

GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

DATA COLLECTION COMMITTEE

Beau Rivage Resort & Casino

Biloxi, Mississippi

October 26, 2022

VOTING MEMBERS

10 Susan Boggs.....Alabama
 11 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
 12 Jonathan Dugas.....Louisiana
 13 Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
 14 Bob Gill.....Florida
 15 Michael McDermott.....Mississippi
 16 Chris Schieble (designee for Patrick Banks).....Louisiana
 17 Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS
 18 Greg Stunz.....Texas
 19 C.J. Sweetman (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida
 20 Troy Williamson.....Texas

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 24 Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
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 37 Ava Lasseter.....Anthropologist
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 43 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
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OTHER PARTICIPANTS

48 Gregg Bray.....GSMFC
 49 Myra Brouwer.....SAFMC

1 Chester Brewer.....SAFMC
2 Michelle Masi.....NOAA
3 Ed Walker.....GMFMC RF AP
4 John Walter.....SEFSC

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PAGE 17: Motion to make Option 4 the preferred. Option 4 is require federally-permitted for-hire vessel owners and/or operators to submit a trip declaration for trips that will be engaging in any type of fishing or chartered activity. The motion carried on page 18.

- - -

1 The Data Collection Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
2 Management Council convened at the Beau Rivage Resort and
3 Casino, Biloxi, Mississippi on Wednesday morning, October 26,
4 2022, and was called to order by Chairman Susan Boggs.

5
6 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**
7 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
8 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**
9

10 **CHAIRMAN SUSAN BOGGS:** I would like to call the Data Collection
11 Committee to order. The members of this committee are myself,
12 Susan Boggs, as Chair, and Dr. Greg Stunz is Vice Chair. Chris
13 Schieble, Dave Donaldson, J.D. Dugas, Bob Gill, Dr. C.J.
14 Sweetman, Mr. McDermott, Mr. Geeslin, Mr. Strelcheck, and Mr.
15 Troy Williamson. With that, I would like to get a motion to
16 adopt the agenda.

17
18 **MR. BOB GILL:** So moved, Madam Chair.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Is there a second?

21
22 **DR. C.J. SWEETMAN:** Second.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you. Okay, and the next item on our
25 agenda is the Approval of the August 2022 Minutes. Are there
26 any additions or changes that need to be made to that? Seeing
27 none, may I get a motion to approve those minutes?

28
29 **MR. DAVE DONALDSON:** So moved.

30
31 **MR. GILL:** Second.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you. All right, and so the next item on
34 our agenda is the Action Guide and Next Steps that, Dr.
35 Hollensead, I think we're going to just jump right into our next
36 item, correct?

37
38 **DR. LISA HOLLENSEAD:** Yes, Madam Chair. We're going to have
39 Carly go through the action guide and then jump right into that
40 agenda item.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** All right. Thank you so much. Ms. Somerset.

43
44 **ABBREVIATED FRAMEWORK ACTION TO MODIFY FOR-HIRE TRIP DECLARATION**
45 **REQUIREMENTS**
46

47 **MS. CARLY SOMERSET:** Yes, ma'am. Thank you. To start off this
48 morning, we'll be discussing the abbreviated framework action to

1 modify for-hire trip declaration requirements, and so you all
2 have seen this at the last two meetings, I believe, and,
3 essentially, this relates to the SEFHIER program. Participants
4 have described the hail-out provision as burdensome, and so we
5 have looked at modifying these trip declarations, and so, to
6 start off with, I believe that Dr. Masi will be giving a
7 presentation outlining the rationale for two administrative
8 changes that will be going along with this document, and so, if
9 she is available, I will let her take it from here.

10

11 **DR. MICHELLE MASI:** Hello, and good morning, everyone. The
12 first administrative change would be to allow one declaration
13 for dual commercial reef fish and for-hire federally-permitted
14 vessels. Before I jump into this, I just want to note that I
15 have a bit of a lag in when these slides actually come up on my
16 screen, and so, if you hear me pause for a long time, it's
17 because I'm not seeing what you're seeing, probably.

18

19 The concern with the concern regulation, that we have actually
20 heard from the industry as well, is that dually-permitted
21 vessels must submit a declaration to each sector for every trip.
22 Now, the problem is that they have different submission pathways
23 between the sectors, and these are defined in the regulations,
24 and so for-hire and commercial can use VMS forms, but only for-
25 hire can use software applications, like VESL and eTRIPS. Then,
26 for commercial only, they have use of the IVR phone line.

27

28 Also, the declaration fields, the information that gets
29 collected, differ between the sectors, and, for example, the
30 commercial declarations have extra fields, like gear and
31 species, and they don't have pre-landing information, and the
32 for-hire declarations ask things like the trip start, date and
33 time, the end date and time, and also the landing location.

34

35 The administrative regulation modification would be to modify
36 the data pathway, in order to allow one declaration to serve as
37 notification for both sectors. In order for this to apply, a
38 vessel must have both a federal commercial reef fish and at
39 least one of the four Gulf for-hire permits. They also must
40 have a VMS unit that gets approved in both sectors, and they
41 will need to declare, using a VMS declaration form that gets
42 transmitted through the VMS system. This means that vessels in
43 the Southeast Regional Headboat Survey would be excluded,
44 considering they have the vessel software requirement for that
45 survey.

46

47 Also, they would need to use the VMS declaration form that's
48 associated with the sector that they're operating in, and so,

1 for a commercial trip, the dual-permitted would need to use the
2 commercial VMS declaration. For a for-hire trip, they would use
3 the for-hire VMS declaration form, and then, if they were on an
4 out-of-fishery trip, for example getting gas, they would need to
5 use the commercial VMS declaration form.

6
7 The second administrative change would be to require a
8 declaration submission timeframe. The concern with the current
9 regulation is that SEFHIER relies on an automated compliance
10 algorithm, in order to match a vessel's logbook to the
11 declaration, and that matching gets based on the trip start date
12 and time between the declaration and the logbook. Now,
13 declarations can, and are, being submitted months in advance of
14 an actual trip start, and this means that there is increased
15 possibility of the trip start times being different between the
16 forms, and so, for example, on the date of a trip, a trip can
17 start late, due to weather or customers running late.

18
19 This creates a burden, both administratively and for the
20 industry, and so, when the algorithm doesn't find a match,
21 SEFHIER staff have to call the fishermen, in order to get the
22 correct times, so that the staff can then manually override the
23 vessel's compliance status, and, for fishermen, they may have to
24 go months into their records, when we call them, in order to
25 determine what the correct start time should have been, and,
26 also, when they're out of compliance, they can't renew or
27 transfer their permits.

28
29 Then, for OLE, they actually aren't getting timely information
30 about trips, when declaration emails go out to them days, or
31 months, in advance of the trip start.

32
33 The administrative regulation modification would be to require a
34 trip declaration submission window, which would be no more than
35 twenty-four hours in advance of the trip start. We expect there
36 to be minimal impact on the industry, since, looking at the 2022
37 SEFHIER declaration data, it showed that less than 2 percent of
38 our declarations were submitted more than twenty-four hours in
39 advance of a trip start, and, in fact, 85 percent of them were
40 submitted within one hour, and, of course, the benefits would be
41 decreased administrative burden and increased efficiency for
42 permit renewal for our fishermen.

43
44 The additional background information is just there, if anybody
45 wanted to look into the differences between the fields among the
46 forms, and so I'm going to stop there and open the floor to
47 questions.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Are there questions for Dr. Masi at this time?
2 Okay. Anything else, Dr. Masi?
3
4 **DR. MASI:** I don't have anything else. Thank you so much.
5
6 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** All right. Ms. Somerset.
7
8 **MS. SOMERSET:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and so I will just make a
9 note here, since we saw those two administrative changes, and,
10 if they want to add anything, or Mara, that these will be --
11 These will not be in the document, as discussion, but they will
12 be tied to the document, and so, as this document moves forward,
13 these would just be administrative changes that we wanted
14 everyone to know about, and so we just wanted to let you all
15 know.
16
17 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Mara.
18
19 **MS. MARA LEVY:** Right. Well, I just want to make clear that
20 they would be in the rulemaking, and so they'll be in the
21 proposed rule, and so folks will have a chance to comment on
22 them, but they just won't be incorporated into your framework
23 action, because the agency is making these administrative
24 changes under their authority to implement this plan.
25
26 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you, Ms. Levy. Ms. Somerset.
27
28 **MS. SOMERSET:** Thank you, and so, since Bernie has the action
29 guide up, I will just move back to this for a minute, and so now
30 we're going to go into the discussion of the abbreviated
31 framework action, and so I will just clarify the purpose of the
32 document.
33
34 There have been a few changes since you all saw it last, and so
35 it has been revised. I will go through the revisions, and not
36 what you saw at the last meeting, but what has been added to it,
37 and so just review the -- We'll review the document. If you
38 have any questions or recommendations, then I will be happy to
39 take those, after I finish going through the document.
40
41 All right, and so I will just reiterate the purpose and need,
42 and it has changed a little, and so the purpose is to reduce the
43 number of trip declarations required to be submitted by Gulf
44 reef fish and CMP-permitted for-hire vessels while conducting
45 on-the-water activities, and, while doing that, we still want to
46 maintain the data integrity of the reporting program.
47
48 The need is to reduce the burden, and we've had discussions on

1 this at the last few meetings, the change here is, you know,
2 submitting trip declarations outside of fishing or charter trip
3 activities, and so we modified this just a little to include the
4 charter trip activity, because the new option that has been put
5 in since the last meeting specifies trip declarations for
6 fishing and charter activity, and so I just wanted to note that.

7
8 You've already seen the first three options, and these are
9 exemptions from the trip declaration requirement that would
10 apply to non-fishing trips that are completed in a certain
11 timeframe, and so Option 1 is sixty minutes or less, Option 2 is
12 ninety minutes or less, and Option 3 is 120 minutes or less, and
13 so that should all be familiar to you, as it was on the last
14 draft of this document.

15
16 At the last meeting, a motion was made to add an Option 4, and
17 that would require federally-permitted for-hire vessel owners
18 and/or operators to submit a trip declaration for trips that
19 will be engaging in any type of fishing or chartered activity,
20 and so just some discussion here, before I open it up, and,
21 essentially, the difference in Option 4 from the other three
22 options is it specifies charter activity, and so that would
23 include dolphin cruises, sunset cruises, as well as fishing
24 activity.

25
26 There's a table in the document that I will rework, and I
27 apologize, but, essentially, it has the difference between
28 fishing activity and non-fishing activity, and so dolphin and
29 sunset cruises are non-fishing activity, but, in Option 4, they
30 would require a trip declaration, because there are paying
31 passengers onboard.

32
33 All fishing activity would still require a trip declaration as
34 well, and so, for example, if you are going out to catch bait,
35 and you do not have any clients onboard, that would require a
36 trip declaration, because you're fishing for bait, and it's
37 fishing activity. If you have paying passengers onboard that
38 are going on a sunset cruise, they're not fishing, and so it's
39 not a fishing activity, right, but there are paying passengers,
40 and it's considered charter activity, and so that would require
41 a trip declaration.

42
43 Option 4, there is no time limit on non-fishing activity, and so
44 you would not have to do a trip declaration for non-fishing
45 activity, and you could take as long as you needed. Options 1
46 through 3 still have that time limit in place, and so I believe,
47 at the last meeting, we had an example of, if you're going to
48 get fuel, and let's say that the option is the sixty minutes,

1 and so you leave your slip, and you travel to the fuel dock.
2 From dock-to-dock, you have sixty minutes to make that trip, and
3 you don't have to make the declaration.

4
5 You get to the fuel dock, and you fuel up, and you take as long
6 as you need. Once you start moving from the fuel dock back to
7 your slip, you have a sixty-minute window that would not require
8 a trip declaration, because that's non-fishing activity, and so
9 I'm just trying to provide examples for the difference between
10 Option 3 and the new Option 4 that was added, but that's
11 essentially what we've added since the last meeting, and I will
12 open it up to any questions that you may have, or discussion as
13 to how you would like to see this document progress.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Okay. Does anyone have any questions for Mr.
16 Somerset? Mr. Dugas.

17
18 **MR. J.D. DUGAS:** Thank you, Chair. Carly, just some
19 clarification, and so we, or the agency, wants to know when a
20 charter boat leaves the dock to go on a sunset cruise or to go
21 look at dolphins in the pass, and am I understanding that
22 correctly?

23
24 **MS. SOMERSET:** Yes, sir, and I can -- Quickly, paying passengers
25 onboard, there's socioeconomic data associated with that, and so
26 I believe that data is needed by SERO, and they would like to
27 have it for some analyses, and so charter activity is something
28 that they would like a trip declaration, but I don't know if
29 Andy has something to add.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

32
33 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** I would say less so information on
34 socioeconomic data with regard to those trips, but the key issue
35 is those trips would be very difficult to distinguish from a
36 fishing trip, especially if they're of a similar duration, and
37 so, you know, the key for us is validating the trip occurred and
38 that there's a logbook that's been correspondingly submitted,
39 and so that is the reason why we would want to have that
40 information for those trips that are at least moving into the
41 offshore, regardless of whether they're fishing or not.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Any other questions? Ms. Somerset, in Table
44 1.1.1, where you describe fishing trip and non-fishing trip, and
45 I believe you started that you were going to rework this table,
46 and the confusion, to me, was you describe here a non-fishing
47 trip that would not probably require a declaration, but you also
48 list, in that column, dolphin or sunset cruise, but, in the

1 document, in Option 4, it states that you would capture that.

2
3 It specifies that trip declarations would be required for
4 vessels engaging in charter activities, such as sunset or
5 dolphin cruises, and so that's a little confusing, and we can
6 maybe work through that. Any other questions or discussions on
7 this document? Ms. Somerset.

8
9 **MS. SOMERSET:** If there's no other questions, we do have the
10 Reef Fish AP recommendations, as well as the LETC had -- They
11 discussed it, and I can go into both of those, if there's
12 nothing else right now on the document.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Go ahead and review those recommendations,
15 please, ma'am.

16
17 **MS. SOMERSET:** All right, and so we'll start with the Reef Fish
18 AP recommendations, or, actually, I see Captain Walker, and I
19 don't mean to put you on the spot, if you would like to go
20 through them.

21
22 **MR. ED WALKER:** Was there more than one that we passed? You
23 said "them", and I was like, uh-oh, and I only know of one. I
24 will tell you that, among the charter boat guys on the AP that
25 discussed this, they're very frustrated, and they are
26 unsatisfied with all the options, and they expressed
27 exasperation at trying to get more consideration from NMFS for
28 their problems and burdensome hail-out requirements. They
29 passed what is the most lenient of these, somewhat reluctantly,
30 and they said we'll take it, and nobody was real happy about it,
31 and that was the mood in the room.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

34
35 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Ed, based on your statement, in terms of the
36 reluctance to even pass this, what do they want? I mean, this,
37 to me, is about as liberal as it gets, unless we drop the
38 charter activity, the non-fishing activity.

39
40 **MR. WALKER:** I think it would be a little difficult for me to
41 say what all the AP guys would like. I think, if you could put
42 the options back up there, like pulling your pinfish traps
43 counts as a thing, and the non-fishing trips, the list of what's
44 considered a non-fishing trip and a fishing trip.

45
46 I don't know, and I don't want to misrepresent each individual's
47 statements up here, but just a general -- The guys are saying
48 they would just like to go to the dock and pick up their clients

1 and go fishing. The dual-permitted guys, and guys with multiple
2 hail-out requirements, are still looking for a little more
3 ironing-out of the requirements of them, but, without going
4 person-by-person, I think that's about the most general thing I
5 can say.

6

7 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Mr. Dugas.

8

9 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Chair. Mr. Walker, maybe I can help you
10 a little bit. The frustration that I see is cast netting for
11 bait, which the agency sees that as fishing activity, and
12 dolphin, or sunset, cruises, in my book, is not fishing
13 activity, and, in Louisiana, and, you know, maybe our charter
14 fleet is different from other areas, but we don't engage in
15 dolphin and sunset cruises. Maybe you all do in Florida, in
16 southwest Florida, and that's my question, is, you know, is the
17 charter fleet, even in the Panhandle, or Alabama, engaging in
18 these other activities?

19

20 **MR. WALKER:** Oh, yes. Yes, there's definitely -- Now, actually,
21 there are some charter, fishing charter boat, guys that do trips
22 in sandbars and stuff, and that's become kind of a big thing
23 now, actually, and they will -- You can sometimes get the same
24 fee for the day, for taking four people to drink at the beach
25 around the corner, and I don't know anybody that charter fishes
26 and does dolphin cruises, that has spent money on a federal
27 fishing permit, but there might be a couple.

28

29 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Well, and I might add to what you're saying,
30 J.D., or comment on what you just stated. For instance, in
31 Alabama -- Well, one of our boats, for example, we do different
32 types of trips that we actually go -- I can see this being a
33 concern, and we go out into the Gulf, and we're maybe gone three
34 or four hours, and we're not fishing, and we're doing a sunset
35 cruise, a booze cruise, whatever, and so I can see where, if you
36 see a charter boat such as ours -- Now, out of Louisiana, if
37 you've got the little center consoles, I'm sure it's a lot
38 different.

39

40 I can understand the agency, especially law enforcement, and, if
41 they see the Reel Surprise in the Gulf, they're going to assume
42 that they're fishing, and so that hail-out, in my opinion, is
43 very important, because they know that, no, we're not engaging
44 in fishing.

45

46 I will add, and, Ed, correct me if I'm wrong, because our -- We
47 use the VESL app for the headboats, and I think it's a little
48 bit different from what you all use from VESL and eTRIPS for the

1 charter boats, but it's only like four buttons, and it takes
2 literally less than half-a-minute to do, and so, to me, it's not
3 that burdensome, and I don't know if it's different for the
4 eTRIPS and VESL for the charter/for-hire, if you could expand on
5 that, Ed.

6
7 **MR. WALKER:** I would love to expand on that. I am a dual-
8 permitted boat myself, and so I have the old VMS system in it,
9 and I can time it, but, the way I have it set up, it's
10 significantly longer than that, and I leave my house, from my
11 dock, to pick my clients up around the corner, about a mile-and-
12 a-half away, and so this, I suppose, may help with that, right,
13 as written, but, as it is now, I have to do the whole thing to
14 the dock, or if I go to the fish house and get ice, and I have
15 to do one there, and then I take my people fishing, and I get
16 home and do another one, and then I'm pretty sure that, from the
17 dock to my house, I have to do another one.

18
19 That's not to mention, and I don't even remember it, but you
20 still have to do a commercial that day as well, or let them know
21 you're on a non-fishing trip commercially, or if that
22 automatically -- It's hard to keep it all straight, and I have
23 South Atlantic permits too, and I'm also required to report that
24 stuff, almost daily, and so what was your original question?

25
26 I don't know the eTRIPS that you have, and I'm not familiar with
27 that one. Mine is old CLS VMS, and it's significant. If I had
28 to guess, I would say it takes me ten minutes, each time I do
29 it.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** So you've answered my question, but, based on
32 what you just said, most of that will go away with this
33 document, especially Option 4, and the only time you would have
34 to complete that hail-out is when you pick those customers up,
35 when you leave to go fish. Those other hail-out options,
36 requirements, would go away.

37
38 **MR. WALKER:** I don't think that it takes care of all of them.
39 It takes care of some. I would have to think about which ones
40 it does and which ones it doesn't, but this one didn't really
41 solve all the problems, and, you know, I can certainly put
42 together a group of charter boat guys that would love to discuss
43 this, for anybody that had any interest in that, because there's
44 -- I can tell you that, industry-wide, they're frustrated, and
45 they're losing support for the system. Even some of its most
46 ardent early supporters are questioning their early support.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Well, we have public testimony this afternoon,

1 and so I would encourage you to ask them to come to the podium
2 and give us their ten-cents' worth, or two-cents', maybe, since
3 it's only three minutes.

4
5 **MR. WALKER:** I think you just did, but I will spread the word.
6 Maybe we'll have some interesting input there.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Well, and I think the agency is really trying
9 to work with the charter fleet, through this, to make it as
10 painless, or not as cumbersome, as it has been, and, as I've
11 said in the past, I mean, it's a lot of give-and-take. You want
12 things, and they want things, and we've got to find a happy
13 medium, and, you know, I applaud the agency for this Option 4,
14 because I do feel like it's pretty lenient, and so any other
15 questions for Captain Walker? Mr. Dugas.

16
17 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Chair. Not for Captain Walker, but maybe
18 for Carly. For a dolphin or a sunset cruise, what if it's a
19 non-paying sunset or dolphin cruise? What if it's free? What
20 if you're just taking your buddies to look at the dolphins?

21
22 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

23
24 **MR. STRELCHECK:** All right, and so I'm going to express some
25 frustration here, and I think this is part of the problem. I
26 appreciate our Chair's comments, and the agency is trying to
27 make this more flexible and lenient, and we recognize there is
28 frustration from the industry, but we can't play the what-if
29 game and try to solve every single charter captain's problem
30 throughout the Gulf of Mexico.

31
32 Everyone runs their different business slightly differently, and
33 I'm concerned that we're trying to accommodate every single
34 charter permit holder in this fishery, and, to me, that's a
35 challenge, and a problem, and not everyone is going to be happy
36 with the regulations, but this is a lot more liberal than what
37 we have in place currently, and I think the concern I have is,
38 if we don't maintain some balance between the priorities of the
39 program, which is to maintain the integrity of the data
40 collection, then we're going to undermine the program at the
41 expense of accommodating all of these requests and more liberal
42 regulations that ultimately will undermine the quality of the
43 data and what we're trying to accomplish, in terms of data
44 improvement, with the for-hire sector.

45
46 **MR. WALKER:** If I can speak here as myself here in response.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Go ahead, Captain Walker.

1
2 **MR. WALKER:** That is not -- This is some of the issues, and I
3 believe, early on, when this program started, it was kind of
4 sold as we're going to measure effort and catch, right, and that
5 was the primary thing.

6
7 We're going to report our catch and be more accountable, and
8 maybe get more fish, because we document our catch, and at least
9 I was not aware that I was going to have all these economic
10 requirements, like how much did I charge that day, you know, how
11 much was gas that day, and this and that and the other thing,
12 and I had this conversation earlier, but I think we should --
13 There needs to be -- I understand, and you can see we need data,
14 and all data is good, right, but you could ask, you know, what
15 kind of sandwiches the guys are eating on Saturday, or whatever,
16 and, at some point, from my perspective, you have to have a cap
17 on how much data you collect.

18
19 Data collection is good, but I'm a guy that just wants to take
20 some people fishing, right, and I'm not a data collection
21 assistant for the National Marine Fisheries Service. I am happy
22 to give you what you need, but I feel like we've exceeded that,
23 that I have met that requirement, and some of this other stuff --
24 -- I just think you guys need to hear that we don't want any more
25 data collection stacked on top of us, and that's my personal
26 opinion.

27
28 I know that you guys are working, and I think you could work
29 harder with the industry to iron this out, and this is
30 something, and it's helpful, but I think it would be good to sit
31 down and say, you know, it just feels like we've run into some
32 roadblocks, and we say, look, we've got these big problems here,
33 and it's really burdensome on, you know, a fair amount of the
34 guys, and we're not really getting, you know, let's work this
35 out and see if we can meet in the middle and find what works for
36 both of us, and I will just leave it there.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Okay. Mr. Strelcheck.

39
40 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks for those comments, Ed, and I'm sorry
41 you feel that way, because I feel like we have been working
42 broadly with the industry, and this is a new program, and
43 there's a substantial amount of change that's been happening
44 with the program to improve it over time.

45
46 I think part of the challenge is we have a very diverse charter
47 fleet, right, and what you view as us working with you or not,
48 versus what Susan and versus another charter captain, you know,

1 in another area of the Gulf might be very different, and, you
2 know, we've talked to a tremendous amount of captains, and we
3 recognize that there is support for this program in certain
4 areas, and there is also opposition to the program.

5
6 I do want to be careful, in terms of, you know, painting this as
7 this is the Fisheries Service versus, you know, the industry,
8 because the council has a role to play in this, right, and they
9 adopted this logbook program, and we're trying to, obviously,
10 build the program and capacity to meet some of the many goals
11 that you just mentioned in talking, but we need, obviously, the
12 support and buy-in from the industry as well, and I recognize
13 that's an important component to this, and so thanks for your
14 comments.

15
16 **MR. WALKER:** Well, I don't think it's gotten to the --

17
18 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Captain Walker, just a moment. Ms. Levy.
19 Captain Walker, go ahead.

20
21 **MR. WALKER:** I don't think it's NMFS versus the charter boat
22 guys, completely, but I think it's gone more that way than in
23 the positive, recently.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you, Captain Walker. Ms. Levy.

26
27 **MS. MARA LEVY:** Thanks. I just wanted to answer the question
28 about non-paying dolphin or sunset cruise, right, and so those
29 aren't charter trips. You have to have passengers for-hire for
30 it to be a charter fishing trip, or a charter any type of trip.
31 If there are no passengers for-hire, no paying passengers, no
32 quid-pro-quo for the trip, and it's just your friends or your
33 family, that doesn't fall under any of this, and so I don't want
34 there to be any confusion about that.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Okay. Ms. Somerset.

37
38 **MS. SOMERSET:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just had one other
39 statement that I wanted to read, for context, from the LETC, if
40 that's okay. Thank you, Captain Walker. I put you on the spot,
41 and I'm sorry, this morning.

42
43 I just wanted to add that, at the LETC, they discussed this
44 abbreviated framework action, and there was discussion that a
45 trip is defined as any time the boat leave the dock. The
46 council may modify how a trip is defined, to allow for movement
47 of the vessel not related to fishing activity, and the committee
48 felt that it was sufficient to declare a trip when setting out

1 fishing only, and the committee was not concerned about inshore
2 vessel activity, and there was a consensus statement that I will
3 read.

4
5 The committee supported Option 4, which is declaring any fishing
6 or charter activity only, and does not share the concerns stated
7 in the document, as it currently, that the option would make law
8 enforcement more difficult. I will add that Matt Walia is in
9 the audience, and he's on the IPT for this, as well as Duane
10 Smith, who was involved in this discussion at the LETC.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you for those comments, Ms. Somerset, and
13 just to wrap up, and thank you, Mara, for that, because, J.D.,
14 if you read this, Option 4 is -- This option would eliminate
15 trip declarations for for-hire vessel owners and/or operators on
16 federal for-hire vessels with Gulf reef fish or CMP charter
17 vessel/headboat permits, except when on trips engaging in
18 fishing or chartered activity, and so, as Mara just stated,
19 chartered activity is if you're being paid, and so, if it's you
20 and your family going on a dolphin cruise, or a sunset cruise,
21 that is not a requirement. Am I correct, Mara?

22
23 **MS. LEVY:** Right. Paying passengers onboard -- I am going to
24 kind of caveat with that doesn't necessarily mean money, and it
25 depends on the circumstances, right, and it can't be a
26 requirement to provide something for the trip, but, as long as
27 it's not a charter trip, then this would not require a
28 declaration.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Okay. Any more questions? All right. Where
31 are we on our -- Ms. Somerset, is there anything else for you on
32 this action?

33
34 **MS. SOMERSET:** If the council would like to select a preferred
35 alternative, that is an option, and I know there is some -- This
36 is an abbreviated framework action, and so the additional
37 chapters have both the description and an analysis, the economic
38 analysis, but you can select a preferred, if you would like.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Mr. Dugas.

41
42 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Chair. **I would like to make a motion to**
43 **select Option 4 as the preferred.**

44
45 **MR. GILL:** Second.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Okay. We'll let Bernie get the motion on the
48 board. Okay. **We have a motion on the board, which is to make**

1 **Option 4 the preferred.** Do I need to read the whole option into
2 the record, ma'am? Okay. **Option 4 is to require federally-**
3 **permitted for-hire vessel owners and/or operators to submit a**
4 **trip declaration for trips that will be engaging in any type of**
5 **fishing or chartered activity.** Any discussion on this motion?
6 **IS there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, the motion**
7 **passes.** Mr. Dugas.

8
9 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Chair. A question, maybe for Carly or
10 Carrie, and when does the AP meet again? Maybe Ed can come back
11 with more ideas to add to this document, and I don't know what
12 the timeline is.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Dr. Simmons.

15
16 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and
17 so I think the intent is for us to go final on this pretty
18 quickly, and this is an administrative action, and try to get it
19 in place as soon as we can, is my understanding, and so bring
20 this back for final action in January or April.

21
22 Regarding the AP, we're going to look at maybe setting a more --
23 I guess a better schedule for some of the AP meetings, and so,
24 typically, the Reef Fish AP meets early in the year and then
25 later in the year, but we want to look at maybe a more strategic
26 plan for setting our AP meetings up in the future. Thanks.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Anything else on this item? All right. Ms.
29 Somerset, thank you. Next, we'll go to Agenda Item Number V,
30 Review of the South Atlantic Council Workgroup Discussions on
31 Federal Private Angling Reef Fish Permits, and I believe we have
32 Mr. John Carmichael and Mr. Ryan Rindone.

33
34 **REVIEW OF THE SOUTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL WORKGROUP DISCUSSIONS ON**
35 **FEDERAL PRIVATE ANGLING REEF FISH PERMITS**
36

37 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Ms. Myra Brouwer, Deputy Director for the
38 South Atlantic Council, will be doing this for Mr. Carmichael,
39 and Mr. Chester Brewer also knows quite a bit about this topic,
40 and so he can help out as well.

41
42 The committee will review discussions from the South Atlantic
43 Council workgroup that investigated the feasibility of a private
44 recreational -- A federal private recreational fishing permit
45 for harvesting species in the Snapper Grouper FMP in the South
46 Atlantic, and the intention of the proposed permit is to better
47 define the universe of fishing effort within the region, which
48 stakeholders contend is overestimated by MRIP's FES survey.

1
2 Identifying this universe of anglers will also aid in other
3 aspects of fishery management, especially if paired with
4 reporting mechanisms for private recreational fishing trips.

5
6 The South Atlantic Council has a couple of different mobile
7 applications that they've worked on in the past, and some that
8 they're still developing, that could help augment this effort.
9 The committee should review the information presented and ask
10 questions, as appropriate, and you guys will get a presentation,
11 during Full Council, from the Joint Council Workgroup on Section
12 102 for the Modern Fish Act, which included a motion from that
13 joint workgroup, which is comprised of council members from the
14 Gulf and South Atlantic Councils, on this topic specifically,
15 and so, Myra, are you on?

16
17 **MS. MYRA BROUWER:** Good morning, everybody. I am on. Can you
18 hear me okay?

19
20 **MR. RINDONE:** Good morning.

21
22 **MS. BROUWER:** Hi. Good morning. This is Myra, and I'm Deputy
23 Director for Management for the council. John Carmichael would
24 have been the one giving you this very quick update, but he
25 wasn't able to join us this morning, and so what I'm going to do
26 is just very quickly go through the attachment that's in your
27 briefing book, to give you sort of an idea of what the South
28 Atlantic Council has been thinking about for this past year,
29 2021, and how we went about getting some recommendations for how
30 to move forward with a permit for the private recreational
31 component for the snapper grouper fishery.

32
33 This workgroup met four times, mostly during 2021, and it was
34 composed of several council members, as you can see on your
35 screen, folks from MRIP, the Southeast Fisheries Science Center,
36 the Regional Office, ACCSP, and then the state representatives
37 who deal with the state data.

38
39 We convened this group, and we had several asks of them. We
40 provided a lot of presentations, kind of background sort of
41 things, for how similar programs have been handled in other
42 regions and in other parts of the Fisheries Service, such as the
43 HMS, and we looked at how MRIP has handled other surveys that
44 could serve kind of as models for something that might work for
45 our snapper grouper fishery.

46
47 As I said, there were several meetings, and the last one --
48 Actually, that should say February 9, 2022, and the workgroup

1 convened to develop their final recommendations for the council
2 to consider at their March meeting last year.

3
4 With all the information that was presented and the discussions
5 they had, they had several recommendations. The very first one
6 was to go ahead and begin developing a federal permit for the
7 snapper grouper recreational fishery. They were cognizant that
8 a permit is not necessarily going to fix any of the data issues
9 that have prompted the council to be looking at this, and mind
10 you that this has been something that's been ongoing for many
11 years.

12
13 The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel has made this recommendation
14 numerous times during their meetings, and so this has sort of
15 been on the council's to-do list, so to speak, for quite a
16 while.

17
18 The idea, as Ryan mentioned, or the purpose, mainly would be to
19 identify the universe of private anglers who target snapper
20 grouper species in the South Atlantic region, first and
21 foremost, and, because it is a federal fishery, it's considered
22 that a federal permit is the most appropriate way to do that.

23
24 The workgroup discussed how this could be implemented, and how
25 it could be developed, and should it be for individual anglers,
26 or should it be for vessels, and the council is working on an
27 amendment, eventually, that's going to consider all these
28 various options.

29
30 The second recommendation was to develop a data collection
31 program to go with the permit, to really get more information
32 about that universe of anglers provided by that permit, and then
33 start to make improvements to the data collection that, ideally,
34 eventually will be -- You know, provide better catch and effort
35 estimates for the recreational component.

36
37 The workgroup, of course, was cognizant that resources are going
38 to be a factor, and so this is going to require pretty close
39 cooperation with other agencies, and, to do that, the council --
40 It was recommended that the council create a snapper grouper
41 technical advisory panel, and so we went ahead and did that this
42 past year, and that group has met, I believe, twice, and they're
43 getting ready to meet again next month, I believe, and so the
44 idea is to have these folks help staff come up with the
45 technical aspects of putting such a system in place and to guide
46 any pilot studies that would likely be necessary to support
47 existing surveys and provide their expertise in other aspects,
48 such as calibration between the current data collection efforts

1 and any changes that would result from the council moving
2 forward with this.

3
4 At the bottom of your brief summary here, there were other
5 recommendations and considerations, kind of, you know -- How do
6 I say it? Not really warnings, but, you know, establish
7 realistic expectations, and, obviously, that's a very important
8 thing that we need to keep in mind, is how to manage
9 expectations, especially among fishermen. They are, you know,
10 very eager to see something happen, and this keeps coming up
11 during advisory panel meetings, and it came up last week again,
12 when our advisory panel met, and so there's a lot of momentum
13 there to try to get this off the ground.

14
15 Our council is going to be looking at an options paper, at their
16 upcoming December meeting, and it's going to be part of
17 Amendment 46 to the Snapper Grouper FMP, and so that's when
18 we're going to start sort of fleshing out the structure for this
19 system, and so we have a good bit of work to do, but we do have
20 a really good group of folks helping us out. With that, I guess
21 I would take whatever questions you all have, and certainly
22 Chester is in there to elaborate on anything that you guys might
23 want to discuss further. Thank you.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you, Ms. Brouwer. Chester, do you have
26 anything to add?

27
28 **MR. BREWER:** I might just want to do a little -- I'm going to
29 say purpose and need, because this is something that has been
30 kicked around, in the South Atlantic Council, for really years
31 now, and the importance of this exercise is, right now, except
32 for the State of Florida, and we're talking the South Atlantic
33 here, we don't really know, and you see the word "universe" come
34 up in these discussions all the time.

35
36 We don't know what the universe of people is that's out there
37 fishing, particularly for deepwater snapper grouper, and so we
38 need, if at all possible, to see how many people are actually
39 out there doing it. We know how many people have saltwater
40 licenses, but we don't know -- There is no differentiation
41 between, you know, fishing in an estuary or fishing in, you
42 know, 600 feet of water.

43
44 One of the things that you see happening is the scientists are
45 forced to extrapolate the data, and it's not perfect, and
46 certainly it's not perfect, because, again, you do not know how
47 many people are actually out there doing it, and so that's what
48 got this effort started, and it was started years ago.

1
2 The workgroup that was put together, which really worked very,
3 very hard, and it's going to come up in Full Council, I believe,
4 was pretty strongly in favor of this, and very strongly in
5 favor, and, right now, the State of Florida has a program that
6 would yield a lot of the information that's necessary, but we
7 don't have it in the other three states.

8
9 I don't want to get too much into what the workgroup came up
10 with, because, again, you're going to have a presentation on
11 that, but, at least to me, it is necessary, and it's stated
12 here, that the permitting be standardized, for all of the
13 states, and, to do that, it becomes a federal program. They're
14 fishing in federal waters, and so I am hoping that a system,
15 similar to what's done in Florida, can be enacted for all four
16 of our states.

17
18 In Florida, it is a no-cost permit, stamp, whatever you want to
19 call it, and you go online, and it takes you about three
20 minutes, and you're done. You get a confirmation number, and
21 you're done, and it's very, very simple, and it gives you an
22 idea of who is doing what.

23
24 It's not as refined as perhaps it would need to be towards
25 directing -- Or directing towards deepwater snapper grouper, but
26 it's going to be a lot of work, to get it all coordinated,
27 because you've got different states that are involved, and some
28 states -- You know, you're going to have different governmental
29 requirements, legislative requirements, and certainly, if you go
30 the route where it's administered by the states, you're going to
31 have that, and so it is a work in process, and it is going to be
32 difficult, but I think, at least to me anyway, and I have felt
33 this way for years, it's something that is very, very important
34 to get done.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you, Mr. Brewer. In the State of
37 Florida, and Mr. Brewer or Dr. Sweetman, either one, and is that
38 an annual renewal, or is it a lifetime thing?

39
40 **MR. BREWER:** It's annual. You get -- I could be wrong, and
41 maybe it would do like a five-year, but I don't think so. Every
42 time I've done it, it was annual, and I would think that you
43 would want it to be annual, because it's -- Again, in the State
44 of Florida, I mean, you can go on the website, and you're done
45 in a matter of minutes, and you've got your permit, and you're
46 legal, and you're good to go.

47
48 Then you've got -- When the sampling takes place, the samplers

1 have got this universe. They're not calling people out of the
2 blue, just because they live along the coast, and they're
3 calling the folks that have been out there, or the folks that do
4 go out there, and fish for these species.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you, and that's why I asked. Dr.
7 Sweetman, I will recognize you in just a moment, but it would
8 make no sense if it wasn't an annual basis, because your
9 universe is going to change annually. Dr. Sweetman.

10
11 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Chester is correct that
12 it is an annual no-cost exemption for the State Reef Fish Survey
13 permit.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you. Any other questions on the South
16 Atlantic? Yes, sir, Mr. Gill.

17
18 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Myra, for that
19 update and presentation, and I'm delighted to see you all taking
20 the lead on a long-needed program. As I understood your final
21 comments, it sounds like Amendment 46 will address the
22 structural component of the how, but does the workgroup intend
23 to address the funding portion of the how?

24
25 **MS. BROUWER:** Thanks for that question, Bob. That's a tough
26 one, and I don't want to venture an answer without -- You know,
27 the workgroup has mainly assisted us with the technical aspects,
28 with the expertise for running these programs how they work, how
29 the data are collected, and that sort of thing. I don't think
30 the funding is going to be anything the council has a lot of say
31 in, and, of course, that's always the big question, right, is
32 how are these things going to get put in place.

33
34 I'm sure that topic is going to be discussed, but I really
35 wouldn't have any more information for you guys at this point,
36 and Amendment 46 will -- You know, it will be an amendment to
37 the Snapper Grouper FMP, and so my sort of blurry vision of how
38 this thing is going to look is it's going to have actions that
39 sort of define the structure, but there will still be a lot more
40 work that needs to happen in the background to implement the
41 various bits of a system like this. Does that make sense?

42
43 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Any other questions for Mr. Brouwer? Yes, sir,
44 Mr. Dyskow.

45
46 **MR. PHIL DYSKOW:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This isn't
47 necessarily a question, but a comment. At the risk of
48 alienating perhaps some of my rec fishing colleagues, I think we

1 need a form of licensing for recreational fishing in federal
2 waters, and particularly the reef fishery, and how should this
3 most effectively be done, and we have the five Gulf states
4 involved in this fishery, from a data collection standpoint, and
5 from an oversight standpoint, and I think it would be most
6 logical, if we're going to have this permit, that it should be
7 managed through the states.

8
9 They're already set up to do this, and, unlike the feds, they're
10 set up to do this with a large population of anglers, where the
11 feds perhaps aren't, and so I am in favor of a private angling
12 reef fish licensing program, whether it's a permit or whatever,
13 but certainly the states, I feel, are in a better position to
14 manage it, and could benefit from the data collection component
15 of this, and so I would be a little concerned in saying let the
16 federal government do this.

17
18 They're not set up to do this, necessarily, and I don't want to
19 speak necessarily for NMFS, but I have, personally, far more
20 confidence that the states could manage this effectively and get
21 rec angler buy-in more effectively than going and expecting NMFS
22 to manage this program with all the components that involve
23 working with the private rec anglers, and so I would encourage
24 us to look at a methodology that would allow this program to be
25 managed by the states.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you, Mr. Dyskow, and we will have a
28 presentation at Full Council, and Mr. Rindone, I believe, is
29 going to talk us through Items A and B, but that is a
30 discussion, and it was a discussion at the working group, but we
31 probably need to save that for Full Council, but Mr. Rindone.
32 Excuse me. Are there any more questions for Ms. Brouwer? Mr.
33 Strelcheck.

34
35 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I guess a question and a comment, and so, Phil,
36 I appreciate those comments, and I think that's an important
37 component, going forward with any sort of federal permit. You
38 know, there's economies of scale, and there's already federal
39 permitting set up, and I think the key would be, if we do that,
40 there's going to have to be standardization and expansion of
41 state programs, right, in order to make that happen, but I don't
42 disagree with you.

43
44 You know, the other challenge, for the federal government, is
45 any funds expended to require a permit -- We would only be able
46 to recoup the administrative costs of that, and that would go
47 then to the General Treasury, whereas the states can take
48 advantage of the opportunity to use that funding to improve data

1 collection, or any other means, supporting the recreational
2 fishery.

3
4 The question for Myra is, with regard to the research
5 recommendations and information on the board, how much has the
6 South Atlantic Council's group engaged with Science and
7 Technology, and, to me, it's an important, I think, conversation
8 that we need to have, as these recommendations move forward, in
9 terms of how these are best addressed, in coordination with the
10 councils and with the agency, and also in terms of prioritizing,
11 especially in light of Mr. Gill's comments about resourcing.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Ms. Brouwer.

14
15 **MR. RINDONE:** I think her audio went out.

16
17 **MS. BROUWER:** I'm so sorry. I was muted. Can you all hear me
18 now?

19
20 **MR. RINDONE:** We've got you, Myra.

21
22 **MS. BROUWER:** Okay. I apologize for these audio issues. Andy,
23 thank you for that question. As you know, this was a process
24 that, as Chester also mentioned, started many, many years ago,
25 and, you know, there's been progress in establishing
26 partnerships and connections with all the players over the
27 years.

28
29 The council gave us direction to pause work on Amendment 46,
30 because that amendment was begun, I don't know, back in 2017, I
31 want to say, and I can't quite recollect, but while we, you
32 know, gathered information from the workgroup, and now this
33 technical advisory panel, and so there will be continued
34 collaboration with all the players, and so I guess that's pretty
35 much what I can say about that at this point. Thank you.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you, Ms. Brouwer. We appreciate you
38 taking the time to present today. Mr. Rindone.

39
40 **MR. RINDONE:** Madam Chair, the only comment about that part that
41 has my name next to it was just to remind you guys that that
42 topic will be covered during Full Council, with Mr. Anson's
43 presentation.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you. All right, and so the next agenda
46 item is an Update from the Gulf States Marine Fisheries
47 Commission on Fisheries Data Collection and Management. Dr.
48 Hollensead.

1
2 **UPDATE FROM GSMFC ON FISHERIES DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT**
3

4 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The next agenda item,
5 we're going to hear a presentation from Mr. Gregg Bray. He is
6 the GulfFIN, and FIN stands for Fisheries Information Network,
7 program coordinator, and he works for, again, the Gulf States
8 Marine Fisheries Commission. It's been a while since we've had
9 an update from that office, and there's been some turnover with
10 council members, and so we certainly want to bring everybody up-
11 to-speed with what they've got going on, and so we appreciate
12 Mr. Bray being here today.
13

14 **MR. GREGG BRAY:** Thank you, Madam Chair and council members and
15 staff. It's a pleasure to be in front of you this morning. My
16 name is Gregg Bray, and I'm here to give you an update as to
17 what we, as the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, do and
18 how we fit in.
19

20 A lot of what we do is data collection, and so it's appropriate
21 to be in front of this committee, and, if you don't know what
22 Gulf Fisheries Information Network is, that's one of the
23 programs that I'm going to explain to you today, and I'm just
24 one of many that work hard at the commission to try to help the
25 states and our federal partners, and I hope to give you some
26 insight on some of these programs this morning.
27

28 Just a brief history on the commission, and the Gulf Commission
29 was established by congressional law in 1949, and it's a compact
30 among the five Gulf states, and our charge is to promote better
31 utilization of the marine resources in the Gulf of Mexico.
32

33 Each program, one-by-one, and I'm going to start with the
34 Southeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program, or SEAMAP, and
35 this is -- You're going to hear this theme a lot, and it's
36 really the main reason why the commission is here, and we're
37 here to help foster these partnerships between federal and
38 state, and sometimes private and university partners, in these
39 data collection efforts.
40

41 This is our fishery-independent program that's focused on the
42 collection, management, and dissemination of fishery-independent
43 data in the southeastern United States. SEAMAP utilizes a
44 multitude of surveys that are deployed at different times of the
45 year to assess the abundance and distribution of fauna in the
46 shelf and slope of waters in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico, and, as a
47 part of that, they're collecting size, sex, and maturity data,
48 life history data, and providing that back to stock assessments

1 for twenty-four species, or species complexes.

2
3 This work started in 1981 at the commission, and the program
4 coordinator for this is Jeff Rester, and so, if you have very
5 specific questions that we can't answer this morning, Jeff
6 Rester would be the point of contact.

7
8 This is mine, and I have worked at the commission since December
9 of 1998, and I have worked on the GulfFIN program my entire
10 time, twenty-four years, but this program actually started in
11 1992, with a focus on commercial landings, and then, in the mid-
12 1990s, it picked up the priority of recreational landings, and
13 it's, again, a cooperative state and federal fishery-dependent
14 monitoring program, focused on the collection, storage, and
15 dissemination of data.

16
17 Some of the different -- Again, it's a multi-survey approach,
18 and there is multiple surveys that meet multiple priorities and
19 needs of recreational effort and landings data that stretches
20 across MRIP surveys, state surveys, saltwater angler license
21 registry data, and, most recently, we've been assisting with
22 collecting the SEFHIER validation dockside survey data.

23
24 Commercial landings through trip ticket programs and, when
25 finding is available, collecting additional biological data,
26 through age structures, lengths, and weights, and providing that
27 data to SEDAR and states to support stock assessments. We
28 operate as a funding vehicle to help the states in collecting
29 this information, and I think, most important, from my time,
30 it's that liaison between state and federal agencies.

31
32 I mean, we see it around this table, and we get a little
33 sideways with each other sometimes, and we try to come in
34 between those and foster good relationships and continue us
35 working forward on a path towards solutions, and I think that's
36 one of the biggest roles we've had to play over the course of
37 the years.

38
39 Our Interjurisdictional Fisheries Program, this is one of our
40 oldest programs, and it originated from the Commercial Fisheries
41 Research and Development Act of 1965, and the
42 Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act of 1986, and the
43 Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act provides funding, and that
44 funding is used to support state monitoring and assessment
45 efforts, with a goal to assess the health of various commercial
46 and recreationally-important fish stocks.

47
48 It also allows for the development of commission management

1 profiles and fishery management plans, which aid the states in
2 maintaining sustainable stocks. We currently have eleven FMPs,
3 with revisions, and have completed seven profiles, the most
4 recent being tripletail, cobia, and red drum, which is under
5 review for final approval, and the IJF program is beginning work
6 on mangrove snapper now.

7
8 All of these are available through the commission website, for
9 anybody that's interested, but, more recently, the IJF program
10 has received increased funding, and that funding has been used
11 to support additional unfunded research at the state level,
12 through the State Research Funding Program, and, just looking at
13 some of the current research they're doing, a multitude of
14 projects at the state level, but a lot of research being focused
15 on blue crabs, on southern flounder, and oysters. Steve
16 VanderKooy is the program manager for this project, for this
17 program, and he would be your best point of contact on any
18 specific questions.

19
20 In 2016, the commission was contacted by NOAA's Office of
21 Aquaculture, with a goal to develop a small grants program to
22 address opportunities and challenges with the emergence of
23 aquaculture in the Gulf region.

24
25 Some of the early work was focused on oyster, off-bottom oyster
26 aquaculture work, and they developed a -- Because there is so
27 much interest in oysters, at the recommendation of NOAA
28 Fisheries, we developed an Oyster Consortium, which is a single
29 coordinated effort looking at oyster genetics and breeding.
30 That is ongoing, to this day.

31
32 To-date, this program has provided over \$8 million for research
33 and development of aquaculture in the Gulf, and, currently,
34 there is a round of pilot projects that, actually, Steve was
35 mentioning that it closes on Monday, with another \$600,000
36 available for one-year small grants, and we're excited about
37 where this work is going and the emergence of this in our
38 region.

39
40 Sport Fish, Sport Fish Restoration, and everybody knows how
41 important artificial reefs are in our region, and James Ballard
42 is our coordinator that provides coordination and communication
43 between the five Gulf state artificial reef programs, through
44 annual meetings, and their goal is to address issues related to
45 artificial reef research, development, and management across the
46 region. When possible, they also meet jointly with the Atlantic
47 States Marine Fisheries Commission Artificial Reef Subcommittee
48 to address national issues with regard to artificial reefs.

1
2 One specific area of data collection that James wanted me to
3 highlight was the Gulf Artificial Reef Monitoring and Assessment
4 Program pilot study, or GARMAP, and they have developed -- James
5 has developed these submersible units that he has placed off the
6 coast of Mississippi to collect year-round water quality data.

7
8 It allows for monitoring of seasonal changes in water quality,
9 to determine prevalence and determination of low dissolved
10 oxygen events, and what this presents is an opportunity to
11 understand how reefs are functioning over time, and compare that
12 with natural reefs, and, if expanded to other regions, it would
13 allow states to assess impacts from natural and manmade
14 disasters on the reefs.

15
16 James has been presenting some of the data from this first year
17 of activity, and it seems to be working really well, and we're
18 excited about the possibilities for this, and, if you have more
19 questions about that, I would encourage you to reach out to him
20 on the specifics.

21
22 We also know how big of an issue aquatic invasive species are,
23 both nationally and in our region, and our Aquatic Nuisance
24 Species Program facilitates coordination and communication
25 between the eight coastal states, from Texas to North Carolina,
26 through biannual meetings of the Gulf and South Atlantic
27 Regional Panel, and this regional panel operates under the
28 National Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force.

29
30 The commission provides administrative support for the regional
31 panel, to help achieve its directives, and the priorities of the
32 regional panel are to identify aquatic nuisance species, the
33 regional priorities, to make recommendations to the national
34 task force, to assist the national task force in coordinating
35 federal nuisance species program activities in our region, and
36 they provide advice to the public, and private individuals, on
37 methods of potentially controlling aquatic nuisance species, and
38 they submit an annual report to the national task force,
39 describing regional activities, with regard to prevention,
40 research, and control.

41
42 They also -- The commission program also provides administrative
43 support for any of the non-federal projects that have selected,
44 under Region 4 of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Aquatic
45 Invasive Species Small Grants Program, and, over the last seven
46 years, they have funded forty-three projects, totally over \$1
47 million. This project started in 2002, with the commission.

48

1 Lastly, one of the other areas that the commission is heavily
2 involved with is disaster recovery. We have, unfortunately, no
3 shortage of disasters that have impacted our region, and,
4 whenever it seems to be something that impacts multiple states,
5 we try to play the role of providing assistance in funding, or
6 research, in ways that can reduce the burden to our state
7 partners.

8
9 One of the current programs that many of you are familiar with
10 is the Return 'Em Right program, and so this started on October
11 1 of 2020, with the commission, and it's a collaborative effort
12 between NOAA Fisheries, the Gulf States Marine Fisheries
13 Commission, Florida Sea Grant, and the University of Florida.
14 Funding is provided under NOAA's Damage Assessment, Remediation,
15 and Restoration Program, and the focus is on helping restore
16 injured reef fish stocks from the Deepwater Horizon oil
17 disaster.

18
19 One of the identified priorities is we all recognize that
20 release mortality, due to barotrauma for reef species, is an
21 issue, and so this program is aimed at collecting data and
22 monitoring the use of descending devices and other release
23 practices used by Gulf of Mexico reef fish anglers.

24
25 This is Charlie Robertson, who many of you have met, and I'm
26 sure you will hear from in the future, as there's a lot of
27 interest in this project, and a lot of hope for this project.
28 There's a multitude of data collection aspects with this,
29 ranging from human dimension surveys, just looking at what are
30 the baseline beliefs, the behaviors, that anglers have when
31 decision-making, when it comes to how they release reef fish,
32 and they're funding some independent, on-the-water research,
33 looking at survival and depredation for these priority species.

34
35 They're funding some monitoring, at the state level, of fishery-
36 dependent data from the private and the for-hire sectors, and,
37 as I said, this research is collecting some fishery-independent
38 data, and then they also have launched a major outreach and
39 education campaign that is coupled with actually providing
40 descending devices, and the hope is that, through education, and
41 through providing these devices, and when it's appropriate to
42 use them, and how it's appropriate to use them, that we can
43 potentially reduce the amount of mortality associated with
44 released catch that are being impacted by barotrauma.

45
46 This monitoring process is meant to go on, and so, as the
47 education component is rolled out, and devices are being handed
48 out, they can monitor changes in behaviors, and potentially

1 changes in survivability, as they get more of these devices in
2 the hands of constituents and get more education in front of
3 them.

4
5 I think this is my last slide, and one of the other areas of
6 disaster assistance that we've recently assisted with is the
7 CARES Act, and so we're all familiar with the COVID-19 pandemic
8 and the impacts that that had on coastal marine fisheries
9 participants, and Congress authorized \$600 million in fisheries
10 assistance funding to be provided to states, tribes, and
11 territories.

12
13 The commission was involved in working with the states to
14 distribute that money to those impacted fishery participants.
15 The disbursement was done in two parts, and the first CARES Act
16 disbursement provided roughly \$29 million to the five Gulf
17 states in assistance, and then the CARES Act 2, which I think is
18 still ongoing for some states, is providing roughly \$26 million,
19 and, if anybody has specific questions on that program, you can
20 contact Jeff Rester, and, Madam Chair, that concludes my
21 presentation.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you, Mr. Bray. I really do appreciate
24 that. I didn't realize exactly what all the Gulf States Marine
25 Fisheries Commission did, and so I applaud you all and your
26 efforts. Are there any questions? Mr. Diaz.

27
28 **MR. DALE DIAZ:** Thank you, Mr. Bray, for your presentation, and
29 I think it's been way too long since we've had you all give us a
30 presentation, and, quite frankly, I think we take you all for
31 granted.

32
33 Every one of your programs are important, and they're all
34 professionally run. We always get information in a timely
35 manner that helps us tremendously here, and I just wanted to
36 commend the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission on the good
37 work that you all do, and I think a lot of it is the leadership,
38 and I want to commend and give some recognition to Mr.
39 Donaldson. When this council needs something, or something is
40 needed in the Gulf of Mexico, the Gulf States Marine Fisheries
41 Commission steps up.

42
43 You mentioned the CARES Act and helping administer disaster
44 funds, and, I mean, people don't realize that it's hard to get
45 disaster funds out quickly. By running them through the Gulf
46 States Marine Fisheries Commission, that gets funds out to the
47 communities and people that need them much faster. I mean, it's
48 a giant job.

1
2 You all stepped up to do the Return 'Em Right, and one thing you
3 didn't mention is, you know, we had a need, recently, for what
4 to do with the shrimp data that's being collected off of the
5 boats, and you all gladly stepped up and filled the role there,
6 to make sure that that data -- That you all could receive it,
7 and they do QA/QC, to make sure that data is continuing to flow,
8 and to help us manage that fishery.

9
10 Anyway, I just wanted to make sure and recognize you all for the
11 hard work you do, and I appreciate that you all are always
12 willing to help, and always willing to step up, and you all are
13 great partners for the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management
14 Council. Thank you very much.

15
16 **MR. BRAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will make sure that I
17 relay that message back to staff that aren't here this morning,
18 and maybe aren't listening, and we really appreciate it, and
19 we're here to help, as much as we can.

20
21 **MR. DIAZ:** Well, at one time or another, I think I've worked
22 with every one of your programs, and they're all professionally
23 run and well done, and you have a great staff, and so thank you.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Any other questions for Mr. Bray? Thank you so
26 much. We appreciate it.

27
28 **DR. JOHN WALTER:** Thank you, Mr. Bray, and I just -- From the
29 Science Center perspective, I want to thank Gulf States for
30 their can-do attitude on so many projects that we really
31 couldn't get done without your participation and digging in, and
32 so it really supports the science mission, and I think all of
33 the science that gets done in the Gulf, by having Gulf States as
34 partners, and so thank you.

35
36 **MR. BRAY:** Thank you. We value that partnership with you all as
37 well.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you very much. We do appreciate it, and
40 we hope to see you again soon.

41
42 **MR. BRAY:** Thank you. We're glad to be back.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thanks. Okay. The next item on our agenda,
45 Dr. Hollensead, and would you like to take us through the update
46 on commercial electronic reporting?

47
48 **UPDATE ON COMMERCIAL ELECTRONIC REPORTING**

1
2 **DR. HOLLENSHAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and so I just have a
3 verbal update for this. We, you know, intended to perhaps have
4 another draft document to address the update on the commercial
5 electronic logbook program. For those unaware, the Science
6 Center is interested in moving over towards electronic
7 submission of the commercial coastal logbook program. Right
8 now, it's handwritten, by paper, and then mailed to the Science
9 Center.

10
11 This can cause some issues, if there's perhaps a data-entry
12 error, and, you know, having to contact that participant, and
13 then get that remedied, and so it's desired that this electronic
14 submission would help speed those things up, and also, you know,
15 speed up the time in which participants can fill out these
16 forms, and they can move a little more quickly and get their
17 submissions through, and so that's what is happening.

18
19 because the coastal logbook program is a very -- It's a big
20 program, and so it runs through the Gulf of Mexico and then all
21 the way up the Atlantic coast, and so, because of this, this is
22 going to have to be a joint document with the South Atlantic,
23 because of the Coastal Migratory Pelagic FMP, and so we're in,
24 of course, coordination with the South Atlantic on this.

25
26 We've made some progress so far. They have -- The South
27 Atlantic had their meeting to discuss this back in September,
28 and then we had every intention for the IPT to meet and revise
29 that document and come forward, and there were some scheduling
30 issues with staff on that IPT, and there was Ian that paid
31 everybody a visit, and other acts of God, and so we weren't able
32 to get them together until last week, and so to move forward,
33 and so we don't have the document for you, and so that's the bad
34 news, but the good news is, in that time, the Reef Fish AP met.

35
36 They represented some materials, some of which are in the
37 background, and we can go over those, if you would like, but,
38 otherwise, I've got them there in the background.

39
40 What the Science Center did is they gave a nice presentation,
41 and, if you recall, at the last meeting, we had a spreadsheet
42 that was made available for the committee to review that had
43 some data fields that were changing over from the paper to the
44 electronic. We got some feedback from the committee, during
45 that time, and so the Science Center and the IPT went back and
46 revised that spreadsheet, to make it a little -- To clarify some
47 things, you know, what data fields were being -- Not necessarily
48 added, but renamed, and so it's the same field, but it's going

1 to look a little different.

2
3 Then the Science Center also went through a demonstration, which
4 I think was beneficial, to actually see the application in
5 action, and so, I guess, at this point, I would tee-up Ed,
6 Captain Walker here, if he wouldn't mind -- The Reef Fish AP had
7 some comments, and they made a motion, and so I will let him
8 field that.

9
10 **MR. WALKER:** Could you put the motion up? The AP -- It's just
11 the commercial guys, but they were very excited, I would say,
12 about this, very enthusiastic, and the presentation was
13 fantastic, and some of the panel members asked if they could
14 test it and play with it now, and it was a resounding thumbs-up
15 for this one. They've been dealing with that paper system, and
16 they're looking forward to the new program.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you, Captain Walker. All right. Dr.
19 Hollensead. I'm sorry. Mr. Gill.

20
21 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and so this question is for
22 Andy or John, and you recollect, the last time we visited this
23 subject, I strongly recommended that you develop, as part of it,
24 a test platform amongst the fleet, to iron out bugs, like we
25 commonly do, and so my question is, is that an ongoing part of
26 this program, and, if so, any info on how it may get structured,
27 the timing, et cetera?

28
29 **DR. WALTER:** I am going to need to check with staff on whether
30 there will be something like a soft rollout, or a pilot, on
31 this, whether it will be -- So how much overlap there would be
32 between the paper and the electronic, and so allow me to get
33 back to you after talking to staff.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Mr. Gill.

36
37 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and, to that regard, John, if
38 the thinking is no, then I would suggest a re-think, because I
39 think that's an important part of this program, like any -- Not
40 only -- You see, from Ed, the enthusiasm for the program, but we
41 need to minimize the rollout, so that the glitches, et cetera,
42 and the buy-in is better, and it seems, to me, that that's a
43 proforma, yes, we're going to do something along that line, and
44 make it happen. Thank you.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Dr. Walter.

47
48 **DR. WALTER:** Madam Chair, I will get back to the committee or

1 Full Council on that, when I get that information. Thanks.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you. Any other questions? Dr.
4 Hollensead, what do you need from this council today?

5
6 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** So I was just going to go through some of the
7 next steps, as we've got planned, and then, any feedback would
8 have, we would be happy to take then, but, otherwise, I was just
9 going to give some next steps, and it would just be
10 informational.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Sounds good. Go ahead, please, ma'am.

13
14 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Okay, and so we have heard recommendations from
15 the Reef Fish AP, and I wanted to let the committee know that
16 this will also be going in front of the CMP AP on December 1,
17 and we'll potentially get on the schedule maybe a Data
18 Collection AP as well, if that can happen at some point, and
19 that would probably be a good idea.

20
21 Also, to let you know that the South Atlantic had a couple of
22 their APs meet to discuss this issue, and so their Mackerel
23 Cobia met on October 5 through 6, and their Snapper Grouper met
24 on October 18 through 20, and so the South Atlantic Council has
25 also gotten some feedback from their APs on their as well, and
26 so it's actually kind of a nice coordination, that we're having
27 some of our APs simultaneously look at this while we develop the
28 document.

29
30 In terms of plans for the document, the South Atlantic Council
31 will be meeting in December, and we will have a draft of that
32 document available for their council to review. You know, based
33 on any revisions that would happen there, we are looking to have
34 a draft of the document for this at the January meeting. Past
35 that, I'm not real sure what would happen, but we just wanted to
36 let you know that, at least for January, we're looking to have
37 something. We had hoped to have something by this meeting, but
38 we'll certainly get something to you by January.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Dr. Hollensead, do you have any -- The comments
41 from the South Atlantic APs, were they positive for the program,
42 or do you know?

43
44 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Myra, are you out there in webinar land? I'm
45 going to shoot up a flare.

46
47 **MS. BROUWER:** I am.

48

1 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you for bailing me out.

2
3 **MS. BROUWER:** Of course, and so thank you for that question. We
4 had a meeting of the Mackerel Cobia AP, and my recollection is
5 they were very supportive, first of all, and this is something
6 that fishermen in our region have been requesting for some time.
7 They did point out that, for vessels that are permitted in both
8 the South Atlantic and GARFO, the timing of reporting, for
9 submitting the logbooks, would be a little different.

10
11 Up in GARFO, the trip ticket, or VTRs, are requested, or
12 required, to be submitted prior to offloading, and so vessels
13 have to estimate their catch and submit that in, and then they
14 have to go back and modify their submission, whereas, in our
15 region, vessels have seven days from the completion of their
16 trip to submit the logbook, and so that will continue to be like
17 that, and there's going to be that little bit of a disconnect,
18 because, of course, that would require additional action from
19 the South Atlantic Council, and potentially the Mid-Atlantic,
20 and so they pointed that out.

21
22 Then the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel had some concerns about
23 how vessels that have multiple permits in multiple corporations,
24 or different names, and how the electronic reporting would be
25 affecting them, whether they would have to have various accounts
26 for their businesses and have to submit multiple logbooks, and
27 those were the concerns raised by the advisory panels, but they
28 were generally in support of moving forward.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you for that update. I do appreciate it.
31 We'll see this document in January. Based on Mr. Gill's
32 request, I mean, is that something that we can move forward
33 with, even if a pilot study is considered, and how would that
34 work? That may be a deep question. Dr. Hollensead.

35
36 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** I certainly would allow the Science Center,
37 when they get some folks together, to give a more formalized
38 answer, but, when this question has come up in general, in
39 various APs, from quilting together some things that I have
40 heard, right now, eTRIPS would be who this program would be
41 running through, and it is up and running in GARFO, for example.

42
43 Fishermen can set up a test account, and they have to contact
44 ACCSP to do so. They still have to put in their paper logbooks,
45 and that still has to be done, but they can run a test account
46 of their trip, run through and then go through, and so there is
47 a mechanism that way to sort of test it out. In terms of a
48 formalized pilot program, I'm not sure about that just yet.

1
2 The other thing that I've sort of heard is that, potentially,
3 there would be a burn-in period, of about a year or so
4 beforehand, before it went, you know, live and was implemented,
5 and so I think those are some of the ideas that have been
6 floated around, at the moment.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Well, it sounds like the consensus, even if
9 there are some concerns, but, overall, that the commercial
10 sector is very receptive to this, and understandably so. I used
11 to have to fill out some of those papers myself, and so anything
12 that we can do with the council, this committee, to speed this
13 process along, please encourage us that way. Any more comments
14 from the agency on this? All right. Seeing none, anything
15 else, Dr. Hollensead?

16
17 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** No, ma'am, unless anybody had any other
18 business, and we have completed the agenda.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Mr. Chair, I am an hour early.

21
22 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on October 26, 2022.)
23

24
- - -