's just the
40 three questions. It's the trip fee, fuel used in gallons, and the
41 price of fuel per gallon, and so those are the three economic
42 questions that would be asked.
43

44 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Sweetman.
45

46 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and, again, just to kind of reemphasize what
47 we've already talked about here, we talked about this in
48 significant detail. I think we've gotten it down to the lowest

1 common denominator for what would be needed for the purpose of
2 this amendment, and, in particular, one of the main things that
3 I'm thinking about is just relative to fishery disaster assistance,
4 and now how the charter community is now eligible to receive
5 fishery disaster assistance, and this kind of information is
6 explicitly what would be needed in order to determine an economic
7 impact from a disaster, and so I think this will be useful on
8 multiple levels.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Okay. Moving on, Dr. Hollensead.

11
12 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** I did have one kind of closing comment also to
13 look at this, and so the IPT had talked about this in sort of
14 lessons learned from the first edition of SEFHIER also, and this
15 document includes some language to a review of the program, a
16 periodic review.

17
18 For example, if there's data fields that, you know, are needed, or
19 perhaps some that, you know, we thought were needed, and are not,
20 the program could be modified to address needs of the fisheries as
21 they come up, and so that's also in here as a way for the public
22 to continue participation in this, and provide feedback, so that
23 the program can always be, you know, improved if that comes about,
24 and so I just also wanted to make that note, in closing.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** I think I remember -- I wish you wouldn't have
27 brought that up. I think I remember reading in here that it kind
28 of did leave a door open for additional economic data requests,
29 which is kind of not what we wanted, and it was kind of the problem
30 in the last time, and it was essentially an open-ended door for
31 additional economic data requests. Can you speak to that?

32
33 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Well, so sort of the flip of your coin there is
34 the idea that if there was -- You know, if they came forward with,
35 hey, we're interested in collecting this information, having it in
36 a review forum means that, you know, it would have to be considered
37 by the council, and why is this data being collected, and what
38 purpose is it going to be serving if something comes about, and
39 this allows that avenue for the council, and the public, to be
40 engaged in those sorts of things.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** That's excellent. I didn't catch that in reading
43 it, but that's -- I'm totally fine with that. Any further
44 discussion? Dr. Banks.

45
46 **DR. BANKS:** A clarifying question, and so did we set a time that
47 we have to review this program again, or are we just any time a
48 change is made?

1
2 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** I think we had discussed, at the IPT level, that
3 it should be like no fewer than five years. It's the idea that
4 you could collect some information and see -- You know, get an
5 idea of actually how the program is functioning, and things like
6 that, and I think that's what we had discussed.

7
8 We could certainly talk about it a little bit more. I don't
9 believe we have it in the document just yet. That was still
10 something we were discussing, but I think the consensus generally,
11 from the folks at the IPT, was no fewer than five years. Let it
12 ride a little bit.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Andy.

15
16 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and so we have statutory requirements for
17 reviews for IFQ programs that I think are seven years, five years
18 after the first implementation. You know, the council can review
19 a program at any time, and so I think the question would be do we
20 want to put in a time commitment within the amendment to say we're
21 going to conduct the review within a certain timeframe, or do we
22 just signal that, you know, it's the desire of the council to do
23 that?

24
25 We're certainly going to provide data, and information, on the
26 program periodically to the council, and let you know how it's
27 operating. We've been doing that in the South Atlantic for quite
28 some time. I think my preference would be to leave it more open-
29 ended, and not obligate ourselves to having to conduct a five-year
30 review.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** I agree with that, and it will keep them all
33 moving here, and it's already going to be reviewed, and we don't
34 have to go into making another item here. Any other comments?
35 Mr. Dugas.

36
37 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Captain Walker. If we're finish with that
38 discussion before moving on, I was going to ask Andy, and we are
39 scheduled for final action on this document in August, and so my
40 question to NMFS is what's your vision of a timeline to get this
41 implemented?

42
43 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Really, J.D.? Just toss me a softball there why
44 don't you?

45
46 **MR. DUGAS:** If I don't ask you, someone will.

47
48 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, I don't really even want to speculate. I

1 mean, obviously, we would need to go through the approval of the
2 amendment, the rulemaking, and we've talked about this as
3 regulatory, and then give captains, fishermen, time, obviously, to
4 be aware of the program requirements. Right now, you know,
5 rulemaking is taking considerably longer than it has in the past,
6 and so certainly in the next year, but I don't want to speculate
7 exactly when.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Banks.

10
11 **DR. BANKS:** To that timeline question, would this be a January 1
12 start date, or could we start this in the middle of the year? You
13 all think about this as like reporting only red snapper, but they
14 report everything else, and that's why I'm asking.

15
16 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Right, and, well, obviously, for species that
17 don't have seasons opening until the second half of the year, it
18 could benefit us to, obviously, gather that data, even if it isn't
19 coinciding with the January 1 start date, but certainly a lot of
20 species, if you start mid-year, and there's a fishery that's
21 already been open, you're not going to get good annual landings
22 estimates, but, with any of these programs -- Granted, we've had
23 SEFHIER operational before, and having that timeframe for captains
24 who are used to the reporting software, again, and compliance
25 requirements, and any sort of new reporting information is always
26 beneficial, and there's a burn-in period.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Mr. Bray.

29
30 **MR. GREGG BRAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was interested in Mr.
31 Strelcheck's answer to the timeline for implementation. Just one
32 point that we wanted to put out there is it's unclear exactly the
33 survey methodology that might be used from a validation standpoint.

34
35 If we're looking at the potential of re-implementing what we did
36 with version 1.0, which was utilizing the commission and the state
37 partners collecting validation samples through their port agents,
38 my staff has told me we need some time and resources to stand that
39 system back up. It's not a system that we can just flip a switch
40 and turn it back on, and so having some resources, and having some
41 time to work with our state partners, and making sure they have
42 electronic devices able to collect this survey information in the
43 field at that time of interviewing captains, is going to be
44 necessary.

45
46 I guess it's just a reminder to Andy and his staff that, if that's
47 the direction we're ultimately going, we need some time to work
48 with you all, and to work with our partners, to be able to have a

1 system like that ready to go, because just the data management
2 system itself is going to take some updating, and it's going to
3 take some time, and some resources. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Sweetman.

6
7 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I think these are some
8 really good points, actually. This is screaming to me that like
9 there's going to be a burn-in year for that first year coming up
10 here, just so we can iron out the kinks and whatnot.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Right, and I get it, and I think most of my
13 fellow charter captains understand that, but just the idea that
14 let's keep this moving, to the extent possible, and make everybody
15 happy. Do we need a committee motion to take this out to public
16 hearings? Okay. Dr. Banks.

17
18 **DR. BANKS:** I'll make that motion to move this forward to public
19 hearing.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Second by Dr. Sweetman.

22
23 **DR. BANKS:** Virtual public hearings.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Okay. Is there any opposition to that motion?
26 Sorry. The motion on the board to take Draft Generic Amendment -
27 - I'm sure this has a number, doesn't it? Modifications to Gulf
28 For-Hire Data Collection Program out for virtual public hearings.
29 Is there any opposition to the motion on the board? Seeing none,
30 the motion carries.

31
32 Okay. Next up we have Dr. Hollensead again with a review of Mid-
33 Atlantic Tilefish Recreational Mandatory Reporting Program. We
34 could take a break. How about we take a fifteen-minute break?
35 All right. Mr. Chair, do you want to handle the breaking?

36
37 **MR. DUGAS:** We're going to take a break, Captain Walker, but it's
38 going to be a little longer. We're going to take our lunch break,
39 since we're so far ahead of schedule, and we'll come back to Dr.
40 Hollensead after lunch, at 1:30. At 1:30, we'll come back.

41
42 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on June 1, 2026.)

43
44 - - -

45
46 June 1, 2026

47
48 MONDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

1
2 - - -
3
4 The Data Collection Committee of the Gulf Council convened at The
5 Hilton Tampa Airport Westshore in Tampa, Florida on Monday morning,
6 June 1, 2026, and was called to order by Chairman Ed Walker.
7

8 **MR. DUGAS:** Okay. We're going to get started, and I'll turn it
9 back over to Captain Walker.
10

11 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am going to turn it
12 back over to Dr. Hollensead, I believe, who has a presentation on
13 the Mid-Atlantic tilefish reporting program. Dr. Hollensead.
14

15 **PRESENTATION: REVIEW OF MID-ATLANTIC TILEFISH RECREATIONAL**
16 **MANDATORY REPORTING PROGRAM**
17

18 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. This presentation comes
19 about -- We've had a series of presentations talking about the
20 potential of standing up a mandatory recreational reporting
21 program for the deep-drop fishery, specifically looking at
22 deepwater groupers.
23

24 If you recall, a couple meetings ago, back in January, myself and
25 Mr. Bray collaborated on a presentation where we sort of laid out
26 some of the pros and cons and potential hurdles associated with
27 that, and then, following that, Dr. Allen provided a presentation
28 where he went over some methodology.
29

30 While we were having that discussion around the table, the South
31 Atlantic liaison, Mr. Hemilright, had mentioned that the Mid-
32 Atlantic Council had been, you know, reviewing a mandatory
33 reporting program for tilefish, and suggested that perhaps, you
34 know, council staff go speak with those folks and glean what we
35 can learn from them, and bring back that information to you all,
36 and so that's what we've done.
37

38 We have gone ahead and done some of that homework, and brought
39 back a presentation to you guys about their program, and some of
40 the challenges that they've associated with as we think about how
41 we may want to move forward with potential next steps, and so,
42 with that, Bernie, if you wouldn't mind pulling up the presentation
43 for me, please.
44

45 A little bit of background and so, again, I'm going to be talking
46 about blueline and golden tilefish in the Mid-Atlantic, and so, in
47 that region, they had noticed an increased trend in recreational
48 harvest since the 2000s and 2010s. Mainly it had been a commercial

1 fishery, but they were seeing some increased interest by the
2 recreational sector for harvest these fish.

3
4 The Mid-Atlantic Council was interested in, hey, let's get some
5 data on what's going on here, and, to do that, let's begin a
6 mandatory reporting program, and they started that as part of
7 adding blueline to their tilefish FMP, sort of laying that out in
8 2017, but their program actually wasn't up and running until 2020,
9 and so that gives you an idea of, hey, we sort of have this idea,
10 and let's bring this into the fold, and it took about three years
11 before they were able to sort of implement their data collection
12 program, and so it does take a little bit.

13
14 In their case, the council didn't really get into the details of
15 building out the logbook. They mostly said, hey, we were just
16 sort of interested in building a logbook, but they didn't go
17 through sort of like the data field sort of things, like, for
18 example, what we just went through for SEFHIER 2.0.

19
20 GARFO, and so that's the Greater Atlantic Regional Office, and so
21 sort of their SERO, used preexisting reporting framework for
22 commercial and for-hire logbooks, to sort of build out the
23 database, and so that's sort of what they had first established
24 back there in 2020.

25
26 This is what the logbook reporting fields look like. You can read
27 them all here. It's a no-cost, vessel-based permit, and so there's
28 no money collected for the permit. The logbooks are to be reported
29 electronically within twenty-four hours of landing, and so this is
30 what the logbook looks like, and they have to report within twenty-
31 four hours of landing.

32
33 They've run into a couple of issues. Since the permit is free,
34 the angler universe is likely overestimated, and so you've got
35 folks that, you know, may look at that and be like, well, I don't
36 know, and I may participate that, or I may not, but let me go ahead
37 and sign up for it, but they actually never really go out, or, you
38 know, they have a ten-foot johnboat, or, you know, we all have
39 aspirations, and so it's likely that that's, you know, potentially
40 overestimated, and so how, you know, do we reconcile for that is
41 sort of a question they had.

42
43 In the case in the Mid-Atlantic, they also -- Their anglers
44 reported that there's too many reporting app choices, and so
45 there's a number of them out there for them.

46
47 Now, that's a competitive process, and so, you know, however many
48 people want to put in and meet those technical specifications, and

1 not a lot can be done for that, but, in the case of this program,
2 some anglers have reported it's just too many to potentially choose
3 from.

4
5 They also report that the reporting fields are not easily
6 understood, and so they're not really sure what it is they're
7 supposed to be reporting, or why, and so, like, Bernie, if you
8 wouldn't mind going back to the previous slide real quick, and so
9 like, for example, soak time.

10
11 You know, if you've been around fisheries data collection for a
12 while, that sort of makes sense, and it actually kind of makes
13 sense if you're thinking about like longline gear, right? When
14 did your gear go in the water, and how long did you set it, and
15 when did you start your haul, but that gets a little more confusing
16 for like a hook-and-line. You know, is it -- I reeled up my bait,
17 just to check if it was still there, and I put it -- Do I start
18 the time again, or is it when I move sites, and so, you know,
19 there's some of these things that may be a little bit too
20 interpretation, especially for recreational anglers who may not
21 have thought about fishing in, you know, sort of this experimental
22 design kind of capacity.

23
24 Then this was interesting that they had reported out, and so we
25 have been talking about looking at the deep-drop fishery because
26 it's a small -- You know, we perceive it as being a small universe
27 of anglers, but, actually, what the law enforcement came back with
28 is, because they're a small universe of angler group, they're
29 difficult to enforce.

30
31 You know, they've already got a wide swath of area that they have
32 to look at, and so they have to look at this one particular group,
33 and it can be difficult, and so perhaps thinking of some other
34 ways in which enforcement can work through this program is
35 something that would have to be thought about.

36
37 As a result, some of the reporting rates were low, and the program
38 estimates were not usable for management or stock assessments for
39 either blueline or golden tilefish, and so, because the reporting
40 rates are so low, and this program has been up, you know, about
41 six years, it has not produced data estimates that could be used
42 for stock assessment or monitoring.

43
44 Recognizing that this was an issue, the Mid-Atlanta Council went
45 on ahead and evaluated their program in 2024. That report is
46 available in your briefing materials, as background, if you wanted
47 to look through that, but some of the key findings was to
48 prioritize outreach, and so, you know, really get into the angler

1 community, and let them know why they're reporting, what this
2 program is trying to do, and that sort of thing.

3
4 Increase staff communication, especially between, you know,
5 council staff and the Regional Office staff, and make sure they
6 work very collaboratively, so that managers and the Regional Office
7 sort of have aligned goals and that sort of thing.

8
9 Explore needs for regulatory changes, and so, basically, if, at
10 any point -- You know, as we mentioned, and we were just talking
11 about with SEFHIER, and, if some questions come up, and a new data
12 field is required, why is that, and why would I be reporting
13 something slightly different, or why might I not be reporting,
14 that sort of thing.

15
16 Making the reporting apps as easy as possible, as easy to
17 understand, in terms of this is what we need you to report, and,
18 certainly, if there's any chance to have sort of already auto-
19 populated fields or that, so that people can move through the
20 reporting process quickly.

21
22 The development of a law enforcement strategy, and so how exactly
23 -- If you put in some new regulations, how will folks in the law
24 enforcement office be able to adequately enforce those rules?
25 Again, increased communication between managers and outreach
26 staff, making sure that, again, the goals of the program are
27 adequately being sent out to the participants.

28
29 Frequently engage both the industry, and so the people fishing,
30 and state agencies that might be helping collect the data, on what
31 their needs is, as well as the sampling staff, and so like, as we
32 were just talking about for SEFHIER, you know, folks on the dock
33 side doing the sampling, that everybody sort of understands the
34 common goal, and what the needs, and how the design is set up. A

35
36 Develop clear goals, and evaluate the process as you go along, and
37 so definitely making sure it is -- What question do we want to
38 answer, and what data do we need to do that, and, you know, setting
39 that out from the get-go. Mr. Chair.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Just while we're on this page, so the number of
42 active permits on that, I'm guessing that's in the thousands?

43
44 **DR. HOLLENSSEAD:** No, and I think that is active number of permits.
45 We have Hannah Hart online. She is Mid-Atlantic Council, and if
46 she would like to -- If I've misrepresented anything, Hannah, or
47 something, please feel free to speak a little more to this slide,
48 if you don't mind.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Is she there? Okay. So, according to this,
3 then thirty people have these permits, and 2 percent of those
4 thirty people actually reported. Wow. Okay. I can see why it
5 wasn't suitable for -- I assumed those were 30,000 people.
6

7 **DR. HOLLENSSEAD:** No. In my understanding, that is -- I believe -
8 - Hannah, if you're able to hear us, if you're able to speak, we
9 would appreciate any insights you have.
10

11 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Can you hear us, Hannah? Hannah, you have to
12 unmute yourself. I guess we can come back to that. I kind of got
13 the answer to my question there though.
14

15 **DR. HOLLENSSEAD:** Yes, and my understanding, characterizing this
16 group, is a lot of it is folks actually targeting HMS species,
17 and, when they can't do that, some of them like to have the
18 opportunity to come back and fish for some tilefish on the way
19 back in, is generally how I think they're categorized and so --
20 But it's very few, and so it is a small universe, even so.
21

22 Some developments, and so, while we were having our meeting in
23 April, the Mid-Atlantic was also meeting that week, and
24 recognizing, after sort of this report out that they had had, and
25 going to the industry and asking, hey, what is it that you would
26 like out of your program, they developed a framework action that
27 basically streamlined and simplified the logbook. It took away a
28 lot of the data fields that were being asked, and sort of curved
29 it to just a few questions.
30

31 When that was being brought about here in April, the council was
32 informed by GARFO that many of those changes would sort of, quote-
33 unquote, break the database structure, and so the way in which it
34 was being reported was sort of this static way in which their
35 database could communicate throughout the programs that they have
36 up there, the commercial programs that they have, for example.
37

38 By tweaking, or modifying, what was being done for tilefish, it
39 was not going to be conducive to their sort of backend structure,
40 and so GARFO staff indicated that, if the framework action was
41 passed, but the current alternative selected by the council, that
42 the document may only be partially approved, and that any changes
43 to the system may take years.
44

45 Understanding that, the council went on ahead and passed the motion
46 to submit the document as written with the council's current
47 preferred alternatives, and so it's a little bit of a holding
48 pattern as to how that outcome might look.

1
2 A little bit of lessons learned from the Mid-Atlantic program was
3 to ask anglers only what is needed to achieve the program goal,
4 and so, if you have some goal that you want to figure out, just
5 the universe of anglers for now for example, just ask those
6 straight, pointed questions, and no need to get into necessarily
7 soak time, or discards, which it's not going to be -- You know, if
8 there's no goal there at the ready, to just go ahead and start
9 simply. Limit the number of questions at first, and you could add
10 more in the future if needed.

11
12 They recommended having a dedicated database for that program, and
13 so one of the things that would come out from the report is a lot
14 of the recreational fishermen contended that the data collection
15 program was set up more for like a commercial fisherman, or a for-
16 hire fisherman, and that recreational fishermen are not that type
17 of person, and so they wanted to have, you know, just as
18 straightforward as they possibly could, in terms of just a data
19 collection program.

20
21 Having its own dedicated database, you could go ahead and amend
22 that, and it could potentially be a little more nimble than
23 something that you have for a big commercial program, or an IFQ
24 program, or something like that.

25
26 The relatively small angler universe does not mean creating a
27 mandatory program is simpler. If you've only got fewer people,
28 it's difficult for law enforcement to go on ahead -- To go through
29 and, you know, enforce those regulations in such a small group,
30 and so, at that, law enforcement would probably need to be
31 consulted. You know, is what you're requesting something that is
32 enforceable, so that actually it could be something that an
33 estimate comes out that you can feel like it has something that
34 you can use.

35
36 I think one of the main takeaways that was interesting about this
37 is you only get one chance to make a first impression, and so one
38 of the things that the Mid-Atlantic is now sort of struggling with
39 is this program has been going on for six years, and there's
40 nothing to show for it, in terms of we now have something that's
41 being used for stock assessments or monitoring, and now, if they
42 even revamp the program, right, there's this idea -- The optics of
43 which of, hey, we've got it now, and so continue reporting, but,
44 you know, for some folks, it's a little bit like trying to put the
45 toothpaste back in the tube, and so that's one of the things that
46 they're kind of working through right now.

47
48 I guess then, you know, talking to those folks, and then coming

1 back and thinking about, you know, what potential goals the council
2 might have for the deepwater grouper complex, you know, what is
3 the goal? What is it that you're interested in achieving here?

4
5 If it's just getting at an angler universe, and so just try to get
6 an idea of how many people are actually out here doing this, and,
7 you know, I have "quickest" here in quotations, because it's not
8 actually that quick, but perhaps maybe a little more
9 straightforward relative to some other options.

10
11 You could either have a state-specific offshore endorsement or
12 some sort of federal permit, if you're going to go out for these
13 types of species, and ask, okay, you know, are you going to go
14 after these, and then, during the renewal or when they first sign
15 up, ask if that angler has participated in the deep-drop fishery,
16 and so that gets an idea of, hey, I usually sign up for these, but
17 I didn't catch any last year, and so you can get an idea of this
18 person put in, but they never actually participate in the fishery.

19
20 You get some idea of who is wanting to sign up for it, but then
21 who's actually out there prosecuting the fishery, and maybe, if
22 so, how many were harvested, and maybe you do some sort of range,
23 one to five, six to ten, something like that, and then that's just
24 all you would do initially.

25
26 That would give you an idea of what the angler universe is, and,
27 as things come about, you could see how it goes, and you could
28 maybe add onto that afterwards, as the goals, or needs, for that
29 management plan change over time.

30
31 The other end of that is if you're like, well, I'm interested in
32 using these data directly in a stock assessment, or for management,
33 that's going to be more of a years-long endeavor, and think of
34 something along the SEFHIER line, right, and so that would be, I
35 would imagine, having something where you've got industry working
36 groups, and staff collaborations, like what we had with our AP,
37 and get a lot of people involved in this fishery to come and speak
38 to you about what they would like to see, have the Regional Office
39 talk about, well, here's some of the things that we're interested
40 in that we see in stock assessments that we would have to ask you
41 about, and so some things like that, so that everybody could kind
42 of come to a consensus on what it is that they're looking for.

43
44 Then have a dedicated database for the program, and so it's not
45 necessarily linked to something else, and so, if you would like to
46 make changes, it doesn't break some other component. Also, looking
47 at, you know, some comprehensive logbooks. You know, whatever
48 your goal is, go ahead and ask those questions and move on.

1
2 Also, get law enforcement involved. You know, if this is going to
3 be a mandatory reporting program, you know, law enforcement should
4 be consulted, and we should also get their feedback as well, and,
5 at the very end here, I've got, you know, lots of outreach,
6 outreach, outreach, outreach.

7
8 It would have to be a very dedicated effort to, you know, allow
9 people to sort of participate, talk about what their feelings are
10 about the program, what they think would work, and also, you know,
11 by managers and data scientists and things like that, to really
12 get out to them why it is they're reporting, and what it is it's
13 going to be used for, and so just that everybody has that
14 understanding all around.

15
16 This presentation wouldn't be possible without Hannah and Jose,
17 who has definitely helped for the Mid-Atlantic, and was crucial to
18 building out this, but, Bernie, if you wouldn't mind going up to
19 the previous slide, and I guess I'll just leave it here.

20
21 In terms of next steps, you know, we've had a couple of
22 presentations on this. I know that we've got a motion to develop
23 a permit for this, which is something, you know, certainly we could
24 think about, but I guess, you know, in terms of what is the
25 overarching goal, which direction would you like to take this in,
26 would you --

27
28 Again, keeping in mind that I would think sort of that golden rule
29 that we have at the beginning of the presentation, that you only
30 get one chance to make a first impression, with that sort of in
31 mind, and we would just -- You know, staff would just be curious
32 at whatever next step, or guidance, the committee would have for
33 us, and we can go forward from there.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Thank you, Dr. Hollensead. I had one question,
36 and so these permits in the North Atlantic there, or Mid-Atlantic,
37 they were voluntary? You didn't -- You weren't required to have
38 these?

39
40 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** No, and so it would have been a mandatory
41 reporting, and so, if you were going to go harvest blueline tile,
42 or golden tilefish, you would have to have this.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** So they only did -- They only had thirty, or
45 fifty, of those permits? Dr. Sweetman.

46
47 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you for the presentation, Dr. Hollensead, and
48 Hannah and Jose for putting that together. Is there any validation

1 associated with this program?

2
3 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Hannah, are you able to speak, to answer Dr.
4 Sweetman's question if there was any validation for this program?

5
6 **MS. HANNAH HART:** I think so. Can you hear me, Lisa?

7
8 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Yes, ma'am, go ahead.

9
10 **MS. HART:** Okay. Sorry about that, and so, to Dr. Sweetman's
11 comment, no. Currently, there's not any validation at this point,
12 and that's one of the things that we struggle with, that, you know,
13 once we do get reporting rates, or hopefully, if we get reporting
14 rates to where we want them to be, at this point, there's really
15 no way to validate like if that's true consensus or not.

16
17 It's something our SSC has commented on multiple times, but, you
18 know, as you saw from that graph, and, Lisa, I don't know if you
19 want to pull up that graph again, but I can help clarify some of
20 the details.

21
22 The total number of permits that we're seeing each year people get
23 is in the 1,500 range, but then the number of permits that are
24 actually reporting tilefish is about maybe thirty, on a good year,
25 that we've seen, and so the reporting rate of people actually
26 getting the permit and then reporting going on tilefish trips is,
27 as you can see, like between 3 percent to 1 percent, depending on
28 the year, and 2020 is a partial year, and so I wouldn't take that
29 with much grain of salt, and that's also the first year this was
30 implemented, but, as you can see, like we're getting permits.

31
32 Are these people actually participating in the fishery? It's hard
33 to tell at this point, or are they just getting permits because
34 it's free, and then, you know, the number of reports we're seeing
35 each year, compared to the total number of permits, is so low, and
36 so that's been kind of like our key issue at this point.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Okay. Thank you, Hannah. Any more questions?
39 Dr. Sweetman.

40
41 **DR. SWEETMAN:** So, Hannah, while I've still got you on the line,
42 how are you guys looking to try and address that over-subscription
43 issue there? I know it's not an easy thing, but I'm just curious
44 if you all at the Mid-Atlantic have tried to tackle that issue in
45 particular.

46
47 **MS. HART:** Yes, and can you guys still hear me?
48

1 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Yes.

2
3 **MS. HART:** Okay, and so that's something that, right now, we're
4 just trying to get more people to report at this point, and so
5 Lisa touched on the action we recently took final action on. We're
6 just trying to make this as simple as possible, because, in 2024,
7 we did a program evaluation where we sought stakeholder feedback
8 on, you know, why we're seeing so few reports, and part of that
9 was people just don't understand it.

10
11 They're not aware of the reporting requirements, or even sometimes
12 the permit requirement, and so that's been our initial step. I
13 will say it's been difficult.

14
15 Since this is one of the first private recreational reporting that
16 we have at the council level here in the Mid-Atlantic, and really
17 the New England region as well, it's been kind of a step-by-step
18 process, and it's been difficult since -- One thing also with our
19 recreational reporting, it's tied directly to our commercial and
20 for-hire electronic reporting.

21
22 We recently learned, through that framework action, that our
23 regional office can't easily make changes within that recreational
24 part of it, since it's tied to the other two sector components,
25 and so we're kind of hitting a hurdle, at this point, as to how we
26 actually improve the program, and so it's really -- This is like
27 the first step to probably a long-term process.

28
29 Depending on how our regional office responds to that framework
30 action, and we just submitted our rulemaking package last week,
31 and so, depending on where that goes, I think that will help inform
32 our next steps.

33
34 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Hannah.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Okay. I think that's the end of this program,
37 or discussion on this, and so any other comments? To me, at best,
38 it's got a long way to go, and it doesn't give me a great deal of
39 confidence in us trying something similar at this point. Mike.

40
41 **DR. MIKE ALLEN:** Thank you. Thank you, Lisa and Hannah, for this
42 summary. You know, it seems like, in this case, in the Mid-
43 Atlantic, they -- Hannah, correct me if I'm wrong, but you kind of
44 started this by asking for everything that you might ever want to
45 get, right, and it turned out that it fell way short of what you
46 would need to be able to use it.

47
48 I wonder if a path forward for us, with regard to deepwater

1 grouper, would be to start at the very basic level of just trying
2 to identify, and this kind of goes back to what Gregg Bray
3 mentioned in his original presentation of more of a carrot approach
4 of working with the anglers, try to identify who these anglers
5 are, so that we could survey them.

6
7 You know, we're kind of faced with a situation, with deepwater
8 grouper, where, right now, we basically don't have any reliable
9 data for the recreational landings, and something like being able
10 to identify these anglers, and survey them for catch information,
11 could at least allow us to get some trend information on catch.

12
13 Then maybe we could build. You know, if that's successful, we
14 could build something in, you know, that's more detailed after
15 that, and so I guess what I'm advocating is that we consider kind
16 of the opposite of this approach, and so start small, and try to
17 build up relationships that we can use to get some information,
18 rather than trying to get it all upfront.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Sweetman.

21
22 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I agree with Dr. Allen
23 there. I think we need to walk before we run here, but clearly
24 that approach isn't going to get us what we're looking for, right,
25 for the type of data that we want to use in management purposes,
26 but I still think like it's important to walk before we run.

27
28 Like there's other mechanisms that we could utilize potentially
29 for management purposes. I mean, if SEFHIER 2.0 comes online,
30 there could be some ways that we could utilize some data from some
31 deepwater grouper trips there to potentially inform what might be
32 going on, you know, some sort of index-based approach there, in
33 combination with utilizing the universe of anglers, and that is
34 ultimately what we're trying to get.

35
36 That doesn't resolve some of the other issues that I think the
37 Mid-Atlantic dealt with relative to like validation and things
38 like that, but I think it's probably better to start slow, and
39 then build it up, before you build it to a capacity where it's not
40 usable, and you need to tear it apart altogether.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Great comments. I hadn't considered that the
43 SEFHIER will give us some deepwater landings information. Good
44 point. Okay. Anthony.

45
46 **DR. ANTHONY OVERTON:** I'm not on your committee, but something to
47 kind of think about, program-wide, is I noticed the permit was
48 free, but when you have the words "free" and "mandatory" together,

1 oftentimes you don't have any skin in the game, and so it might be
2 worth charging a minimal amount for the permit, to try to increase
3 participation, but, if I'm giving something for free, I'm certainly
4 not doing something that I mandatorily have to do, and so that may
5 also help in the reporting and getting the data that you need, and
6 just a suggestion.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Good point. Anyone else on this topic? Seeing
9 none, I hand it back over to you, Mr. Chair. This concludes the
10 Data Committee. Dr. Banks.

11
12 **DR. BANKS:** I think we're going to have to give Lisa a little more
13 direction there, and so I think, as part of this conversation, my
14 question is, is there -- Like what of this do we want them to
15 explore? Do we want to look at reporting apps? Do we want to
16 look at the actually putting a permit, and who would assign the
17 permit? Do you want to charge for the -- Like let's maybe give
18 Lisa a little more direction there.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Allen.

21
22 **DR. ALLEN:** I'll just make a case that I think it would be a good
23 first step to be able to identify these anglers, right, whether
24 that's a permit, but some way to identify these anglers that we
25 could at least do post-season follow-up surveys, that kind of
26 thing. Options for identification.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Hollensead.

29
30 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Yes, and, so, along those lines, Mr. Schieble, I
31 might put you on the spot right here, and I believe the State of
32 Louisiana, right, through their offshore endorsement, can identify
33 red snapper fishermen, and then, after the season is over, do a
34 follow-up survey, where they randomly ask those folks sort of a
35 targeted survey on top of what they already are asked, and is that
36 true?

37
38 **MR. CHRIS SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and so we have the Recreational Offshore
39 Landing Permit, or the ROLP, as we call it, which identifies the
40 user group of offshore anglers, separate from the saltwater license
41 frame, for ten listed species, and so that includes the snappers,
42 which is red snapper in there, but also groupers, tilefish, and
43 things like that are in there, but it doesn't separate out just
44 red snapper anglers. It lists any of those ten species that you
45 would catch that are included in that permit, but doesn't define
46 you as a snapper angler.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Thanks for that. I appreciate Mike trying to

1 keep something going here, and make something out of it, and I'm
2 struggling to -- I agree with you that we need to try this, but I
3 just haven't seen a great way forward on it yet. I'm certainly
4 not opposed to trying to identify it, as you say, but it definitely
5 looks like it's going to be more difficult than I thought. Anyone
6 else have any direction for Dr. Hollensead? Okay. I guess that's
7 all we're hearing, Lisa. We can come back at Full Council if we
8 think of some more direction. Dr. Simmons.

9
10 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so
11 I think we have a little time here, and so let's try to make sure
12 I understand you guys are asking us to do. This would not -- This
13 would be like a council and National Marine Fisheries Service type
14 of program that we would try to consider, like the Mid-Atlantic
15 Council, but we would start small, and try to think about the
16 efficacy of requiring a permit for private anglers in the Gulf of
17 America targeting deepwater grouper.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Allen, is that what you had in mind?

20
21 **DR. ALLEN:** Yes, and that's exactly what I was suggesting, is a
22 permit that, if you're going to land deepwater grouper, you would
23 have to have this permit. We can identify those folks, and we
24 could do follow-up surveys, that kind of thing. Thank you.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Thanks.

27
28 **DR. BANKS:** So I guess my follow-up question is I buy my Texas
29 saltwater license, which currently allows me to fish offshore, and
30 do I then go to an NMFS website to buy this endorsement, or permit?
31 What is the mechanism here, or is Texas going to have to have some
32 way to put it in their system, because I'm looking at my state
33 partner, but I don't see our commission letting us do that.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** I think those are the kind of things we're going
36 to have to look at here, and find the best path forward. Obviously,
37 it doesn't sound like each state is going to voluntarily come up
38 with their own, but --

39
40 **DR. BANKS:** Well, that's what Dr. Simmons is asking. Like we need
41 to come up with some things that need to be in either another
42 presentation or document for us to discuss, so they have some
43 direction.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Allen.

46
47 **DR. ALLEN:** Just to follow-up, I mean, it would -- We discussed
48 this a little bit before, but it would make sense to me, rather

1 than try to do this state-by-state, that it would be some kind of
2 federal permit to lend these fish, some kind of a -- You know, not
3 necessarily tied to like the HMS system, but something that is a
4 federal permit that we could identify these anglers. I think it
5 would seem, to me, would be the most expeditious way to get some
6 information here.

7
8 Keep in mind that the alternative to starting down this road is
9 that, the next time we do a deepwater grouper assessment, we're
10 basically going to have very little information on deepwater
11 grouper recreational landings, right, and so it's a start.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Froeschke.

14
15 **DR. JOHN FROESCHKE:** If we were to do this, it would seem we would
16 need to include some sort of question in the dockside sampling
17 protocol of did you have -- Or do you have a deepwater grouper
18 permit, if you land one of those or something, and I don't know
19 how easy it is to add a question like that to the system, but, I
20 mean, to me, that would be the utility of it.

21
22 I don't see a state -- Like, there's no fine or anything, the best
23 you could do is say that, out of all the intercepts that include
24 positives for deepwater grouper, 50 percent of them had permits,
25 and we know that there are X number of people in permits, and so
26 you could estimate it as 2X for the landings. Something like that,
27 I guess, would be the process?

28
29 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Mr. Bray.

30
31 **MR. BRAY:** I think one of the concerns with that, John, if I
32 understand you right though, is we think a large portion of these
33 people are private boat anglers fishing behind private docks, and
34 so you're never going to have a dockside sampler there, unless we
35 have some type of cooperative research program where they
36 volunteered into saying, all right, yes, you guys can come, and
37 I'm taking trips on these days, and you can come sample me, but,
38 if they truly are, a lot of these, fishing behind private docks,
39 we're never going to have a sampler there to get answers to
40 questions like that, which is what makes validation so difficult.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Sweetman.

43
44 **DR. SWEETMAN:** No, and, even to that point, that's a good one,
45 Gregg. I mean, like maybe this is just the starting phase for it.
46 You get this endorsement out there, this sort of permit, so you
47 can identify that, and then, if it becomes like, oh, there's some
48 utility to this, then you do some sort of cooperative research to

1 try and get some of that, because yes, and, I mean, FWC sampling
2 private docks is not going to be happening, and so, I mean, there
3 needs to be some way to kind of get that information, but I also
4 don't think we need to resolve this today.

5
6 Like, I mean, this is getting into some very fine-scale details
7 there, for a fishery that we have like next to no information for
8 relative to the landings, and so I think it's appropriate even to
9 think about this before Full Council, and have even more discussion
10 here, and so just throwing that out there.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Mr. Anson.

13
14 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and one more item for consideration at this point
15 is -- I don't know how it can legally done, but it might be
16 something where you set up a generic reporting permit, and then,
17 as you go through time -- So we don't have like umpteen million
18 permits, I guess, and I'm just -- I'm also trying to weigh out the
19 issue of trying to identify a universe.

20
21 Just looking down the road, if this were to pick up speed for other
22 species that we don't have a lot of data on, how seamlessly would
23 we be able to roll those in additional species, is what I'm
24 thinking of, and it's just something to consider at this point.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Yes, and that's a great point. Andy.

27
28 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So, I guess, first, I want to acknowledge Mike,
29 and all the efforts he has put into this. I think, right now,
30 where I'm struggling is I'm still -- I can't see the vision here
31 as to what we're going to gain from this, right, and a lot of smart
32 people around this table who are not experts in data collection,
33 and I know that this has come before GulfFIN and some other, you
34 know, people, and we've talked to Science and Technology.

35
36 A lot of ideas on the table, but not necessarily a lot of ability
37 to act on them, where we feel like there's this clear, fruitful
38 path forward, right, and so what do we know? We know that
39 recreational landings of deepwater species is likely increasing,
40 but still represents a fairly small fraction of the overall
41 harvest, right?

42
43 There's uncertainty, high PSEs, and so I'm just starting to
44 question whether the juice is worth the squeeze at this point,
45 and, you know, I just sat through a GulfFIN committee where we
46 were talking about funding, and we're struggling to have, you know,
47 funding for our most abundant, common species, and now we're
48 talking about adding a new requirement, potentially.

1
2 I say all this because I don't want to dismiss it, but I'm almost
3 thinking like this sets up for like a nice pilot study, a research
4 project, something that someone could actually work toward,
5 without necessarily going down the regulatory front right away.

6
7 Identifying the universe, doing some surveys, collecting data from
8 all of the states who have permit programs, might be a beneficial
9 avenue, just to kind of see what we have in terms of information
10 and data, and then we could take the next steps, and so I offer
11 that as a possible path forward, because I think we still want to
12 try to pursue ways to collect better data for rare-event species.
13 I'm just not convinced we're going to come up with something that's
14 going to be all that helpful, and we may be in the same situation
15 as the Mid-Atlantic, where someone is talking about our program
16 six years from now, and they say, well, what do we do with it?

17
18 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** All right. Dr. Sweetman.

19
20 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I think that's a fair point, Andy. It's
21 just where I struggle -- It's like we can't really do anything. I
22 feel like we're paralyzed to do anything without getting that data,
23 right, and so like that's where I struggle, and so kind of a
24 chicken-and-the-egg kind of scenario here for this, but, yes, I
25 hear you loud and clear on that.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** That was kind of my thought, too. A pilot
28 program is a great idea, but they're going to have the same
29 question we do of, okay, what do we do here, and what is this pilot
30 program? I'm certainly not opposed, but I would just love to hear
31 a great idea on how we're going to do it. Dr. Banks has it. Let's
32 go.

33
34 **DR. BANKS:** So his needs to be a MARFIN priority when it comes
35 out, or when CRP comes out. There you go.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Dr. Allen.

38
39 **DR. ALLEN:** Thank you, and, Andy, I see your point there, and I
40 agree. I mean, the center has got a lot of bigger issues to work
41 on right now, and is in a challenging situation, and so I
42 definitely get that.

43
44 I guess I would advocate that we continue to discuss this, and I
45 do like the idea of a research type project to -- Maybe some kind
46 of a survey approach to look at the extent of the fishery, that
47 kind of thing, prior to a regulatory kind of situation, but we
48 possibly can come back at Full Council, but let's keep talking

1 about it. Lisa, I really appreciate this presentation, and Hannah
2 for spending your time with us. Thank you.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** I wonder if we could -- If it would be possible
5 if we had Emily put something out asking the actual participants
6 their thoughts on potential ideas on how they could self-report
7 their deepwater catch, because, I mean, that's what I'm going to
8 do.

9
10 I'm going to maybe go on the deepwater page on Facebook, to the
11 guys that deep water fish, and say what would be a good way,
12 acceptable way, to help us count fish, and have a better idea of
13 what's happening out there, because there is a lot of support for
14 that among those guys, because I think they acknowledge, you know,
15 the shortcomings of, you know, catch estimating here, and so maybe
16 we could put something out there, and somebody would have a good
17 idea, or an idea that would work good for those people. Mr. Dugas.

18
19 **MR. DUGAS:** Emily's hand is up.

20
21 **MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN:** So I think we would be hard-pressed to do
22 like a survey, right, because the Paperwork Reduction Act prevents
23 us from asking more than ten people the same question without it
24 being associated with a public meeting.

25
26 However, what you're talking about, Ed sounds a little bit like
27 the scoping process, and so there might be a way for us to sort of
28 take this out to scoping, and we don't necessarily have to do that
29 through a series of in-person meetings, but, if we're scoping on
30 it, we can sort of present the idea and gather feedback in the
31 form of public comment.

32
33 We can even probably host some online meetings, if we wanted to do
34 that, and so I think that might be a way to do it, but, as far as
35 just like putting out like a social media poll, which would be the
36 fastest and easiest, we can't do anything like that, and so I
37 think, if we wanted to get feedback from this community, we would
38 have to do it through something more official, like scoping.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN WALKER:** Noted. All right. I'm just throwing ideas out
41 there. I'll think about it some more. Anything else? Seeing
42 none, we will let you off the hook, Dr. Hollensead, and thanks for
43 your hard work on all this, and I'll turn it back over to Chairman
44 Dugas.

45
46 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on June 1, 2026.)

47
48 - - -