

1 GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

2  
3 DATA COLLECTION COMMITTEE

4  
5 The Lodge at Gulf State Park Gulf Shores, Alabama

6  
7 April 6, 2022

8  
9 **VOTING MEMBERS**

10 Susan Boggs.....Alabama  
11 Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama  
12 Leann Bosarge.....Mississippi  
13 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC  
14 Jonathan Dugas.....Louisiana  
15 Bob Gill.....Florida  
16 Jessica McCawley.....Florida  
17 Chris Schieble (designee for Patrick Banks).....Louisiana  
18 Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS  
19 Greg Stunz.....Texas  
20 Troy Williamson.....Texas

21  
22 **NON-VOTING MEMBERS**

23 Billy Broussard.....Louisiana  
24 Dale Diaz.....Mississippi  
25 Phil Dyskow.....Florida  
26 Tom Frazer.....Florida  
27 Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas  
28 Bob Shipp.....Alabama  
29 Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi

30  
31 **STAFF**

32 Assane Diagne.....Economist  
33 Matt Freeman.....Economist  
34 John Froeschke.....Deputy Director  
35 Beth Hager.....Administrative Officer  
36 Karen Hoak.....Administrative & Financial Assistant  
37 Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist  
38 Ava Lasseter.....Anthropologist  
39 Mary Levy.....NOAA General Counsel  
40 Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison  
41 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager  
42 Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director  
43 Carly Somerset.....Fisheries Outreach Specialist

44  
45 **OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

46 Richard Cody.....NMFS  
47 Peter Hood.....NMFS  
48 Michelle Masi.....NMFS  
49 Jessica Stephen.....NMFS

1 Laurilee Thompson.....SAFMC  
2 John Walter.....SEFSC  
3  
4 - - -  
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[PAGE 25](#): Motion to direct staff to develop an abbreviated framework document addressing the trip declaration requirements. [The motion carried on page 29.](#)

- - -

1 The Data Collection Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery  
2 Management Council convened at The Lodge at Gulf State Park on  
3 Wednesday morning, April 6, 2022, and was called to order by  
4 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. Tab F, Number 1 is where you can find the  
12 agenda. Item Number I is Adoption of the Agenda. May I have a  
13 motion to approve or any changes to the agenda?  
14

15 **DR. GREG STUNZ:** So moved.  
16

17 **MR. DAVE DONALDSON:** Second.  
18

19 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you, and I was remiss. I did not name  
20 the members of the committee. It's myself, Susan Boggs, as  
21 Chair, Greg Stunz as Vice Chair, Chris Schiele, Kevin Anson,  
22 Leann Bosarge, Dave Donaldson, J.D. Dugas, Bog Gill, Jessica  
23 McCawley, Peter Hood, and Troy Williamson. With that, we will  
24 move to Item II, which is Tab F, Number 2, Approval of the  
25 January 2022 Minutes.  
26

27 I have a couple of changes, and does anyone else, before I do  
28 that? Okay. Seeing none, on page 7, line 38, "on" should be  
29 "one", and, on page 52, line 24, "moment" should be "movement".  
30 If there is no other changes, may I have a motion to approve?  
31

32 **DR. STUNZ:** So moved.  
33

34 **MR. BOB GILL:** Seconded.  
35

36 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you. Okay. We will move down to Number  
37 III, Action Guide and Next Steps, Tab F, Number 3. Dr.  
38 Hollensead, would you please take us through Items IV and V?  
39

40 **DR. LISA HOLLENSHAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. For Agenda Item  
41 IV, we will be looking at the draft framework action, and this  
42 is the modification to location reporting requirements for for-  
43 hire vessels, should an unforeseen malfunction occur. As you  
44 recall, at the January meeting, the committee selected  
45 preferreds for this document, but we're going to have council  
46 staff, Ms. Carly Somerset, provide an update on the IPT  
47 discussions associated with this document and update the  
48 committee with that.

1  
2 Additionally, we will have Dr. Jessica Stephen from the  
3 Southeast Regional Office provide a presentation update, and she  
4 will be going over some of the technical aspects from their  
5 staff and their office from implementation of this framework  
6 action, and, sort of wrapping up our SEFHIER discussion, Agenda  
7 Item V will be an update from Dr. Michelle Masi for the SEFHIER  
8 program.

9  
10 For Agenda Item IV, the committee can review what NMFS and  
11 council staff has updated them with, and, if they would like to  
12 move forward, council staff and NMFS staff will begin preparing  
13 that document for final action at the next meeting.

14  
15 For Agenda Item V, the committee should ask any questions of  
16 SERO staff about the SEFHIER program. Additionally, now that  
17 the program has begun being implemented, the committee should  
18 consider whether they would like updates at every meeting, or  
19 perhaps every other, depending, and so that's just something for  
20 the committee to consider. Madam Chair.

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you, Dr. Hollensead. All right, Ms.  
23 Somerset, are you ready?

24  
25 **MS. CARLY SOMERSET:** I am ready. Thank you, Madam Chair.

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Proceed.

28  
29 **DRAFT FRAMEWORK ACTION - MODIFICATION TO LOCATION REPORTING**  
30 **REQUIREMENTS FOR FOR-HIRE VESSELS**  
31 **DOCUMENT**

32  
33 **MS. SOMERSET:** Bernie, if we could bring up the document. While  
34 Bernie is doing that, I will just provide a bit of additional  
35 information that Dr. Hollensead provided, and so, looking at the  
36 modification to the location reporting requirements for for-hire  
37 vessels, again, and you all saw this at the last meeting, and so  
38 I'm just going to go over some of the additions that we made,  
39 and they're pretty minor, and we do have some more that we need  
40 to add to the document prior to it going final, which I think  
41 the idea was to do that at this meeting, but it will be -- We  
42 will try to do that at the next meeting, in June, because we  
43 have a few things we need to add to Chapters 3 and 4.

44  
45 If we go to Table 1.1.1, here, I just wanted to point out -- I  
46 just wanted to make a note of a few things that have been added  
47 since you last saw this document. There was an additional  
48 cellular unit that has been type approved by NMFS, and so that

1 has been added to the table, and so now there are four cellular  
2 units that are available for permit holders to use on their  
3 vessel as a VMS unit.

4  
5 Then, Bernie, if you could move to Chapter 2, I will just make a  
6 note of, in Chapter 2, we have added the preferreds that you  
7 picked at the last meeting, and so there is one action, and the  
8 preferred alternative -- The first preferred alternative was  
9 Preferred Alternative 2, and so that's creating an exemption to  
10 the VMS requirement to address equipment failure and set a limit  
11 on the number of calendar days that the NMFS-approved exemption  
12 is valid for vessels with charter vessel or headboat permits for  
13 reef fish and/or coastal migratory pelagics, and the preferred  
14 option that was chosen was Preferred Option 2b, the exemption  
15 will be valid for up to ten days from submittal date.

16  
17 Then, also, Preferred Alternative 3 is create an exemption to  
18 the VMS requirement to address equipment failure and set a limit  
19 on the number of times a permit holder can request an exemption  
20 each calendar year, per vessel, and the preferred option that  
21 was chosen was 3b, the permit holder may not request more than  
22 two exemptions per vessel per calendar year, and so that has  
23 been added throughout the document, to make note of the  
24 preferreds.

25  
26 Additionally, at our IPT discussions after the council meeting  
27 last time, we discussed some additional analyses that need to  
28 occur before the document is finalized, specifically Chapters 3  
29 and 4, and it's mostly economic, and that relates to the  
30 administrative burden that will be put on NOAA with getting this  
31 implemented on the backend, tracking all of it, and so we will  
32 continue to work on that.

33  
34 The last thing I wanted to note here is that, as part of the IPT  
35 discussion, we also talked about the use of permit holder versus  
36 vessel owner-operator, and so you see that quite a bit in the  
37 document. Some of the discussion revolved around what is the  
38 most appropriate use of either or both of those, and so, just to  
39 let you all know, the discussion was based on whether permit  
40 holder or vessel owner-operator was the best term to use  
41 throughout the document.

42  
43 Some of the ideas that were thrown around at the IPT is that, if  
44 we use the permit holder, that could create an additional burden  
45 on the vessel owner-operator. If they are the ones that find  
46 the VMS fails, they would then have to contact the permit  
47 holder, and so it would be an additional step. On the opposite  
48 end, the permit holder is the one that is responsible for the

1 VMS units. They hold the permit. It is their vessel, and so  
2 the onus should be on them to make sure that it is properly  
3 working, even if they are not the captain of that vessel.  
4

5 I just wanted to make note of that for all of you, if you wish  
6 to discuss it or have any other questions about it, but, other  
7 than that, that was the majority of the changes in the document,  
8 and I'm happy to take any questions.  
9

10 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you, Ms. Somerset. Does anyone have any  
11 questions? I do have one. We discussed, I believe at the last  
12 meeting, to maybe add language, and I don't remember where it  
13 went, and I didn't see it in the minutes, about looking at this  
14 document maybe in a year or two, to monitor the frequency of  
15 failures or anything like that, and did we add that to the  
16 document? I saw where we kind of clarified the stacking of  
17 exemptions, but I didn't see this.  
18

19 **MS. SOMERSET:** You're referring to having the updates on how the  
20 program is going? That request was -- We discussed it at the  
21 IPT, in that we could bring that up at council meetings, if it's  
22 appropriate in looking at it, possibly over the course -- If it  
23 doesn't need to be a year or longer, just to see how the program  
24 goes, but that's definitely something that can happen.  
25

26 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Well, I certainly think we need to maybe look  
27 at it at the end of this first year, of the vessel -- Of the VMS  
28 units being in place, to see how frequently this is happening,  
29 and so I would like to, you know, make that request, that we  
30 look at it maybe again in January of next -- Well, I guess it  
31 would be March, since it's only been on the water since March 5.  
32 Any other questions for Ms. Somerset? All right. Seeing none,  
33 Dr. Stephen, are you with us this morning?  
34

35 **DR. JESSICA STEPHEN:** I am. Can you hear me?  
36

37 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Yes, ma'am. Please, whenever you're ready.  
38

#### 39 **EQUIPMENT FAILURE EXEMPTION IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

40  
41 **DR. STEPHEN:** All right. If you will bring up the presentation.  
42 One of the reasons we wanted to give this presentation is that,  
43 oftentimes, what the council and the stakeholders see is the end  
44 product in that user interface behind any data collection, and  
45 we wanted to kind of highlight all of the behind-the-scenes  
46 decision points and work and requirements building that goes  
47 into collecting data, even something as simple as the equipment  
48 failure form.

1  
2 The goals, when we were looking at the equipment failure  
3 exemption, was we wanted to make sure that the process that we  
4 developed was easy for the fishermen to understand, as well as  
5 for council staff and NOAA staff to understand the process, and  
6 we want to automate, to the extent possible, the process, so  
7 that people are well aware that the power-down exemption gets  
8 approved by NMFS OLE and that takes human involvement, and what  
9 we were looking for here was to not have that human involvement  
10 and have an automation, so that we could rapidly approve things  
11 on off hours.

12  
13 We were also looking to make sure that we have compliance and  
14 enforcement integrity when we were working within creating the  
15 exemption failure, and that would be a mechanism that fishermen  
16 can show that they do have the approval for the exemption to law  
17 enforcement, and that's an easy way to submit the documentation  
18 of why that equipment failure occurred, and then, finally, what  
19 we wanted to look at was also ensuring the data integrity, and  
20 so, to Susan's point earlier, we wanted to be able to analyze  
21 any of the exemptions and look at them in combination with  
22 SEFHIER compliance and catch-and-effort estimates.

23  
24 Last, but never least, is we wanted to make sure that we can  
25 spread the awareness with equipment failure requirements through  
26 a variety of different outreach efforts.

27  
28 In order to go to this, we gathered various subject matter  
29 experts, and we formed six different working groups to look at  
30 different topics that were useful for that subject matter  
31 expertise, and, in the next slide, I'll go into each of these  
32 working groups.

33  
34 One of the first things was defining what an equipment failure  
35 was, so that we're able to tell fishermen what is exactly an  
36 equipment failure and what is not, and, in order to do this,  
37 we're working with the different VMS vendors and gathering some  
38 information about their different units and how different  
39 protocols will be used to make sure that it is working right, as  
40 well as gathering vendor information on their warranties and how  
41 often they fail.

42  
43 The next step after that was developing an online form, and so  
44 we were looking to balance a collection of information that we  
45 need from the fisherman submitting the form with what the  
46 program needs in order to connect that information to other  
47 existing data collection programs and to analyze that  
48 information. This is a typical what we call Paperwork Reduction

1 Act, the burden balancing, to make sure that we can gather  
2 enough information.

3  
4 When we want to analyze that information, we do want to look at  
5 tracking of the submissions, in order to make sure that people  
6 are complying with regulations, and we will also want to look if  
7 there are certain vendors or types of units that fail more  
8 often, and so we want to be collecting information on the type  
9 of VMS and then ways to look at annual summaries and patterns of  
10 behavior for looking at this equipment failure down the road.

11  
12 In order to start that online form collection, we did not start  
13 from scratch. What we did is we looked at the power-down  
14 exemption form and began with that as our template.

15  
16 Some of the really behind-the-scenes things that are critical is  
17 how the agency actually develops the structure to store that  
18 data, in order to analyze it and collect it efficiently, and so  
19 we worked with developers in order to look at those different  
20 requirements and build it out. This is really critical,  
21 because, if you don't gather the information and store it in the  
22 correct way, that analysis, later on, may be impacted.

23  
24 Some of the things we would need to connect to are the SEFHIER  
25 compliance database, our permits system, and sharing information  
26 with the various different enforcement data systems. Along the  
27 lines of how we do that is, because we wanted to do this rapid  
28 collection and turnaround of a conditional approval, we also  
29 need to build in quite a lot of quality assurance validations  
30 ahead of time, so that we can do that rapid initial confirmation  
31 or denial of an equipment failure.

32  
33 Just a few examples that I've listed here is we need to make  
34 sure that the vessel being submitted actually exists within our  
35 permit system, so we don't allow for typos or misidentification  
36 of a vessel. We also need to look at whether it was dually  
37 permitted with a reef fish vessel, which would create an  
38 automatic denial, as a reef fish vessel is not allowed to work  
39 under an equipment failure exemption.

40  
41 Then, finally, looking at some of the different types of  
42 exemptions, based on what the council would choose for  
43 preferreds, to make sure that they have not gone over their  
44 required amount of times to submit per year.

45  
46 Also, along those lines of the development side was how do we do  
47 this rapid confirmation or denial, and so we need to create a  
48 process for online submission as well as a way to send that

1 information back to the submitter about either their  
2 confirmation or denial, and we're going to work with an email  
3 automation program to do that, and then, finally, the last kind  
4 of working group we were looking at was defining what the  
5 document failure is and the process to submit documentation for  
6 the failure, and so this would be looking into the timeline to  
7 later submit the documentation about the failure, and so we want  
8 to approve rapidly, but we want to have that documentation  
9 submitted at a later date.

10  
11 Then a way to upload that information, a way to process that and  
12 store it within the system, linking to the initial exemption,  
13 and then also ways to give information to them about to  
14 troubleshoot before thinking about applying for an exemption  
15 failure, since they are limited annually.

16  
17 We also recognize that we do need to think about how this may  
18 affect the permit renewal and transfer process, if a vessel is  
19 currently under equipment failure, while there is still a  
20 requirement to show that the VMS is working, and so we are  
21 working hand-in-hand with them and looking at how that would  
22 affect the renewal transfer process and creating automated code,  
23 so that that awareness is put through to the permit processor.

24  
25 We also need to share that information with law enforcement, and  
26 so we're looking for ways to take the equipment failure and have  
27 it be shown within the VMS database system that officers and  
28 agents look at, as well as a way for them query, on any day, the  
29 vessels that are currently under an equipment failure.

30  
31 In the end, what we also want to do is make sure that we develop  
32 sufficient outreach materials, and we use some of our normal  
33 processes, by developing FAQs that have certain scenarios within  
34 them, give them information about how to submit that proof of  
35 documentation of a failure, and then explanations of why there  
36 is an automated approval or denial, as well as suggestions to  
37 troubleshoot your unit.

38  
39 Because of the rapid order of how we want to get this equipment  
40 failure in here, because the VMS units are out there and  
41 operational, and looking at the timeline of this amendment, what  
42 NOAA is going to do is we're going to create a short-term  
43 storage solution, in order to collect this information, and that  
44 is going to be using a simplistic online form with our minimum  
45 security requirements. That does require a little bit more  
46 backend work, to merge that data with the other database systems  
47 and share the information as necessary.

48

1 Simultaneously, we will be working on a long-term storage  
2 solution for that. Part of the electronic technologies  
3 implementation plan is to make sure that NOAA stops siloing  
4 their data systems and use them together, and so our intention  
5 is to build this into our permits system.

6  
7 There is a lot of benefits to doing this. One is that the  
8 amount of information that has to be entered by the stakeholder  
9 can be great reduced, because that information is already  
10 contained within permits, and they would simply select their  
11 vessel.

12  
13 Another thing would be to improve the QA/QC of the submitted  
14 data, so that we know we have a one-to-one match of all the data  
15 and that doesn't create errors later, in ensuring that the  
16 approval was granted to the correct vessel, and, finally, the  
17 data security for transmission and storage is much stronger  
18 within our permits system.

19  
20 As you all know, there's been a lot of increase in data security  
21 over the last couple of years, and NOAA has been increasing what  
22 those security measures are, and permits will meet any future  
23 standards needed.

24  
25 Then the last comment here would just be our short-term solution  
26 may require us to update the regulations and PRA later, when  
27 we're working within that permits solution, and we're hoping to  
28 actually build it into the regulations to match the permits  
29 system, but we may need changes later, when we push it into the  
30 permits system.

31  
32 I do just want to pause, and we've gotten a lot of emails about  
33 confusion of power-down exemption and equipment failure  
34 exemption, and so I wanted to leave up this slide here for the  
35 council and for the fishermen to look at, to see the difference  
36 of what is a power-down exemption, which is currently possible,  
37 and what is an equipment failure.

38  
39 In a power-down exemption, the vessel, once it is under a power-  
40 down, cannot move on water, versus an equipment failure, and  
41 they would be allowed to move on water for either the seven,  
42 ten, or fourteen days that the council chooses. For a power-  
43 down exemption, currently, you only can power off your unit  
44 after you have received approval, and then it must remain  
45 powered off for a minimum of seventy-two hours.

46  
47 With an equipment failure, because of that automatic approval or  
48 denial, you would be able to power off the unit once you get

1 that, and there is no minimum time limit for how long it stays  
2 off, and it's until it gets fixed.

3  
4 The submission process currently for a power-down was paper, and  
5 we are working right now on moving to an online form that is  
6 combining both the commercial and the for-hire. Keep in mind  
7 that a power-down exemption will apply to both fisheries that  
8 have that VMS requirement on the same vessel.

9  
10 Then, with submission limitations, there is no limitations for  
11 power-down exemptions throughout a year, whereas the equipment  
12 failure would be limited to either one, two, or three times per  
13 year, and the approval process works a little differently  
14 between the two. Currently, power-down exemptions require a  
15 manual double-check of them before they are approved, and that  
16 means that, if you submit it on a Saturday, it might not be  
17 looked at until a Monday.

18  
19 We are working on ways to automate that currently, working with  
20 our law enforcement group, whereas the equipment failure will  
21 give you that conditional approval immediately and provide a  
22 timeframe for you to later provide the documentation of that  
23 failure. Likewise, in this documentation, power-down is just a  
24 simplistic form, whereas equipment failure is both the initial  
25 form and then the documentation, and I think that is my last  
26 slide, and I'm happy to take any questions about the process.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Any questions for Dr. Stephen? Dr. Stephen, I  
29 do have one thing that I don't think some people clearly  
30 understand, and I don't know how we get the message out, other  
31 than just sitting here having this conversation, but the dually-  
32 permitted vessels cannot apply for an equipment failure  
33 exemption, and is that correct?

34  
35 **DR. STEPHEN:** Yes, that is correct, because this is only  
36 applying to the for-hire regulations. The reef fish regulations  
37 still require that you must have a transmitting unit to move on  
38 the water, and so, if you're dually-permitted, you would be  
39 denied an equipment failure, because it's not -- It's for the  
40 permit.

41  
42 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you, and then I do have one other  
43 question, and I think you touched on it and I didn't quite  
44 understand, and is there anything in place -- Well, first of  
45 all, have you all had any requests, because of failures,  
46 equipment failures, and, if so, how have they been handled thus  
47 far?

48

1 **DR. STEPHEN:** So far, the SEFHIER program has not received any  
2 requests for an equipment failure, to date. We would probably  
3 currently handle it on a case-by-case basis, with the  
4 recommendation that you are required to have it, and so you  
5 cannot move on the water without a functional unit.  
6  
7 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Okay. Thank you. Any other questions from the  
8 committee? Seeing none, thank you, Dr. Stephen. Next, we'll go  
9 direct to --  
10  
11 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Ms. Boggs, you have J.D.  
12  
13 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** I'm sorry, J.D. I didn't see you.  
14  
15 **MR. J.D. DUGAS:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I don't know if the  
16 question is for Dr. Stephen, but we talked about the vessels  
17 moving within the marina for fuel and bait and ice, and I don't  
18 recall where we went with that. It seems like it's going to be  
19 an issue still, and could someone clarify?  
20  
21 **DR. STEPHEN:** Michelle will be presenting next and will touch on  
22 those topics.  
23  
24 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Okay. With that, Dr. Simmons.  
25  
26 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I had a  
27 question, and I think this goes back to the document that Ms.  
28 Somerset presented, and are you all looking for a recommendation  
29 from the council regarding whether the equipment failure would  
30 be tied to the permit holder or the vessel owner-operator,  
31 because, right now, it's written kind of both ways in here, and  
32 is that something that the agency is looking for from the  
33 council, so we can kind of clean that up in the document?  
34  
35 **DR. STEPHEN:** We talked with some of our lawyers, and, because  
36 it's an exemption to a permit, the agency feels that the permit  
37 holder needs to be providing that exemption. Also, because it  
38 is limited in scope, they need to be aware of it and providing  
39 the --  
40  
41 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Dr. Simmons.  
42  
43 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Sorry, but, just to make sure I  
44 understand, you're saying that decision has now been made and  
45 the document will have to be updated with the permit holder, and  
46 is that correct?  
47  
48 **DR. STEPHEN:** My understanding is that this is a NMFS agency

1 decision.

2  
3 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Okay. Any other questions? Okay. I think  
4 we're clear now. Dr. Masi, are you ready?

5  
6 **DR. MICHELLE MASI:** I am. Thank you, Madam Chair.

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Whenever you're ready, please proceed.

9  
10 **UPDATE ON SOUTHEAST FOR-HIRE INTEGRATED ELECTRONIC REPORTING**  
11 **(SEFHIER) PROGRAM**  
12

13 **DR. MASI:** Okay. Thank you so much, and so just a reminder that  
14 I'm Dr. Michelle Masi, the SEFHIER Program Manager, and I just  
15 wanted to note that I have actually revamped the SEFHIER  
16 presentation that you guys have been kind of accustomed to  
17 seeing for the last few meetings. Today, I wanted to focus more  
18 on some of the --

19  
20 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Michelle, can you please slow down  
21 a little bit? We're having trouble hearing you across the  
22 webinar.

23  
24 **DR. MASI:** Yes. No problem. Is that better now or still bad?

25  
26 **MR. DALE DIAZ:** No, that's a little better. Just, if you slow  
27 down just a little bit, I think that might have been part of the  
28 problem.

29  
30 **DR. MASI:** Sure. No problem. On this slide, I wanted to  
31 provide some program compliance metrics to the council. As of  
32 March 25, we have 1,328 Gulf for-hire federally-permitted  
33 vessels, and we have 951 VESL and eTRIPS reporting accounts that  
34 have been set up by our Gulf for-hire permitted vessels.

35  
36 We also have over 291,000 total trip reports that have been  
37 received from Gulf and South-Atlantic-permitted vessels, to  
38 date, and that's as of program inception, and so January 4, and  
39 we have received over 35,000 logbooks and over 46,000  
40 declarations from just Gulf for-hire-permitted vessels, and,  
41 finally, we have received, or made, over 8,000 SEFHIER program  
42 and compliance-related calls through our SEFHIER call center.

43  
44 Regarding VMS updates, we currently have ten satellite and four  
45 cellular VMS units that are type approved, and I know Carly just  
46 showed those, but, if you want to access them on our website,  
47 and we update those when anything gets type approved, and the  
48 link is provided on the slide, and then bolded here is just a

1 reminder that the VMS requirement became effective as of March  
2 1, and that third bullet is that we recently heard from a  
3 constituent that there were supply chain issues, and so we  
4 reached out to the VMS vendor, and they noted that there aren't  
5 any ongoing issues. The particular issue in question was just  
6 an isolated dealer issue, and that was quickly resolved.

7  
8 Regarding the VMS compliance statistics, as of March 25, we have  
9 over -- We currently have 178 dual commercial reef fish and for-  
10 hire-permitted vessels that have a VMS, and there are over 600  
11 Gulf only for-hire-permitted vessels that have a VMS unit.  
12 However, as of March 25, we had about 727 vessels that still did  
13 not have a VMS unit, noting though that the vessels that have  
14 permits requiring a VMS are presently having permits withheld  
15 during the application process, and so we are expecting to see  
16 compliance improve over the coming months, and, also, I received  
17 an update on these numbers on Monday, and that 727 is now down  
18 to about 620, as of Monday.

19  
20 I have a few updates here regarding the VMS reimbursement, and  
21 so, first, SEFHIER reimbursement requests are being prioritized  
22 through the end of this month, and then, after that, any  
23 incoming reimbursement requests will be handled on a first-come-  
24 first-served basis.

25  
26 The second bullet is that the cellular VMS reimbursement maximum  
27 has been decreased to \$950, and that was after analysis of the  
28 cellular unit costs. For satellite VMS, the reimbursement  
29 maximum is undergoing review, but, when a cellular VMS unit is  
30 available to the fishery, which is the case for the for-hire  
31 fishery, the max reimbursement will be \$950, unless the vessel  
32 is dual-permitted for a fishery that only allows satellite VMS,  
33 and then, finally, vessels that received the Triton VMS unit  
34 from the NFWF grant will not be eligible for reimbursement, as  
35 they already received a free unit.

36  
37 Regarding VMS and federal permits, to start off, just a brief  
38 permit refresher that federal permits are associated with  
39 vessels and the permit holders listed on the permit, and so, if  
40 there are any changes to the permit holder, or holders, and the  
41 vessel associated with a specific permit, then this constitutes  
42 a permit transfer. Also, any permits associated with a specific  
43 vessel must have the same permit holder.

44  
45 The VMS must be installed and activated in order to renew or  
46 transfer the permit, and so, for transfers, the receiving permit  
47 holder needs to have the VMS activated on the vessel that's  
48 associated with the permit, and, once the VMS is activated, the

1 vessel may get a power-down exemption, or a PDE, noting that the  
2 PDE is for the vessel under that permit, and it applies to any  
3 VMS-required permit on that vessel, and so, for example, if you  
4 are a dual commercial reef fish and Gulf-for-hire-permitted  
5 vessel, then one PDE would cover both fisheries.

6  
7 Regarding the power-down exemptions, or PDEs, the PDE form is  
8 now available online, and I provided the link here on this  
9 slide. You will just go to that link and then fill out the  
10 form, and there's an example of what that looks like here, an  
11 image provided, and you're going to need to have your vessel ID  
12 and your permit number, and then you click "confirm" to submit  
13 that. Again, this form can be used for both commercial and Gulf  
14 for-hire PDE requests.

15  
16 The final bullet here is just that, in vessels that show an  
17 active VMS status in permits are going to be automatically  
18 approved, and so, when you click "confirm", you will get an  
19 automatic approval response back. If an active status isn't  
20 listed in permits, then we're manually checking for an activated  
21 VMS before the PDE request is approved, and, as of right now,  
22 that isn't a long process, and you still should hear something  
23 back within one business day.

24  
25 On this slide, I wanted to show just some general SEFHIER  
26 discussion items, and so first that we've updated our FAQs, in  
27 order to support the industry's request for some clarification  
28 on the purpose of the required trip fee and fuel price questions  
29 that are in the logbook, and so, in order to best answer these  
30 questions, we worked with the SERO economists, and we developed  
31 the answers to the FAQs that I am showing here.

32  
33 For trip fee, an accurate value is critical for cost-benefit and  
34 economic impact analyses for providing reimbursement after a  
35 disaster, and it's required for proposed regulatory changes.  
36 Note that, for any charity trip, where you don't receive any  
37 revenue, you should enter a trip fee of zero. For fuel price,  
38 an accurate value is critical for representing economic  
39 performance of the for-hire vessels and how or why it differs  
40 between vessels, and so you should provide the best estimate of  
41 the price paid for fuel on each trip.

42  
43 On this slide, I have an update for the council on the  
44 declaration burden issue that has been raised by our for-hire  
45 constituents, and so, in listening to a variety of potential  
46 solutions, we considered the simplest, easiest to implement, and  
47 easiest to understand solution, and we found that the  
48 regulations can be modified to require a declaration under the

1 following circumstances.  
2  
3 For a fishing trip, a declaration would always be required,  
4 regardless of fishing trip type or duration. For a non-intended  
5 fishing trip, if the intended trip duration is less than sixty  
6 minutes, then a declaration would not be required, and so, for  
7 example, if the vessel is moving to get fuel or ice, and the  
8 sixty-minute timeframe was selected based on input from  
9 enforcement about the feasibility of tracking and enforcing  
10 this.  
11  
12 Regarding next steps, we would like feedback from the council  
13 and our stakeholders at this meeting, noting that the regulation  
14 change requires council action.  
15  
16 For the declaration burden associated with dual federal  
17 commercial and for-hire permitted vessels, the request is to do  
18 one declaration for these dual-permitted vessels. Some  
19 challenges that we found are that these declarations for each  
20 program collect different information fields and have different  
21 means of submission, and so, for commercial, you can submit  
22 declarations through the phone or VMS. For SEFHIER, you submit  
23 it through the app or VMS.  
24  
25 Given that, the proposed solution would be that this would only  
26 apply to those vessels that have a VMS unit that is type  
27 approved for both programs, and remember that we currently have  
28 ten satellite units that are approved in both sectors and have  
29 forms. Also, you must use the VMS to submit the declaration,  
30 and this would not apply to vessels in the Southeast Region  
31 Headboat Survey, because that program requires declarations to  
32 be submitted using the VESL app.  
33  
34 For applicable vessels, there would be a strict pathway for  
35 submission, based on trip type, where any commercial or out-of-  
36 fishery trips would be reported using the commercial  
37 declaration, and any for-hire trips would be reported using the  
38 for-hire declaration, because remember that requires the hail-in  
39 information.  
40  
41 Regarding next steps, the regulations would need to be modified  
42 to allow one declaration for both programs, but we believe that  
43 this one can be handled administratively without council action.  
44  
45 Finally, I want to emphasize that we're standing by to assist  
46 our constituents who have any questions about the program or are  
47 confused about the reporting requirements. We're definitely  
48 here to help you, and you can reach us at our customer service

1 number or the email that's listed at the bottom of this slide,  
2 and, if you want to reach out to me specifically, my email  
3 address is on the first slide, and, with that, I just want to  
4 thank everyone for listening to our SEFHIER updates today, and I  
5 will open the floor now.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you, Dr. Masi. Ms. Bosarge.

8  
9 **MS. LEANN BOSARGE:** Thank you, Dr. Masi. You always give a  
10 wonderful presentation. You give a lot of detail, and I  
11 appreciate that. I did have a question about Slide 4, or two  
12 questions, actually.

13  
14 The first bullet says, after April 30, reimbursements will be  
15 first-come-first-served for all requests, but that doesn't have  
16 anything to do with not having enough money to cover all these  
17 reimbursements, right, and you just mean that, obviously,  
18 reimbursements may be coming out of New England, and they may be  
19 coming out of Alaska, and they may be -- You know, all over the  
20 country, and this program handles everybody's, and is that what  
21 you mean, that the SEFHIER in the Gulf won't automatically jump  
22 to the top of that list for processing, and it has nothing to do  
23 with running out of money though, right?

24  
25 **DR. MASI:** Hi, Ms. Bosarge. I'm going to actually ask that  
26 Jessica answer this question, because she has a bit more of an  
27 understanding about it.

28  
29 **DR. STEPHEN:** Leann, for the first amount of time, the SEFHIER  
30 reimbursements will be prioritized, and so you're correct on  
31 that, and then, after that date, we would start prioritizing by  
32 the first date received for any of the other nationwide VMS  
33 programs. That said, funding for this is always subject to the  
34 annual amount of money we're given and how much money we can put  
35 into that grant, and so there is concern, with the number of  
36 SEFHIER vessels, that this fund may be drawn down low this year,  
37 with the amount of money being put into it.

38  
39 **MS. BOSARGE:** Okay, and so that kind of leads me into my second  
40 question about this VMS reimbursement maximum, and so it says  
41 the maximum for a cellular VMS is going to be \$950 that they  
42 will be reimbursed. I'm guessing that's the cost of the most  
43 expensive cellular VMS, but then we went on to say that, if  
44 you're in SEFHIER, essentially that's your maximum period.  
45 Although there is fourteen units that you can choose from, there  
46 is only four that you can actually get fully reimbursed for, I'm  
47 assuming.

48

1 I feel like we're changing the rules on these people after we  
2 have implemented this. They went into this with the  
3 understanding that, hey, don't worry, and you can get reimbursed  
4 for the cost of your unit, and that won't be a financial burden  
5 to you, and now we're saying, well -- You have all these options  
6 to choose from, and you can do satellite or you can do the  
7 cellular, but now we're telling them that, no, you actually only  
8 have four units that you can choose from if you want to be  
9 reimbursed, and even that is kind of iffy, because we might run  
10 out of money. I don't know, and I just -- I feel like we're  
11 fishtailing on our stakeholders here.

12  
13 **DR. STEPHEN:** I will give a few comments to that, and so, one,  
14 the VMS reimbursement program is a nationwide program not in  
15 control of the Southeast Region, and so these are decisions  
16 coming out of the nationwide program, based on a lot of cost  
17 allocation policies that have been going on within electronic  
18 technology programs as a whole.

19  
20 You got notice nearly as soon as we did, and we had a little bit  
21 of back-and-forth and misunderstandings about whether it was  
22 just the cellular units or the fishery as a whole, and, very  
23 recently, VMS cleared up that it's the fishery as a whole, and  
24 that was not something the Southeast Region had a say in at the  
25 time.

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you, Dr. Stephen, and, just real quickly,  
28 I will comment to that. We got that notice on Monday, and so  
29 Bob Gill.

30  
31 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Dr. Masi, for  
32 your presentation, and, on your first few slides, I note that we  
33 have significant non-compliance in this program, which is  
34 concerning, and so a two-part question. One is you have given  
35 us considerable detail, and you've done considerable outreach,  
36 in order to try to boost the compliance amongst the industry  
37 relative to this program, and it seems like, at this point, it  
38 hasn't been very effective, and so part one is what is your plan  
39 relative to compliance going forward, and the second part is,  
40 given that, after all this effort, there is still an amazing  
41 amount of folks that are not part of the program, what's the --  
42 If we don't do a whole lot better, and say we're asymptotic to  
43 where we're going to be, what's the impact on the efficacy of  
44 the program as a whole, in terms of the data collection and the  
45 rationale for the program's existence, as it stands? Thank you.

46  
47 **DR. MASI:** I will try to speak to that, Mr. Gill, and then, if  
48 needed, Dr. Stephen can come on and fill in any gaps, and so how

1 we're handling is, of course, we've spent -- I started in July  
2 of last year, and we've spent the duration, and, before that, we  
3 were doing outreach and expanding outreach and trying to reach  
4 our constituents as best we can, and so, at this point, we're  
5 ready to turn on the compliance module in permits, which means  
6 that, if a permit comes up for renewal, not only are they going  
7 to be looking to see if they're VMS compliant, and so if they've  
8 submitted their trip reports, and so I think, once that's turned  
9 on, we'll start to see compliance improve.

10  
11 We've been talking about turning it on for a long time now, and  
12 we're at the point now we're ready to actually go ahead and turn  
13 that on, and so hopefully, by the next time I come and present,  
14 we'll see these numbers have improved substantially. I am going  
15 to stop there and let Jessica fill in anything, if she wants to.

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Dr. Stephen, do you have anything to add?

18  
19 **DR. STEPHEN:** No, and the only thing I will mention is that the  
20 logbook compliance, of course, is when the permit is renewed,  
21 and permits are renewed on a revolving basis, and so I figure,  
22 by the end of the year, we'll have the bulk of people having to  
23 submit their logbooks or having their permit held back until  
24 that submission is put through. Also, with the VMS, we'll be  
25 able to better track people who are not submitting logbooks and  
26 knowing that they are out at sea and need to be submitting them.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Okay. Thank you. Dr. Stunz.

29  
30 **DR. STUNZ:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I wanted to follow-up with  
31 a couple of things that both Leann and Bob said, because it  
32 concerns me a little bit as well, and, by the way, thanks for  
33 the presentation. That was very informative, but it has to do  
34 mainly with the non-compliance, or really the efficiency, and we  
35 had a lot of discussion around the table about buy-in, and  
36 really getting the buy-in, and, for a successful program, we  
37 really want the captains to embrace this program, and I think  
38 that that's really important, that we really hand-hold and  
39 nurture it along, especially during this formative stage, but I  
40 wanted to deliver a message.

41  
42 I know that a lot of the captains are listening here, because,  
43 at least what I am hearing in the western Gulf, is there's a  
44 little bit, or more than a little bit, of confusion, and they're  
45 not really getting the support that they need, or at least  
46 that's what I'm hearing, and so I'm kind of delivering this  
47 message, but I wanted to make sure, since they're listening,  
48 that we get it very clear on the record of who do they need to

1 reach out to to get their questions answered.

2  
3 I think, by doing that, that would increase the compliance that  
4 Bob is talking about and some of the issues that Leann -- Then  
5 also curb issues right in the beginning, to make sure this is  
6 going to be a successful program, but I just want to read this,  
7 and, you know, I'm not accusing anyone or anything, but I just  
8 want to -- But this is the kind of feedback that I get, and they  
9 asked me to convey that the department, and, by the way, I don't  
10 know who the department is, but the department answering the  
11 phone line isn't actually giving any answers, and they keep  
12 saying goodbye and hanging up on the fishermen, and the guys  
13 keep -- Well, the guys tell me that they can't get any answers.

14  
15 While that's just what someone is saying, and I'm sure that --  
16 Who knows what really happened there, but it concerns me a  
17 little bit when they're trying to reach out, and, in some cases,  
18 they're not getting the right answers, and maybe they're calling  
19 the wrong people, but I just want to make sure, while they're  
20 listening here today, that it's very clear what they need to do  
21 to get any questions answered. Thank you.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Dr. Masi, would you mind -- I am not looking at  
24 the slide, but you said the information was located on the first  
25 slide, I believe, and maybe, for those listening, could you  
26 state that information on the record, so that, if anybody needs  
27 to refer back to it, they could?

28  
29 **DR. MASI:** No problem. Thanks, Dr. Stunz, for that information.  
30 On the very last slide is our SEFHIER customer service  
31 information, and we're standing by there, and that's Eastern  
32 Standard Time, but 8:00 to 4:30 every day, for non-federal  
33 holidays, and, if they reach the line and there isn't a live  
34 person to speak to, then, of course, they could leave a message,  
35 and someone would get back to them within the next business day.

36  
37 I will note that, for every phone call that we take, we write  
38 down the information that was discussed, and I know for a fact  
39 that nobody on our SEFHIER team is hanging up on anybody. I  
40 regularly check those correspondence logs, and I read through  
41 them, to see what the conversations are about.

42  
43 Now, there might be another line that they were contacting, and  
44 so I apologize if there was some line that they were contacting  
45 and getting hung up on. We will certainly look into that and  
46 try to take care of that. If at all else, if everything else  
47 fails, my email address is on the first slide, and they can  
48 reach out to me directly.

1  
2 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Go ahead, Dr. Stunz.  
3  
4 **DR. STUNZ:** Thank you very much, and that's exactly what I  
5 wanted to accomplish here, is to make sure they knew exactly and  
6 ensure they were in fact calling the right number, because I  
7 suspect that you guys would be very helpful, but I just wanted  
8 to make sure that they're at the right place, where they need to  
9 be, to get their questions answered.  
10  
11 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Ms. Bosarge.  
12  
13 **MS. BOSARGE:** One more question, and so you're starting to  
14 finally receive some data from these units, and it sounds like  
15 you've got about -- Well, I would have to go back and look, and  
16 I don't know if all six-hundred-and-something of them, or 700,  
17 are actually pinging right now, but they should be pinging,  
18 pretty soon, to law enforcement, and that's half the data that's  
19 going to be going to OLE. How is that database handling that  
20 over there?  
21  
22 I know that they -- When we were talking about shrimp and  
23 bringing our 500 units online, if we went to VMS, that they were  
24 going to have to increase their capacity to handle that data,  
25 and so how's it going with you all? Have we heard anything on  
26 that, Jessica?  
27  
28 **DR. STEPHEN:** When we started the SEFHIER program, we did hire  
29 two additional VMS tech support that are specifically dedicated  
30 to the SEFHIER program. They have access both to the SEFHIER  
31 database and the VTrack database, and we are actively working at  
32 the communications between the VTrack database and our SEFHIER  
33 database, to import information into that.  
34  
35 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Ms. Bosarge.  
36  
37 **MS. BOSARGE:** No, I'm talking about the NOAA OLE database that  
38 all that goes into, all those pings.  
39  
40 **DR. STEPHEN:** Yes, and that's the VTrack database system that  
41 the Office of Law Enforcement runs, but the Southeast Region has  
42 access to the information in that system. We just need to make  
43 that database connection to our -- We hired techs, and we work  
44 directly in that system, to see those pings.  
45  
46 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** All right. Anybody else? Mr. Diaz.  
47  
48 **MR. DIAZ:** Thank you, Dr. Stephen, and thank you, Dr. Masi. I

1 appreciate your presentations. I have a couple of questions,  
2 and you all might have said this and I missed it, and I  
3 apologize if so, but, of the 1,328, do we know how many of those  
4 permits are latent permits and might just be out there for sale  
5 or people just aren't using them?  
6

7 **DR. MASI:** I can probably answer that one, and so we don't have  
8 an exact measure of latent permits, and we have estimated it to  
9 be about 20 to 30 percent. However, once we see better  
10 compliance with the VMS, we'll know if that vessel is just  
11 sitting there with the permit and not actively fishing, and so  
12 we'll be able to better address that question probably in the  
13 next year or so.  
14

15 **MR. DIAZ:** Okay. Thank you, and I noticed that you mentioned  
16 this reporting time, where they have to file a report, and you  
17 all are throwing out that sixty minutes, and I actually think  
18 that's a pretty good idea. I know folks have been talking about  
19 having to report for just moving around to get ice and fuel and  
20 things like that, and I think probably most of that could be  
21 accomplished in sixty minutes, and I am curious to see if we'll  
22 get any public testimony on that here. Have you all heard much  
23 feedback so far from the for-hire community about that idea, and  
24 I guess I would also pose that question to Ms. Boggs, also. Dr.  
25 Masi.  
26

27 **DR. MASI:** Thanks for the question, and so we did do some  
28 outreach with some of our constituents on the timeframe, and we  
29 had a few options, and lengthening to as much as possible was  
30 recommended by our constituents. The reason for the sixty-  
31 minute selection is we heard from them, and then we took that  
32 back to OLE, and the sixty-minute was selected over the other  
33 options, given that -- Over the longer option, given the fact  
34 that the position occurs, for the VMS, every hour, and so, in  
35 order to track that, it's easier for OLE to just do it based on  
36 a one-hour position rate. Does that answer your question?  
37

38 **MR. DIAZ:** Thank you, Dr. Masi. Ms. Boggs.  
39

40 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you, Dr. Masi, and so I honestly have not  
41 had the opportunity to talk to any of the captains about this,  
42 and I think we'll hear a lot about it in public testimony, and  
43 so I have a few questions, but, so we don't run out of time, Dr.  
44 Masi, I understand that, on Slide 8, we need -- The council  
45 needs to take action to make these changes to the declaration,  
46 correct?  
47

48 **DR. MASI:** That's correct, and I will probably open the floor to

1 Mara Levy, if she's on, to better address that, if that's okay.  
2  
3 **MS. MARA LEVY:** Yes, and so it's going to require council  
4 action, because the amendment that put this in place said that,  
5 every time you depart for a trip, you need to declare, and so,  
6 if we're going to make an exception to that, the council is  
7 going to need to do that, and it can probably be through an  
8 abbreviated framework action, and, I mean, I know the agency is  
9 recommending sixty minutes, and we'll probably look at a couple  
10 of options, right, and so you're going to do an abbreviated  
11 framework document, if the committee and the council make a  
12 motion to do that.  
13  
14 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Okay. Any discussion on this possible change?  
15 J.D.  
16  
17 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't think sixty minutes  
18 is enough. I know, in Louisiana, the marinas get jammed up in  
19 the middle of the season, and pumping on 300 or 400 or 500  
20 gallons of fuel at a time, and it's going to go over sixty  
21 minutes, and so we might want to address that.  
22  
23 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** As Ms. Levy stated, we might have to look at a  
24 couple of options in the document. Does anybody want to make a  
25 motion to start a document? Mr. Anson.  
26  
27 **MR. ANSON:** I will make that motion. I don't, obviously, have  
28 it, but maybe it would be to direct staff to develop an  
29 abbreviated framework document addressing the temporary  
30 exclusion or --  
31  
32 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** It would be trip declaration  
33 requirements, I believe.  
34  
35 **MR. ANSON:** Okay. **Addressing trip declaration requirements.**  
36 That's good enough, Dr. Simmons? Is that good enough?  
37  
38 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes, and that's the way I  
39 understand we're looking at changing regulations in that  
40 section, and is that correct, Ms. Levy?  
41  
42 **MS. LEVY:** Yes. I think we understand what this is asking.  
43  
44 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Do we have a second?  
45  
46 **COUNCIL MEMBER:** Second.  
47  
48 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Okay, and so we have a motion on the board to

1 **direct staff to develop an abbreviated framework document**  
2 **addressing the trip declaration requirements.** Is there any  
3 opposition to this motion? Mr. Donaldson.  
4

5 **MR. DONALDSON:** I don't have opposition, but I have a question.  
6 We're creating a separate document than the framework action  
7 that we're working on? It has to be a separate document, and we  
8 can't -- I am just thinking of if we can be efficient and  
9 include it in an already existing document, but I don't know.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Ms. Levy.  
12

13 **MS. LEVY:** I mean, you can. I guess it depends on timing,  
14 right, and like how fast we want to move. I don't know, and  
15 maybe staff can talk about whether it would be more efficient to  
16 put them together or not, and I don't know, in terms of where  
17 are in the process. Are we supposed to take final action on the  
18 -- That's why. Okay. You're supposed to take final action on  
19 the other document.  
20

21 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Ms. Somerset and Dr. Simmons.  
22

23 **MS. SOMERSET:** To Mara's point, it was supposed to be final  
24 action at this meeting, but we have the additional mostly  
25 economic analyses for gag, the administrative burden, and so it  
26 is not complete yet, but it would slow it down just a bit, and I  
27 think the idea was to go final at the next meeting.  
28

29 **MR. DONALDSON:** Never mind.  
30

31 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Dr. Simmons.  
32

33 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just  
34 wanted to commend Dr. Masi and Dr. Stephen for helping us come  
35 with solutions on these two issues, and I hope we can move it  
36 through the process quickly. I did have a question about when -  
37 - The council will develop this document, but do you all have a  
38 good idea if the software will have to be modified with the  
39 vendors to accommodate this change? Thanks.  
40

41 **DR. MASI:** The answer to that is no, since we're changing the  
42 regulations, which is why this was the preferred solution. Does  
43 that answer your question?  
44

45 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes, ma'am.  
46

47 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Mr. Strelcheck.  
48

1 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** I recognize that the VMS requirements are  
2 just newly implemented, and we haven't had any instances where  
3 someone has requested an exemption for failure, but, given the  
4 comments earlier, I would certainly lean toward if we could  
5 delay that framework action until August and incorporate this  
6 into the framework action, and let's get everything kind of  
7 addressed all at once and take final action at the August  
8 council meeting. Thanks.

9  
10 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** We have a motion on the board. Do we want to  
11 incorporate it in with -- I mean, I understand what Andy is  
12 saying, and I appreciate Dave's question. We haven't  
13 experienced any failures, and it seems like the SEFHIER team has  
14 been very helpful in addressing all of the issues, and I haven't  
15 been able to comment, but, Dr. Masi, I really appreciated this  
16 presentation, because you have addressed a lot of the questions,  
17 and it appears that, as things come up, you all are addressing  
18 them, and we're getting through without any disruption to the  
19 fishermen, and we may have to hear some comment this afternoon,  
20 and so what is the desire of the committee? Do you all want to  
21 -- Do we need to go ahead and vote this motion up or down and  
22 then come back and discuss it? Ms. Levy, what do I do?

23  
24 **MS. LEVY:** Well, I mean, I guess, if you decide you want to  
25 incorporate it into the current document, you could -- The  
26 motion maker could change the motion, and you could amend it. I  
27 mean, I don't -- It's up to you how you want to proceed, but  
28 Carrie looks like she has something.

29  
30 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Dr. Simmons and then Mr. Anson.

31  
32 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and so I  
33 guess, Andy, do you think that we could just leave this kind of  
34 flexible and just put in the committee report that we could try  
35 to incorporate this and take final action in August, because we  
36 always think these things are easy, and then we get into the IPT  
37 level, and we always get into hiccups, and I would hate to delay  
38 the VMS equipment failure document too much longer, and so can  
39 we have a little flexibility there and just put that into the  
40 report as the intent of the council?

41  
42 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, I'm certainly fine with that approach, and  
43 I think the recommendation we brought forward is pretty  
44 straightforward to consider, and I think the question is about  
45 the timing, which has been some of the discussion today about  
46 that, and we will need to work through that before the next  
47 council meeting.

1 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Mr. Anson.

2  
3 **MR. ANSON:** I guess I'm fine with a delay, if it's in August, if  
4 we are going to incorporate this into the other document, and  
5 it's just two more months, I guess, relative to if we were to  
6 take final action in June, but, in deference to the comments and  
7 concerns that the charter boat operators have brought to us,  
8 that prompted us to develop the other document, and there could  
9 be some potential for impacts to business, and so the two months  
10 more --

11  
12 You know, is it kind of a little bit of a Russian roulette here,  
13 in my mind, as to whether or not -- So certainly, to the extent  
14 that the agency has been very amendable, or sensitive, to those  
15 types of issues, if maybe they can extend that window a little  
16 bit more, if and when those circumstances occur, I guess is all  
17 -- You know, if this were to go to August, and so that's all. I  
18 mean, I can -- We can amend it, or we can just leave it as-is,  
19 if staff is comfortable and everyone is comfortable with trying  
20 to get it in for an August timeline.

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Okay. Ms. Bosarge, I will recognize you, but I  
23 want to ask a quick question to Kevin's point, and, Carrie or  
24 Mara, and I'm not sure, but, when we vote on this motion and we  
25 move forward, we note the flexibility, but, even if we go final  
26 in June with the current document, it won't be on the books,  
27 and, I mean, you're already going to be through summer, and  
28 that's kind of my thinking, and so, if we just marry them, and  
29 then we just get it all out there for the first of next year,  
30 but let's hear what Ms. Bosarge has to say.

31  
32 **MS. BOSARGE:** Well, I think I would prefer to go final in June  
33 with what we have, and then this part might not get -- Might not  
34 be available for them until next year, but, if we go final in  
35 June, and if the agency would give it some priority, that six-  
36 month window, you might have it in place before the end of the  
37 year, but, if we wait until August -- I don't know, and you know  
38 how it goes around Thanksgiving and Christmas, when it comes to  
39 trying to get anything done, and so I think we probably should  
40 go --

41  
42 These people are trying to get these on the boats and  
43 functioning right now, and that's going to be the biggest burden  
44 on the supply chain for these things, when they all rush in  
45 there to get them, because we've only got half the fleet  
46 outfitted right now. Then that leads to possible issues with,  
47 you know, the functioning of the unit, and I don't -- I think it  
48 needs to go faster, rather than slower, and I prefer June.

1  
2 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** All right, and so here we go. We have a motion  
3 on the board to direct staff to develop an abbreviated framework  
4 document addressing the trip declaration requirements. Is there  
5 any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.  
6 Ms. Somerset and then Mr. Anson.

7  
8 **MS. SOMERSET:** Mr. Anson can go first. I have a question about  
9 document clarification, and so I will hold.

10  
11 **MR. ANSON:** Actually, mine is not related to this topic, and I  
12 just wanted to -- Actually, I might bring it up under Other  
13 Business. How's that?

14  
15 **MS. SOMERSET:** All right, and so, just for my edification and  
16 clarification for when I'm updating this document, and sorry to  
17 go back, but I just wanted to ask one more thing about the  
18 permit holder versus the vessel owner-operator, so that, when  
19 I'm making these changes -- Most of the VMS regulations in Part  
20 622 refer to the vessel owner-operator and not the permit  
21 holder, and so I just wanted to clarify that this EFE, the  
22 equipment failure exemption, would be permit holder, but a  
23 majority of the others, including the power-down exemption are  
24 the onus of the vessel owner-operator, and I understand that  
25 several -- There are captains who are also the owners and the  
26 permit holders, but the permit holder is not always the captain  
27 or operator.

28  
29 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** I will let Dr. Masi and Dr. Stephen speak to  
30 this, but -- I am kind of asking this as a question, but I think  
31 it needs to be consistent in all of the documents. Otherwise,  
32 it could get a little messy, if you're trying to do different  
33 things in different areas, and I thought, with Dr. Stephen's  
34 presentation, that it said permit holder, and so I don't know  
35 what you all have to do, the agencies, to get on the same page.

36  
37 **MS. SOMERSET:** Right, Madam Chair, and that's why we wanted some  
38 clarification, because it could cause some confusion, because  
39 the other requirements point towards the vessel owner-operator,  
40 and so I just wanted to point that out.

41  
42 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Okay. Thank you. Dr. Masi, does that take  
43 care of what you needed us to take action on?

44  
45 **DR. MASI:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair.

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Okay. Ms. Bosarge and then Mr. Diaz.  
48

1 **MS. BOSARGE:** While we have Dr. Stephen on the phone, or the  
2 webinar, I had one more question. That \$950 that you all came  
3 up with as the maximum reimbursement that you can get -- I was  
4 looking at some old paperwork that I had, but one of those  
5 cellular units is just at \$2,000, and it's \$1,995, and it's  
6 about twice what you're willing to reimburse for one of them,  
7 and how did you come up with that maximum of \$950?

8  
9 **DR. STEPHEN:** I reached out to VMS as well, when I saw the  
10 dollar amount, and so their analysis is they took an average of  
11 the units, and now that most expensive cellular unit is actually  
12 a hybrid unit that is cellular and satellite, and so they  
13 discounted it from their analysis.

14  
15 **MS. BOSARGE:** So how many units can you actually get on the  
16 cellular side, and, I mean, we have fourteen units, and it looks  
17 like now we're down to three that you can actually get fully  
18 reimbursed for, and are those three less than \$950, the last  
19 three remaining?

20  
21 **DR. STEPHEN:** I would have to look at their analysis again, but  
22 I think at least three of those units that were strictly  
23 cellular would have the reimbursement cover the full cost. Now,  
24 if you choose a more expensive unit, you don't get reimbursed  
25 for the full cost, but you do get reimbursed up to the \$950  
26 amount.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Mr. Diaz.

29  
30 **MR. DIAZ:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think most of us probably  
31 received an email from one of the captains in Florida, and he  
32 was talking about some of the fields on the app don't auto-  
33 repopulate, and it might be just specific to certain units, and  
34 so, in his email, he specifically talked about he returns to the  
35 same dock every day, and he uses hook-and-line gear every day,  
36 and he has the same number of crew virtually every day.

37  
38 Anyway, he was making a comment about it would be good if they  
39 could auto-populate, and so, Dr. Masi or Dr. Stephen, can you  
40 all speak to that, about where we're at with that, or if that's  
41 just with some units, or if there's any options there for the  
42 future? Thank you.

43  
44 **DR. MASI:** Thanks for that question, and so the reason we have  
45 chosen not to allow certain fields to auto-fill is just for  
46 scientific integrity. We hope to be able to use the data  
47 someday, and we want to ensure that we're getting an accurate  
48 representation of those values from the for-hire fishery.

1  
2 If a field is always auto-filled, then you run into the  
3 situation where if, in general, you do the same thing all the  
4 time, but, in a rare instance, you happen to change something,  
5 you might not remember to change that field, because it's  
6 already filled in for you, and so we just want to try to  
7 eliminate the potential to overlook it, if possible.

8  
9 Now, there are some options, and we do allow vendors to take the  
10 path of a favorite, and, in VESL, for instance, if you have a  
11 field, the value that you most often fill in will be listed at  
12 the top of the list, in bold, and so easy to select from all the  
13 other options, and so you just hit that, and it will fill in for  
14 you. The other app we have is eTRIPS, and we're currently  
15 working with them right now on the auto-fill.

16  
17 **MR. DIAZ:** Thank you, Dr. Masi.

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Okay. I have two quick questions, or,  
20 actually, I have three. Dr. Masi, the 8,000 compliance calls  
21 that you referenced on Slide 2, could you very briefly, just  
22 maybe a couple or three bullet points, and what are the  
23 highlights, or what are the high-liners, that people are calling  
24 in about, or what are the compliance issues?

25  
26 **DR. MASI:** I can touch on that, and so, essentially, this  
27 changes over time, right. When the program started, and so  
28 remember this 8,000 is from January 4, 2021, and we, obviously,  
29 had a lot of questions about how to get set up with the  
30 different apps, how to set up an account, things like that.

31  
32 Over time, we saw things like, and we would call out to people,  
33 that you're missing a logbook, or you potentially had a field  
34 filled in wrong, or you were missing a field, and so things like  
35 that over time. More recently, of course, the calls have been  
36 largely focused around either missing reports, but also a lot of  
37 calls about VMS requirements and how to get set up with that and  
38 how to get the reimbursement.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you, and, as I said earlier, I'm going to  
41 put on the record the telephone number that needs to be called,  
42 and so, if anyone is listening, and they don't have that number,  
43 and so to Greg's point of maybe they are calling the wrong phone  
44 number. It's 1-833-707-1632, correct?

45  
46 **DR. MASI:** That's correct. Thanks, Ms. Boggs.

47  
48 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Okay. We do have a question for you, Dr. Masi,

1 and Dr. Stephen, for Other Business, and will you all remain on  
2 the line, or do we need to go ahead and take care of that now?

3

4 **DR. MASI:** I can remain on the line.

5

6 **DR. STEPHEN:** I will be on the line as well.

7

8 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Okay. Thank you. All right. Dr. Hollensead.

9

10 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just for a little  
11 housekeeping, SERO has been really good about these reports and  
12 these updates on SEFHIER, and I just wanted to ask the committee  
13 about the frequency of these reports. What would you all like  
14 to do?

15

16 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Bob Gill.

17

18 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to weigh-in on  
19 that one. We have a new program, and, everything else being  
20 equal, my thinking is we don't need a report every meeting, but  
21 this program has some hiccups at the get-go, the non-compliance,  
22 in my mind, and so I'm thinking an appropriate frequency might  
23 be every other meeting, to get an update on where we are and  
24 where we're going, with an idea to broaden that out when things  
25 seem to settle down.

26

27 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** I mean, I'm fine with that. I mean, I think  
28 it's very important, until we get some of these issues resolved,  
29 and as we continue to hear from the captains, and that might too  
30 determine the frequency, and we're hearing a lot of issues, and  
31 I will let Dr. Stunz weigh-in.

32

33 **DR. STUNZ:** I actually would like maybe to see it every meeting  
34 for the initial beginning here, Bob, and I think for sure we  
35 could back off once we feel like, okay, well, it seems to be,  
36 you know, headed where we want it to be, but, with the  
37 compliance, and the issues we just talked about about maybe not  
38 getting all the information they need, for the next few  
39 meetings, I would prefer --

40

41 It doesn't have to be that extensive, as we've discussed today,  
42 but just a brief update about, you know, here's the users, and  
43 here's the latent, the ones we know about, and here's non-  
44 compliance or whatever, just so we kind of keep a close finger  
45 on what's going on, and then back off, a little later down the  
46 line, but I'm not going to fight that too hard, if it's not  
47 possible.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Mr. Anson.

2  
3 **MR. ANSON:** I would just add that, when the time is appropriate,  
4 any, you know, kind of twenty-thousand or thirty-thousand-foot  
5 level summary statistics of the analysis, any QA/QC issues or  
6 something that has arisen, that we might be able to discuss here  
7 at the council and be able to get back out to the community, if  
8 there are certain things that are impacting the data, but no set  
9 timeline that you have to bring anything back for the next  
10 meeting, but just, at some point, it would be nice to see some  
11 data start to populate, and then, if you do identify any issues  
12 related to data collection, that the council might be a good  
13 place to advertise those. Thank you.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Mr. Donaldson.

16  
17 **MR. DONALDSON:** I just want to agree with Dr. Stunz, and I  
18 think, initially, we probably should do it every meeting, and  
19 then, as the program matures, we can adjust as necessary, but I  
20 think, for right now, there's enough issues that a presentation  
21 every meeting would be a good idea.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Dr. Hollensead, I would agree, until we kind of  
24 get all of these issues worked out, because I think we're going  
25 to continue to hear, especially through the summer, as it really  
26 gets ramped up, and then maybe, Bob, next year, we get a  
27 presentation in January and say, okay, we'll look at it again in  
28 June, and so I would say every month from here. Okay. The next  
29 item --

30  
31 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Susan?

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** I'm sorry, Andy. Go ahead.

34  
35 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I have my hand raised, but it's sometimes being  
36 seen and sometimes not, and so I guess a question, based on the  
37 comments that were just made, and, you know, I hear people,  
38 obviously, talking about they want the presentation at every  
39 meeting, and there was a mention of every other meeting, but the  
40 discussion centered around because of all these issues and  
41 compliance, but I guess what I'm struggling with is what is the  
42 council -- What do we want to bring to the council, in terms of  
43 decisions before the council?

44  
45 This presentation was a very good one, in my opinion, because we  
46 were being very reactive and responsive to feedback and  
47 information we've heard and some key decision points that we  
48 felt that we needed to lay back out to the council or convey to

1 fishermen.

2  
3 If the information you're desiring, going forward, is kind of  
4 similar to that, then I guess my argument would be that staff  
5 would need to help decide at what point are there things that  
6 the council needs to weigh-in on, versus just kind of summary  
7 statistics and data, to kind of let you know these are the  
8 changes that have taken place between meetings, and I don't see  
9 that nearly as helpful and informative to the council as the  
10 larger discussion that we've had around a lot of issues today,  
11 and so I wanted to get some feedback, or reaction, to that from  
12 those that have already weighed-in, and let's see if we can have  
13 a little more flexibility in deciding like at what point do  
14 things come back to the council, versus every meeting we have to  
15 report-out, even if there's really not a lot of changes or  
16 information that we would be bringing back to you, other than  
17 some kind of updates on statistics.

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Well, I will start that discussion. I mean, I  
20 would certainly like to see -- We would have to go back to I  
21 think it's Slide 2 or 3, where it gives us the statistics, how  
22 many -- Because, I mean, this is something that the captains  
23 asked for, and the council took a lot of time and worked through  
24 this, and it's Slide 3.

25  
26 Basically, in just a short -- I don't necessarily guess that we  
27 have to have a presentation, but, you know, what is the  
28 compliance, and is there any issue out there that -- I mean, I  
29 understand that we made -- We took action on one specific issue  
30 today, because it was requested, but just for us to understand  
31 the compliance, and, if the compliance continues to be an issue,  
32 then what is the reason? What needs -- Does the council need to  
33 take action to help with that?

34  
35 So I don't think it needs to be as elaborate as what we saw  
36 today, but I think, until we get this at least through its first  
37 full year, with both VMS and reporting, just a little update.  
38 Thank you. Dr. Stunz.

39  
40 **DR. STUNZ:** Susan, that's exactly it. Nothing extensive, Andy,  
41 and I would -- The slide we're looking at right now is all I  
42 would be looking for, kind of like how we do landings, something  
43 really quick, because my concern is, if it's every other meeting  
44 for now, in this initial phase, if something comes up and then  
45 it's not time to address it at that meeting, and then it goes to  
46 another -- You could be months down the line, and we're not  
47 being probably nearly as adaptive, or responsive, as we need to  
48 be, and hopefully everything goes fine and then we back off,

1 but, at least for now, I would prefer something just as simple  
2 as this slide right here.

3

4 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Mr. Gill.

5

6 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and so I am in the minority  
7 here, I guess, but that's okay. I am thinking, Andy, along the  
8 lines that you're thinking, and that is that the process is  
9 going along, and our interaction is fairly limited and unlikely,  
10 and I'm sure, if there's a problem that arises that needs  
11 council attention, then you all are going to bring that to us,  
12 whether we have a presentation or not, but I am satisfied that  
13 you're going to be working the problem, like you have, and it's  
14 going to move on, and so there's no action item that I see the  
15 council really getting involved with that needs that frequency,  
16 and I was thinking of the workload and what's the value, and so  
17 I am still persuaded that I don't see a need for every meeting.

18

19 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Another thing too, Bob, I think too is there is  
20 several captains out there, when they see these numbers, they're  
21 going to find those folks and find out why aren't you doing  
22 this, because they want people to be compliant, and they want  
23 this program to be successful, and I don't know, Dr. Hollensead,  
24 if it's just something that SEFHIER can just send it and you  
25 provide the update, just a very simple one-pager and here it is,  
26 but I am like Greg, and I would like to see it monthly, at least  
27 for now. Ms. Bosarge.

28

29 **MS. BOSARGE:** Yes, and I think this is, you know, a big enough  
30 program, and it's really light years ahead of the type of  
31 reporting that you had before, and I think this is the true  
32 implementation, right, and everything is finally mandatory, for,  
33 what, thirty-five days now or something, and so we're not well  
34 into this yet, and I think we need an update at each meeting.

35

36 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Is that what you need, Dr. Hollensead?

37

38 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Yes, ma'am.

39

40 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** All right. Well, then would you take us  
41 through Action Item Number VI, please?

42

43 **NMFS-SERO USE OF COUNCIL FUNDING UTILIZED BY THE PERMITS OFFICE**

44

45 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Okay. Agenda Item VI, Mr. Strelcheck will give  
46 a verbal update on the SERO's use of council funding utilized by  
47 the Permits Office. If you recall, the council funded \$94,000  
48 that have been applied to updating the SERO permits software

1 system, and this is informational for now, and no action needs  
2 to be taken. As I understand it, Mr. Strelcheck will sort of  
3 tee-off a more in-depth presentation from a representative from  
4 the permits staff that will occur at the next meeting.

5  
6 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Mr. Strelcheck, whenever you're ready, sir.

7  
8 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Recall that, last year, I  
9 approached the council about providing some funding for our  
10 permits online system. This is a multi-million-dollar overhaul  
11 of our permits system that had reached end-of-life. Previously,  
12 you were only able to renew permits, with our old system, and we  
13 have now built the system and expanded it for all types of  
14 permit applications, and so it's still a work in progress, but  
15 it's largely developed.

16  
17 We rolled it out back in August of last year, and so the \$94,000  
18 -- I can't say specifically what it went for, but what I can say  
19 is that money has been well spent, and the system itself is  
20 reducing the amount of time that it takes to renew a permit, and  
21 it has almost cut that timeframe in half at this point, because  
22 what is now happening is it's reducing the number of errors and  
23 the back-and-forth that we have to have, in terms of sending  
24 paperwork to and from permit applicants.

25  
26 You're also seeing a growing number of people that are using the  
27 system, which is going to make it more efficient and timely for  
28 them to receive their permits and renewals and for us to process  
29 those permits and renewals, and so we are spending a lot of time  
30 now working on some outreach and education, and there is  
31 certainly an emphasis, obviously, on trying to drive people  
32 towards the permits online system and for them to utilize it  
33 effectively, and so, at this stage, we are continuing to put  
34 additional funding from NOAA Fisheries to support both the  
35 operations and maintenance of the system, but the continued  
36 development to enhance the system.

37  
38 Kevin McIntosh, my Permits Branch Chief, I have talked with  
39 Carrie Simmons about having him present at an upcoming council  
40 meeting, and what he can do is provide a much more in-depth  
41 presentation of how the system looks and some of the statistics  
42 we're seeing and the outreach and education efforts that we're  
43 doing for educating permit applicants, and so, with that, I will  
44 answer any questions you have. Thanks.

45  
46 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you, Andy. I will say it works very  
47 well. I've had a couple reach out to -- A couple of captains  
48 reach out to me, and they've had issues, and Kevin has been very

1 responsive and has very quickly addressed the issues, and so I  
2 think it's working well. Any other questions or comments for  
3 Andy? All right. Seeing none, Dr. Hollensead, would you take  
4 us through Agenda Item VII?

5  
6 **UPDATE ON WORKSHOP TO EVALUATE STATE-FEDERAL RECREATIONAL SURVEY**  
7 **DIFFERENCES**  
8

9 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** For Agenda Item VII, we're going to have an  
10 update on a workshop that was held at the end of February  
11 looking at state-federal recreational survey differences. The  
12 states had an opportunity to provide some of their data and  
13 survey information to some consultants, who then got to provide  
14 some feedback and then, at this workshop, sort of have a broader  
15 discussion of those topics, and so Dr. Richard Cody, I believe,  
16 is on the line to provide that update to you.

17  
18 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you. Dr. Cody, are you with us this  
19 morning?

20  
21 **DR. RICHARD CODY:** Yes, I'm here. Can you hear me okay?

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Yes, sir. Please go ahead.

24  
25 **DR. CODY:** All right. As Dr. Hollensead mentioned, we had a  
26 workshop in late February to address congressional mandates for  
27 an independent review of the surveys and make improvements to  
28 those surveys, but also to complete, or to start the process to  
29 complete, the transition for the state surveys, and so,  
30 basically, this was a two-and-a-half-day workshop, and it  
31 focused on two approaches, or two dual approaches.

32  
33 One was to develop the research needed to address the  
34 congressional mandates, and, also, the second part was  
35 completing the transition process, and the idea was that we had  
36 to have both occurring at the same time, to make progress on the  
37 transition, and we couldn't have one bottleneck any kind of  
38 progress with the other.

39  
40 The workshop basically outlined the plan that would be a dual  
41 approach, as I mentioned, and, since then, there has been the  
42 development of an outline of a transition plan, and, next week,  
43 the transition team working group will meet to discuss the next  
44 steps with the workshop and to flesh out who is responsible for  
45 certain parts of the transition plan.

46  
47 In the workshop, there was some discussion of the data  
48 management aspects of the Gulf surveys, and, generally, the

1 approach taken there was, with the help of Gulf States, was to  
2 have the Gulf States take charge of management, given that this  
3 was going to take some time to develop, or it's getting to a  
4 point where it was satisfactory in the long-term.

5  
6 Then the other aspect that was mentioned in the workshop was the  
7 communication related to the work of the transition team, and  
8 so, right now, we're in the process of identifying members from  
9 the different states and regional entities that will populate  
10 this communications team.

11  
12 As I mentioned, the working group will meet next Tuesday, and,  
13 basically, the discussion will focus on some of the products  
14 from the workshop. We have two main products that are expected,  
15 and one is a report from the workshop chair, Paul Rago, and this  
16 will basically summarize the workshop proceedings and hopefully  
17 integrate some of the information from the consultants relative  
18 to their research recommendations. Paul is still working on his  
19 part of that, and so the workshop report, and what he has right  
20 now is he has transcripts of the workshop, and he has notes  
21 taken by staff members that recorded the workshop, and then,  
22 also, he has the draft report from the consultants, which we  
23 just received, that outlines some of the recommendations.

24  
25 Those recommendations, I can say, are both broad and then  
26 specific to the states as well, and so there are some broad  
27 recommendations that focus on survey types and surveys that have  
28 effort, separate effort and catch components, versus the  
29 recapture methods, and then, also, they have some specific  
30 recommendations relating to the actual states themselves, and so  
31 directed more to the states, and so we will be sharing that with  
32 the team on Tuesday, plus, right now, we are in the process of,  
33 as I said, of finalizing that report that Paul will have for us  
34 some time, we hope, later this month.

35  
36 One other point to make is that, related to the transition  
37 process, some specific -- I mention today probably the gag  
38 calibrations related to the stock assessment for gag, and so we  
39 were charged with developing specific TORs, terms of reference,  
40 for inclusion of the gag calibrated estimates in the assessment  
41 process.

42  
43 We have received input from the Southeast Science Center, and  
44 also from the consultants, and shared those with Florida, and so  
45 Florida now is working to address those TORs, and we will be  
46 having a meeting with some Florida representatives and Bev Sauls  
47 to discuss -- Just to make sure we're on the same page, as far  
48 as the expectations for those terms of reference.

1  
2 I will mention, also, that related to some of the information  
3 that was presented in the workshop, we have a meeting coming up  
4 next month, and so with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
5 Fisheries, regarding their calibrations, and so we'll be  
6 discussing that, and that's relative to the use of calibrated  
7 estimates for the upcoming red snapper assessment.

8  
9 I think that's basically where we are at this point. The  
10 meeting next week will be, I think, pivotal, in that it will  
11 determine kind of the next steps. Since we do have a draft of  
12 the consultants' recommendations, the idea will be to focus on  
13 how best to complete the resources needed to address those  
14 recommendations. Thank you.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you, Dr. Cody. Are there any questions  
17 for Dr. Cody? Mr. Gill.

18  
19 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Dr. Cody. I  
20 appreciate the update. Recognizing it's a work in progress, but  
21 also recognizing the importance of that work in progress, and  
22 following up on our discussions during the workshop, my concern  
23 about the timeline comes up, and I would like to ask if you  
24 could give a broad overview of what that timeline looks like,  
25 and I'm not looking for specifics, but kind of how long it's  
26 going to take before transition is complete or some indicator of  
27 where we are and when we hope to end up. Thank you.

28  
29 **DR. CODY:** I can address that, I think, broadly. Obviously, the  
30 research components will address the need for some improvements  
31 to each of the surveys, and the consultants have specific  
32 recommendations related to non-sampling as well as sampling  
33 error, and so those are going to take some time to complete.  
34 However, that shouldn't, I think, be a bottleneck for the  
35 transition plan, but they will still need to be accounted for in  
36 that process.

37  
38 I would say, realistically, the research plan is going to take,  
39 depending on identification of funding and getting things  
40 through the approval processes and so on, it could take between  
41 two and five years, and so that's obviously an extended  
42 timeline, but it doesn't probably help with transition or  
43 anything, and so we're hoping that we can address and prioritize  
44 those research interests over the coming months, in  
45 conversations with the working group, and that will help us, I  
46 think, identify the major things that we can address quickly and  
47 put us in a position where we will have surveys that are --

48

1 I would say, as far as timelines are concerned, in the immediate  
2 future, I think our primary concern would be the gag assessment  
3 and having the review completed for the calibration, in time for  
4 that, and so Florida is working with us and is expected -- They  
5 expect a deadline of later this month for turning in their  
6 documentation for review, and we'll work with them to make sure  
7 that there is -- That we get that done.

8  
9 Then it will pass to the consultants, and we expect to have that  
10 completed -- I think, yesterday, in the Reef Fish Committee  
11 meeting, a May 25 deadline was proposed there, and so we don't  
12 see an issue with meeting that deadline. It does bump up  
13 against some of the consultants, with their day-job work, but I  
14 think that we should be able to get that done.

15  
16 In the immediate future, that deadline shouldn't -- But I would  
17 imagine that we should be able to identify, over the next few  
18 weeks at least, given that we have the consultant report in-  
19 hand, some manageable timeline, when it comes to transitioning  
20 the surveys, and I would be focusing on trying to get that done  
21 within the next two years, at the most, but at least have a plan  
22 outlined.

23  
24 We may not have all the pieces in place, such as the data  
25 management aspects and things like that, but we'll be to a point  
26 where we're functioning and can move forward, and so sort of a  
27 non-answer, because I haven't given any specific dates, other  
28 than the ones for gag, but I think we would be happy to provide  
29 updates of the discussions that we'll be having with the  
30 transition team, because there are many moving parts to this. I  
31 mean, one is the big consideration of everyone's ability to  
32 address the different components of transitioning.

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you. General Spraggins.

35  
36 **GENERAL JOE SPRAGGINS:** Dr. Cody, thank you so much. I just  
37 wanted to tell you that we appreciate the efforts that NMFS has  
38 made to address our differences in the surveys and all, and we  
39 appreciate the workshop, and I can tell you that we are trying  
40 to do something now, and we have a consultant that we're working  
41 with, as I briefed yesterday, about the possibility of trying to  
42 find improvements to our system and the way that we can work  
43 better with data collection, and I look forward to working with  
44 you all in the very near future, to make sure that we can make a  
45 better effort with this. Thank you very much.

46  
47 **DR. CODY:** Thank you, General Spraggins, and I will just add to  
48 that that Trevor has been very upfront and forthcoming about

1 sharing information with us, and so we appreciate that, also.  
2 Thank you.

3  
4 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you, Dr. Cody. I don't see any other --  
5 I do. Never mind. Mr. Diaz.

6  
7 **MR. DIAZ:** I also want to thank Dr. Cody for the efforts of  
8 Science and Technology and the stuff that you all are working  
9 on. I am very interested in hearing further updates on this  
10 transition team regularly, and I think this is very important.  
11 I do think that -- I know the State of Mississippi has been  
12 working closely with your team, Dr. Cody, and I do think they've  
13 made a -- They've presented some compelling evidence that there  
14 is some real issue with low sample size and the numbers that we  
15 get out of that, and so I'm very interested to hear what comes  
16 out of this transition team and some of the recommendations that  
17 are made on the sampling and non-sampling errors, and so I would  
18 urge that we get regular updates on this transition team, at  
19 least for the next few meetings, and see how this is going.  
20 Thank you again, Dr. Cody.

21  
22 **DR. CODY:** Thank you.

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

25  
26 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank  
27 you, Dr. Cody, for the update. I think, as you said, there's a  
28 lot of moving parts here going on, and we don't have -- You said  
29 the report is not yet available for this transition workshop.  
30 When that report is complete, I think it would be imperative,  
31 and I plan to ask for it at the SEDAR Steering Committee meeting  
32 in May, that the document that was developed with your agency,  
33 the Science Center, and the Southeast Regional Office, and that  
34 document is "The Recommended Use of Current Gulf of Mexico  
35 Surveys for Marine Recreational Fishing in Stock Assessments",  
36 and I really think that document needs to be updated based on  
37 the results of the transition team.

38  
39 There is outdated dates in there regarding those options, and  
40 any of the things that would occur, based on that workshop, it's  
41 not clear how that will translate into the assessment and  
42 management process, and so I would really urge all those folks  
43 involved to please consider updating that when that report is  
44 complete, and that is a document that we can look at at the  
45 council level, and staff can look at, and the public can review  
46 as an understanding of where we are in this process and how we  
47 see it flowing through stock assessments and into management.  
48 Thank you.

1  
2 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Dr. Cody, do you have any response to that?

3  
4 **DR. CODY:** Well, I would say that I agree. We did identify some  
5 exceptions in the workshop that I think need to be specifically  
6 addressed. That said, I think, also, and I haven't had a chance  
7 to do a deep dive into the consultant recommendations, but there  
8 is some information there, I think, that is relevant to that  
9 document and could be used to update it.

10  
11 The other thing I will mention too is the consultants did make  
12 some specific recommendations related to, as Dale pointed out,  
13 sample size and rare-event species, and so there is some input  
14 there, and I would be happy to provide updates as we continue  
15 this work.

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you, Dr. Cody. All right. Seeing no  
18 other hands, we'll go to Other Business. Mr. Anson.

19  
20 **OTHER BUSINESS**

21  
22 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am a little hesitant  
23 about bringing up this topic, because I don't want to alarm  
24 anybody, but, since Dr. Masi and Dr. Stephen were here present  
25 for this committee, this is an issue that kind of reared its  
26 head at the Ecosystem Committee meeting, and it relates to the  
27 FEP that we've been discussing relative to the notion of one of  
28 the aspects, or one of the ideas, that was brought forward  
29 during that committee regarding cooperative research.

30  
31 I was just curious if Dr. Masi or Dr. Stephen could just provide  
32 a simple answer as to this question I have, and that question is  
33 if, in the future, it is decided that cooperative research could  
34 be introduced through the for-hire sector, is the process that  
35 was set up to establish SEFHIER -- Is that process in a position  
36 where it could accommodate the addition of either a module that  
37 would be created specifically to an ecosystem issue, a fishery  
38 ecosystem issue, or additional questions that could be added to  
39 the current suite of questions?

40  
41 Again, I'm just trying to think ahead, and I'm not promoting it,  
42 because, again, it's nothing that we decided at the Ecosystem,  
43 but I'm just curious to see if that could be easily implemented  
44 through what's been established through the SEFHIER program.

45  
46 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Dr. Masi or Dr. Stephen?

47  
48 **DR. STEPHEN:** I'll take a stab at this one. Sorry, and I wasn't

1 in the Ecosystem meeting, and so I didn't hear how the  
2 conversation went there, but if you're asking, if we add  
3 additional questions to SEFHIER -- I will give you kind of a  
4 layout of how that works.

5  
6 We would need to get PRA approval, which is the approval we need  
7 to add any questions to the system, and so that's kind of a  
8 paperwork aspect to it, and it does need to be approved  
9 throughout the process and have strong justification.

10  
11 The next step then would be reaching out to the different  
12 vendors and establishing a timeline for them to do the  
13 development work, in order to add those questions to not only  
14 their application, but we would also need to reach out and  
15 establish the infrastructure within the data receiving systems,  
16 in order to get that information as well, and so well within the  
17 realm of possibility, and it's the timeline of it that I might  
18 get a little bit concerned on, if it's expected to occur  
19 rapidly.

20  
21 Because these were all outside applications and not applications  
22 owned by NMFS, we're a little bit limited in asking for them to  
23 add additional questions, and that's just they need their  
24 development time within their other businesses to do that  
25 development. Did that answer what you were looking for?

26  
27 **MR. ANSON:** It did. Thank you very much.

28  
29 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** That was a very good question, Kevin, and I  
30 agree with you. I mean, that would be a way to gather  
31 additional information. Any other business? Peter and then  
32 John Walter.

33  
34 **MR. HOOD:** I just wanted to mention that the South Atlantic  
35 Council, at their meeting last month, has started working on an  
36 electronic -- A commercial electronic logbook amendment, and  
37 we're -- I know you'll be talking about this at the June  
38 meeting, and I think Carrie had mentioned that it would be on  
39 the agenda there, but we're recommending that that perhaps be a  
40 joint amendment between both of the councils, because the  
41 coastal logbooks are used by a variety of fisheries, both in the  
42 Gulf and the South Atlantic. Again, it would be helpful, at  
43 least when you get into that conversation, about thinking about  
44 doing something jointly with the South Atlantic. Thanks.

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

47  
48 **DR. WALTER:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to follow-up

1 on Mr. Anson's comment about how this could potentially  
2 facilitate CRP work, and I think that it definitely could, and  
3 perhaps some of the models are on how fishermen could help with  
4 surveys, or how their data could be helped to inform things,  
5 which we might not have very much information on, and I think we  
6 talked about that in the fireside chat last night, in  
7 particular, and there's a number of species for which there are  
8 fisheries for, but we really either don't have surveys, and we  
9 could perhaps develop indices based on their fishery-dependent  
10 information, which this could really facilitate, and then, also,  
11 in perhaps designed surveys that would utilize fishing vessels,  
12 and I think, in that case, there is a good example, in the South  
13 Atlantic, with a deepwater longline survey that's operating on  
14 commercial longline vessels and actually getting us really good  
15 data for a lot of the species that we previously didn't have  
16 data for.

17  
18 Cooperative research is something that I know is high on the  
19 agency's list of priorities, in terms of being able to harness  
20 the information and the expertise of our fishermen to support  
21 the science. Thanks.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Thank you, Dr. Walter. Anything else for this  
24 committee?

25  
26 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Susan, I do have something.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Okay. Go ahead, Andy.

29  
30 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I just wanted to follow-up on Peter's comment,  
31 and so, as he stated, the South Atlantic Council is moving  
32 forward with a logbook action. They are going to look at an  
33 options paper in June, and I think the goal is to try to take  
34 final action as early as December of this year, and so I would  
35 ask Carrie. Do you need a motion from the Gulf Council to  
36 proceed at this point with a joint amendment with the South  
37 Atlantic Council? I certainly recommend that, and I think it  
38 would be prudent to go ahead and do so.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Dr. Simmons.

41  
42 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. No, and,  
43 actually, we've been talking about this for a while, and I think  
44 we had a motion from February of 2013, and so it's been on the  
45 list for a while, and so we are planning for a joint amendment,  
46 and I hope we can make it happen and there's no divorces, but  
47 we'll have a discussion and try to get involved with the IPT and  
48 the South Atlantic to bring, hopefully, draft options, if not a

1 presentation, in June.

2

3 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Great. Thanks.

4

5 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Ms. Bosarge. Dr. Simmmons, we don't need a  
6 motion, or Dr. Hollensead?

7

8 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** I think Carrie is indicating that no motion is  
9 required, because it's been several years ago, but I actually  
10 had a question, and maybe Mr. Strelcheck, or perhaps Mr. Hood,  
11 can answer this for me. I know there has been -- We have  
12 brought the commercial electronic logbook topic to the Reef Fish  
13 AP and the CMP AP, and there has been interest from our APs  
14 that, if the paper logbooks, as they exist, go to an electronic  
15 framework, that there is strong support for that.

16

17 I guess my question is, and it seems like that perhaps could be  
18 moved quickly, but, just for clarification, is that what the  
19 South Atlantic is working on, or are they also talking about  
20 adding other fields, reporting a hail-in before offload, because  
21 those things, you know, our APs indicated they would want some  
22 input on, and perhaps some workshops, and so that would take a  
23 little bit longer, and so just some clarification on that would  
24 be helpful.

25

26 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Andy.

27

28 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Certainly John Walter can weigh-in here, but my  
29 understanding is that it's a kind of simple, streamlined action  
30 that the South Atlantic Council was pursuing and that it would  
31 be essentially just allowing for electronic submission of the  
32 same variables and data that are submitted currently on the  
33 paper-based forms, without expanding out the requirements.

34

35 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you for that clarification. I appreciate  
36 it.

37

38 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Ms. Bosarge.

39

40 **MS. BOSARGE:** So a different topic, if that's okay, if there's  
41 no more feedback on that.

42

43 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Yes, ma'am.

44

45 **MS. BOSARGE:** Okay. I was wondering, and this is for you, Dr.  
46 Walter, and the wenchman -- We've had a discussion, and, since  
47 Susan has got six more minutes in her committee, we might as  
48 well use it, right, and we had a discussion about wenchman at

1 the fireside chat last night too, kind of going in line with  
2 what you all were talking about on cooperative research and  
3 getting information from the fishermen on some of these species  
4 where maybe you don't have as much information.

5  
6 We need to get that topic before the SSC, to really start moving  
7 on that and doing anything with it, and it's my understanding  
8 that the Science Center is going to provide, obviously, that  
9 last stock assessment, that data-poor assessment, that we did I  
10 believe, or tried to do, on using the mid-water snapper complex  
11 and any other information that you may have, and what do you  
12 think our timeframe has on you getting any and all wenchman data  
13 that you all might have, mid-water snapper depth complex data  
14 you might have, over to council staff, so they know when they  
15 can put it on the SSC agenda?

16  
17 **DR. WALTER:** Thanks for that question. I can't say what the  
18 timeline would necessarily be, because I don't exactly know all  
19 the information sources that we might be able to get that from,  
20 but I can get back to you, and back to council staff, on when  
21 that might be kind of a useful conversation that is seeded by  
22 data for the SSC.

23  
24 One thing that I will comment on is that, given that there are  
25 funds available, through the competitive Cooperative Research  
26 Program, which often the scientists take on, but they have to be  
27 partnerships with the industry as well, so the industry can look  
28 to trying to really target those particular topics of interest  
29 and then find a scientific partner to go in on, and those can be  
30 both within the agency as well as external, and so I think  
31 that's a resource that we need to start to consider, because  
32 that allows proactive -- It allows the industry to take the  
33 action that they may want to take and find the partner to make  
34 it happen and then bring that science and data, because, while I  
35 would love to devote our resources, the Science Center  
36 resources, to all of these, there are a number of pressing  
37 resources, and we just can't get to all of them with the  
38 attention that people may want.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** A follow-up, Ms. Bosarge?

41  
42 **MS. BOSARGE:** Yes, and that sounds excellent, and I like those  
43 kind of ideas. All right. Well, if you -- Maybe by the  
44 committee report during Full Council tomorrow, if you have any  
45 feedback on the timeline for -- Because I think it's just stuff  
46 you're going to pull, and it's not new things you will have to  
47 do, but you're just going to have to find whatever data you have  
48 and send it to staff, and so maybe if you can get us an update

1 by Full Council, and that will give me a better idea, before we  
2 leave this meeting, of what SSC agenda that we'll see that topic  
3 on. Thanks.

4

5 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Dr. Simmons.

6

7 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I know  
8 you're trying to wrap up. Just along the cooperative research  
9 idea, I mean, I do think that's a good idea, but, historically,  
10 it's been quite competitive, and it's been not a lot of money,  
11 and it's been only for one year, and so I think we have to think  
12 about perhaps expectations with that.

13

14 You know, when you're trying to answer some of these difficult  
15 questions offshore, it's not really possible to do it in that  
16 amount of time with that little amount of money, and so perhaps  
17 we should think about revamping some of those programs to meet  
18 some of these needs, and then, on top of that, it would have to  
19 flow through the priorities as well, to get some of this mid-  
20 water and deepwater species to the top of the list. Thanks.

21

22 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Mr. Gill.

23

24 **MR. GILL:** Quickly, to that point, there's also the MARFIN  
25 program that allows longer timeframes than the CRP program, and  
26 typically is better funded, that might also be used.

27

28 **CHAIRMAN BOGGS:** Anything else to come before this committee?  
29 Seeing none, that concludes our committee.

30

31 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on April 6, 2022.)

32

33

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