GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

DATA COLLECTION COMMITTEE

Renaissance Battle House Mobile, Alabama

October 24, 2018

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The Data Collection Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council convened at the Renaissance Battle House, Mobile Alabama, Wednesday morning, October 24, 2018, and was called to order by Chairman Greg Stunz.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA
APPROVAL OF MINUTES
ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS

CHAIRMAN GREG STUNZ: I will call to order the Data Collection Committee. For the new committee members, I will announce those. Obviously, it's me as the Chair, Mr. Anson is Vice Chair, Mr. Schieble, Ms. Boggs, Dr. Crabtree, Mr. Donaldson, Ms. Guyas, Mr. Sanchez, Dr. Mickle, and Mr. Swindell. We have all of those members present.

The first item of business will be Adoption of the Agenda. Does this committee have any changes or additions to the agenda? Seeing none, I do have one just minor change. Under Item IV there is all the MRIP discussions, and we might move up Item VI, which is also just a brief update on an MRIP workshop that had recently occurred, to kind of go along with that, before we get into the for-hire section of the agenda, and so, if there is no oppositions to that minor move, I think Mr. Donaldson moves the accepted agenda. Is there a second?

MR. KEVIN ANSON: Second.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Okay. Second by Mr. Anson. Any opposition? Seeing no opposition, the agenda is approved. Our next item of business is Approval of the Minutes from the August 2018 meeting. Is there any comments, edits, or suggestions to the minutes? Seeing none, would someone please offer a motion to approve those?

MS. MARTHA GUYAS: I will make that motion.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Moved by Ms. Guyas.

MR. ANSON: Second.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: We have a second from Mr. Anson. Any opposition? Seeing no opposition, the minutes are approved. Our next item of business is Dr. Froeschke, if you want to talk us through the Action Guide, and I guess, keeping in spirit with what we've been doing and talking about that component of the Action Guide as we get to it, it seems like it keeps everything fresh on everyone's mind, and so, if you want to go through the first section regarding the action plan, and we'll come back to it as we move through the agenda.

REVISIONS TO MRIP RECREATIONAL DATA COLLECTION

DR. JOHN FROESCHKE: Thanks. The first item for Data Collection is the presentation from Dr. Cody at MRIP, and this is regarding the revisions to the MRIP data collection that incorporates -- As you all know, the MRIP survey has recently transitioned to a mail-based effort survey, and they have made this change and recalibrated the data historically to be in a common currency.

They're going to give a presentation about that and highlighting the changes in their estimates of historical effort and harvest for several species, and the committee will need to look at that and think about how these calibrations could affect our ongoing management, and so we'll start there.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Okay. Thank you, Dr. Froeschke, and so, Dr. Cody. If you're following along, this is going to be Tab F, and Number 4(a) is his presentation. Whenever you're ready, go ahead.

While they are pulling this up, we had some discussion in the SEDAR Committee that is related to the MRIP, and so it was kind of hard to discuss one without discussing what is occurring here, and so there will be a lot of synergy, and maybe overlap, to that discussion, and so, anyway, Dr. Cody, it looks like your presentation is up, whenever you're ready.

DR. RICHARD CODY: Thank you. What I had planned to present today really is just an update of our transition to our FES, in particular, but also the APAIS, or the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey, improved survey designs.

As you probably are all pretty well aware, MRIP really consists of two different components that go together to generate catch estimates. We have an effort component, and that's covered generally through telephone and mail surveys, and then we have an access point direct angler intercept survey, which is used to get the catch information, and that's done dockside at public access and also private access, publicly accessible private access, sites.

One thing that I want to kind of stress from the very beginning is that recreational data is just one of many different components that are used in stock assessments, and it, along with the commercial data, basically comprised the fisherydependent component for stock assessments, and you also have fishery-independent data, and that includes specialized surveys and biological information to also be included in stock assessments.

MRIP itself really is a collection of surveys. It's really a collaborative effort. The surveys that you hear the most about are the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey and then the Coastal Household Telephone Survey, or Effort Survey, which was changed in 2018 to the Fishing Effort Survey, but, really, there are a number of regional surveys that are part of a larger collaborative effort, and I won't get into the details of the different surveys, but it spans both coasts, and it includes the Pacific Islands and the Caribbean as well.

For fishing effort, in 2018, we transitioned to a new survey called the Fishing Effort Survey from what was previously known as the Coastal Household Telephone Survey, which was a random digit dialing survey of coastal households, and, as everybody knows, in recent years, the survey, because of its dependence on landlines, had become less and less effective as a way to reach anglers, because, basically, you had a lot of coastal areas anyway, in particular, where you had people dropping landlines in favor of cellphone use.

That was a major impetus for changing the survey over. I will mention also that the Fishing Effort Survey, and I will talk mostly about the changes to that, but it really affects the shore and private boat modes only.

It doesn't impact the charter mode. That is covered by the for-hire telephone survey, and that's a telephone survey, but it's a list-based survey, and it operates based upon information provided by the charter operators, and so the contact, the phone number, that they use has been given to us by the charter captains. Then there is also the Large Pelagic Survey, which is something that doesn't really impact the Gulf so much, but it is another telephone survey that is used in the Northeast.

For estimating catch rates, we use the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey. It's a dockside intercept, and there is also the headboat sampling that we use as well, and that is used to inform biological sampling information for headboat surveys. Again, I mentioned the Large Pelagic Survey.

As far as the improvements made to the survey designs, the Fishing Effort Survey, as I said, is a mail-based survey of shore and private boat trips, and it replaces the legacy telephone survey. It uses the U.S. postal address system database, or sequences, and also it uses angler registries to augment that information, and so you've got the most complete set of contact information, address information, from the U.S. postal address system, but you also have state-based angler registries that are used to supplement that sampling. It produces higher estimates of trips, or effort, but also we feel more accurate estimates of fishing effort.

The Access Point Angler Intercept Survey has gone through some changes too, but not to the same extent that we had for the Fishing Effort Survey, where there was a complete change in the mode of how this survey was administered. With the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey, the improvements were more subtle, and they tended to better align the survey design with the estimation process, so that you had the two reflecting the -- You had the estimates reflecting the survey design.

We have better time-of-day coverage, which is something we didn't have with the previous access point survey, and that has some PR consequences that I might get into a little bit later, but, overall, it gives us better coverage on a twenty-four-hour basis, and then these estimates, as I said, because we aligned the survey design with the estimation process, the way it's supposed to be, these are more statistically sound estimates.

With the fishing effort survey, one of the big advantages of it is that it is a major improvement over the phone survey, in our ability to reach anglers, and so we reach far more anglers on these surveys. The surveys get into the right hands, and that's another thing that -- With a phone survey, it tends to be the person who answers the phone that gives the information on the fishing trips, and they may not be the person that actually makes the fishing trips.

On top of that, it's a cold call, and so you don't have time to prepare for the questions, and so we get about a three-times higher response rate from the Fishing Effort Survey relative to the old Coastal Household Telephone Survey.

We also have an improved questionnaire. One of the things about the telephone system is that it used the CATI system, and it was a pretty complex type of a system. You needed pretty well-trained interviewers to administer the survey, and, because of its complexity, it tended to have a tendency for respondents to hang up before the survey was finished, and so we got a lot of incomplete answers to surveys.

With the Fishing Effort Survey, the questionnaire itself is a little bit more general, and it leads into the discussion. It doesn't hit the angler straight out of the box with we are NOAA and we want to know what you're doing for fishing. It asks about outdoor activity, and it asks some questions related to weather, and then it gets into the fishing questions.

The two surveys, the two redesigns, have been extensively reviewed by -- Actually, in the 2017 National Academy of Science review, both were given high marks as improvements over the old methodology.

With the improvement made to these two surveys, and in particular with the FES, since it was a complete change in the methods that were used, we decided, with the help of our partners, the councils and states and the commissions, that we needed a well-developed transition plan with a benchmarking period. There would have to be a calibration to maintain the historical time series and a way to convert the old estimates to the new currency, so that they could be used in stock assessments and in management decisions.

What we came up with was a three-year benchmarking period from 2015 to 2017, where both surveys were conducted side-by-side, and this was the basis for the calibration model that was used to adjust the old methodology into the new currency, and vice versa.

One thing I mentioned is that, with the calibration, you can go from the old methodology, the Coastal Household Telephone Survey, to the FES, or the Fishing Effort Survey, or vice versa. The calibration itself doesn't care which method that is used. It will produce a calibration for either, and so we realized that, for the 2018, the first year that the FES is being done and the CHTS wasn't, that there would be a need for calibrated estimates to be -- The FES newer estimates to be calibrated back to the old Coastal Household Telephone Survey numbers, so that the 2017 ACLs could be evaluated correctly, and there is the ability to extend that beyond 2018.

Just some ideas of the magnitude of the differences between the two surveys, and what I have here are sets of graphs for both private boat and shore, but the first one is for private boat, and you have two graphs. The blue, the top bar, is the new methodology, and the bottom bar is the old methodology, and, right away, you can see there is a substantial difference in the estimated effort for private boat for the Gulf of Mexico.

For the purposes of just visualization, we broke these graphs up into two main periods. You have telephone versus mail in the first period, and then you have telephone versus mail plus a wireless effect in the second period, and what that is showing, really, is the adjustment made to the calibration model after the year 2000, when we introduced a wireless effect into the model. After 2000, we tried to account for the changes in the use of landlines by an increasing cell use in that period, and so that's what that reflects.

In general, what you see is a change of about 2.2 overall times difference between the new and the old, but you will see that, in the more recent years, from 2000 onwards, that these numbers tend to be a little higher than they had been for the first few years, 1981 through 1999, and that reflects the incorporation of the wireless effect into the calibration model.

For shore, the change is more substantial. It's more than three-times the effort that we experienced with the old methodology, and, again, you will see that, in more recent years, because of the wireless effect, or associated with the wireless effect, there is an even higher rate of change.

Just some numbers here, and I have a few graphs that show the differences in estimates for harvest and for total catch. In this case here, we have gag harvest for the Gulf, and this doesn't include Texas, and, after 2013, it doesn't include Louisiana, and so it's completely made up from -- It's made up of MRIP estimates, and it doesn't include the state surveys for either Texas or Louisiana, just to make that point.

What you will see is that, for gag, and with other species too, the trends seem to be fairly similar. You do get more pronounced peaks and troughs in the new estimates, and, again, some of that -- A lot of is due to the effect from the FES calibration, but there are some effects associated with the calibration used for the access point surveys as well, depending on the species that you look at.

For total catch, which includes discards, there is a similar type of trend. Overall, it's about more than two-times higher. Then you have, in more recent years, particularly 2015 through 2017, the benchmarking period, it seems to be the highest differences.

For triggerfish, we see a similar trend overall, less than twice the amount for harvest, but 2015 through 2017, and, actually the wireless effect period onwards, is a little higher than previous years, and there is a similar effect for total catch. Where we’ve had increases in the CHTS-based estimates in 2017 and 2016, we have noticed, for some species, and I don’t know if it’s a general trend or not, but that the landings and the catch rates are higher for those species during the benchmarking period, when the trend is up.

Spanish mackerel is a species that has a shore component, and you will notice that, overall, it’s about 2.4-times higher for the harvest, and, in recent years, it’s about three-times higher, and so there is a general increase in the difference between the surveys as you get into the more recent years. It’s the same with total catch. We see the same type of thing.

What we have seen for many species is that, if there’s a high shore component, because the FES has a larger effect on the shore estimates, it tends to translate into higher estimates for those species, with higher differences between the two estimates.

Red snapper, we see trends are very similar, about a two-times higher rate overall, but slightly higher in the benchmarking period. For total catch, we see a similar trend, a little bit higher, and, in general, it tends to be that, for total catch, if there is a high discard component, there tends to be, it seems, a higher -- A greater difference between the estimates than there is for the harvest.

Just to throw in some inshore species, this is red drum, and you will see, again, the trends are fairly similar, with most of the peaks and troughs mirroring what has happened in the previous methodology, but, overall, it’s about a two-times difference, or twice as much, with higher rates in more recent years. This is similar also for total catch that contains the discard component.

As far as impacts on recreational fishing, obviously I pointed out that there are major differences between the catch estimates for both methods, and so we expect this will translate into impacts to stock status, catch limits, and allocation decisions. Generalizations are very hard to make at this point, because, as I said, the recreational catch component is only one of many inputs into stock assessments.

As far as the stock assessment schedule, this was a schedule produced by the transition team with input from the councils, commissions, and states. It’s not set in stone, and it may differ from what is available on the SEDAR website and elsewhere, and I know there is some discussion about incorporation of the new information into updates, rather than benchmarks, and so this is not an exhaustive list, and it may not be entirely accurate. It's based on the transition team's input.

The key takeaways really are that there is a substantial increase in effort, especially with the shore mode, and the stocks that tend to have a high proportion of catch from shore in general are more heavily impacted, but, again, there is an impact from the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey calibration as well, and that can affect the magnitude of the difference. They are not independent, so to speak.

The changes in effort are generally larger in more recent years, and this is mostly driven by the wireless effect in the FES calibrations, and then, for 2018, catch will be back-calibrated to ensure that ACLs set in 2017, using the old methodology, match the currency that is being used to evaluate those ACLs, and that can be continued for a number of years, while the stock assessments are being done.

As far as stock assessments and incorporating the new data, that is starting, and has started, and we expect that those will be used to determine stock status and ACLs going forward, and so, as far as what's next, as I said, the revised total catch estimates are available right now. They have been available since July, and they are being incorporated into some assessments and updates, or planned assessments.

The 2018 ACLs and catch estimates will be in the same currency, and it won't be evaluated using the different currency, because of the differences in the catch rates, or in the catch estimates, I should say.

In 2019, we probably can expect preliminary management changes that may be made for reassessed stocks. Again, that's up to the councils, and I don't want to make that set in stone here, but this is just what we anticipate. Then calibrated statistics incorporating the additional new information will be incorporated in 2019 and 2020, going forward, into the new assessments.

Based on the new stock assessments, management decisions could happen in 2020, probably, at the earliest, but that's -- As I said, I'm just here to present on the MRIP data, and this is some of the information that came out of the dealings of the transition team. That is it for the FES transition update. I do have an additional slide here on state surveys, and I will leave it up to Greg if you want to ask questions on that.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Okay. Sure. Thank you, Dr. Cody, for the informed presentation, and I am sure there will be some questions from the committee as well as on some of the state programs that you just referred to. In fact, I think we'll talk about that some even a little bit later in the agenda as well, and so are there any questions from the committee? Ms. Bosarge.

MS. LEANN BOSARGE: I am not on your committee, but I was wondering -- You talk about it having a higher impact on the shore-based fishing, and so you are switching from the telephone to a piece of paper, right, and so why do you all think that -- That piece of paper reaches all anglers equally, I would assume, whether you're fishing from a boat offshore or from a pier or whatever, but what do you think is driving the shore-based change to be more dramatic than the others?

DR. CODY: There are a couple of theories that have been proposed by the consultants that have been involved with the project, and one of those is that shore fishing events, or fishing trips, tend to be less memorable, and, when you're put on the spot in a phone call, those trips tend not to be reported as accurately as something like a boat-based trip.

It also could be that the boat-based anglers that report on these trips actually are remembering some of those shore-based trips as well and reporting them, and so those are the two theories out there, and we are looking at that information, to evaluate it and see what we can do in 2018, going forward, to get a better idea of what is going on.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Dr. Mickle.

DR. PAUL MICKLE: Thank you, Dr. Cody. That was an informative presentation, and I do have a question about the mail survey, following up on Leann's question. With a mail survey, I know it's been through extensive testing and peer review, which was the title of your slide, but was it ever discussed that maybe a mail survey, because it probably takes more time, and there would be prep, that you just said, involved with filling it out and submitting it, but would you think that would be a bias as targeting anglers who are more engaged in the fishery, and probably better and more efficient at catching in the fishery, increasing landings, which seems to be the trend on every single slide you showed with data? Thank you.

DR. CODY: There are a few exceptions to the increasing trend, just a couple of species here and there, but not -- In general, that is the case. What we've been doing is that, as I said, we have been using the state-based license information to augment the sample.

In doing so, it gives us an opportunity to compare what is reported by anglers, identified as anglers, versus the outreach household in the survey, and so, as far as we can tell so far, there is no indication of a bias from that study, but that's a limited study that was done a couple of years ago as part of the pilot testing, and so another thing that they looked at as well was response, non-response, bias, and they did a follow-up survey on the non-respondents, and there was no indication from that that there was a bias from that as well, but that is something that we continue to look at.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Go ahead, Dr. Mickle.

DR. MICKLE: Just an example of how this change is probably going to affect the way that management exists in the State of Mississippi, and so just some numbers to throw out there of what has actually occurred, as far as landings, with spotted seatrout.

I think this is relevant, because, although it's a state species, more than 90 percent of the total data going into our stock assessments is recreational harvest, and so you can imagine the effect that this calibration can have. In 2015, it went from 1.7 million pounds landed in the State of Mississippi for spotted seatrout to 3.5. In 2016, 2.9 to 7.1 million. In 2017, 1.2 million to 5.5 million. These are orders of magnitude different planets here.

Then, in talking to my stock assessment specialists, we harvest a lot of seatrout, a total of maybe even up to 62 percent, average, total biomass harvest. If we look at these landings, we would be harvesting more than is swimming out there on the prior year, and so reality seems to be leaving the conversation, and at what point -- Who identifies this as best available science, and who is tasked with identifying this, and at what point do the scientists within each state, or on the federal level, acknowledge that maybe this isn't informative to the model anymore? That's just something that we're struggling with in the State of Mississippi, and I had a voice here, and thank you.

DR. CODY: I would defer to Roy and others to address that question. I mean, obviously, for best available science, the FES is what we have right now, and we had to get away from the Coastal Household Telephone Survey. There really wasn't a choice there at all. We knew it was bad, and so to stick with that would have been -- We probably would have been challenged even more.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Dr. Crabtree.

DR. ROY CRABTREE: I think we're all looking at this and trying to understand what's going on. We have a number of state surveys going on in the Gulf now that are all giving lower catch estimates than the FES survey is, and I don't think there's a -- I don't think we understand yet exactly what is happening with it, and so I think that's part of the reason that we backed off on the MRIP revision assessments and that we're slowing down a little bit and taking a look at some of these things, and so I've heard comments like that, Paul, from a number of other states, and I don't know what the answer to that is, but there are discussions going on, and I know Clay has been on some email discussions with some of our scientists, nationwide, posing exactly that question of what catch estimates are the best available and what are we going to use in stock assessments.

I don't know where that is going to come down at this point, but I understand the concerns you raise, and I think there are a lot of things that we need to understand better than we do right now, and hopefully we'll make progress on this over the next year.

DR. CODY: Can I add to that just one other thing as well? We started a pilot study in 2018 to do a side-by-side with the FES, and it will be a push-to-web design, and so that will allow us to introduce other questions to the survey that can be completed online that might give us a better picture of what's going on with the survey, but there does appear to be some consistency between the behavior of the Fishing Effort Survey and other mail-based surveys, in terms of showing overall increases in estimates. We saw that with a pilot study for the Fish Hunt Survey also.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: I have Mr. Swindell and then Ms. Bosarge.

MR. ED SWINDELL: Looking at the chart here for red drum, of all fisheries, we keep pushing off the stock assessment on that particular fishery, but I am looking here at your last three years, I think I'm looking at, and the total catch and harvest of red drum has drastically dropped. Any particular reason that you are aware of, from your surveys?

DR. CODY: No, I don't have a particular reason why that might have happened. I thought it was a consistency with both surveys though. I will just pull it back up, if you don't mind. There was a drop around, I think, 2012 through 2014 or so, or 2015. I don't really have an explanation for that, except that it's consistent for both surveys.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Dr. Froeschke, did you have a comment?

DR. FROESCHKE: We talked about this on Slide 12 at the MRIP red snapper workshop, and the explanation we discussed there was that's because LA Creel was removed from the survey, from there, and so the landings drop is likely attributed to the landings that are now being reported through LA Creel.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: This is some good conversation, and I know Ms. Bosarge is next here, and we're probably going to have to move on in a minute, and so, if there's any last-minute questions, we will go through them, but, Ms. Bosarge, go ahead.

MS. BOSARGE: I was just thinking about the differences between a telephone and a mail, and there are strengths and weaknesses to both, obviously. If you have good phone numbers, the phone works great, right, but, if you don't, then it's not so wonderful, and it's the reason we're still doing it on the charter boat side, because you have good numbers for them, telephone numbers, but I am thinking about the response that you get that says, no, I did not fish.

If you call somebody on the phone, and you've got them on the phone, they will tell you, real quick, that, no, I didn't fish. They may hang up on you after that, but you found out if they fished or not. Now, when you go to a paper survey, and you're asking them about all their activities and such, for that individual that didn't fish, and you are wanting to know if he fished, think about somebody that is not in this management realm and they're just a normal person.

They're like, oh, they want to know if I fished, and, well, I didn't fish, and so, okay. Then they deep-six it. To tell you they didn't fish, they have got to fill it out and put a stamp on it and take it to the post office, and they probably think, well, I didn't fish, and so they don't need me to mail this back, right, and so I'm wondering -- Have you looked at the no-fishing responses on the paper side, versus what it used to be on the telephone side, and see if there are any big differences there? If there are, then I would guess that the no response, the people that don't respond on the paper side, that would need to be kind of factored in.

DR. CODY: Yes, it is a fact that more people are reporting fishing trips with the mail survey, and so the paper survey, the way it's administered, it gets more people to report fishing trips. With the telephone survey, the question of whether you fished or not can get you off the phone quicker if you say no, and so there is also the possibility that people, because they just don't want to be on the phone, they will say no, just to get out of the call, and so there is that possibility as well, as part of the telephone survey.

The thing about the mail survey is that you have a time to look at it, and there is language in the actual survey that says no fishing trips are important, that information is important too, but, also, there is other information that people can report on, such as the weather and outdoor activities, participation, things like that, and so those are also in there to get people to respond to the survey.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: One more question from Mr. Schieble, and then I think we're going to have to move on. I know there's a lot of good discussion, and we'll have to continue this into the future, certainly, but we have a lot of other agenda to cover as well. Mr. Schieble go ahead.

MR. CHRIS SCHIEBLE: I will make it quick. This goes back to what Dr. Froeschke said over there, and so there are no Louisiana landings data at all in this? LA Creel is entirely removed from all of this?

DR. CODY: Louisiana is included when they were a part of MRIP, going back in time, and so, in 2013, they are in there. After 2013, they are not in there, and so the LA Creel data is not included in this. These are just purely MRIP estimates.

MR. SCHIEBLE: So this includes all states except Louisiana?

DR. CODY: Except Louisiana 2013 forward and Texas.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Dr. Cody, thank you for the presentation. I am sure that it probably won't be the last, because there is obviously, I think, a lot more discussion that we need to have around this table, but we do need to move on. We are not leaving this topic in the agenda, but we have here Dr. Barbieri, and there are some SSC comments related to this.

I know you discussed this also in the SEDAR Committee that we had, but I didn't know if there was anything, other comments, from the SSC, because, in my mind, this committee, obviously, is going to hopefully inform this group on how we interpreted all of these incongruencies that we're seeing with these data streams.

DR. LUIZ BARBIERI: Right, and not much beyond what was already discussed, Mr. Chairman. We expressed the same concerns over the effort dropping dramatically after 2013, or after 2012, due to the LA Creel, and the fact that, when you look at assessing stocks that this council manages over the entire Gulf of Mexico, now we have different metrics between the western Gulf and the eastern, in terms of distribution of the MRIP survey, and so this brings an extra level of concern regarding the use of recreational fisheries data into stock assessments that we're going to have to be very careful about, and so that's number one.

Number 2 is it highlights the need for us to continue investigating this issue of how to calibrate the existing state surveys with the MRIP survey, that there are a few things there that we still need to understand and we don't completely understand what is going on.

For example, the GRFS, the Gulf Reef Fish Survey, that Florida administers, also has a licensed-based mail survey, but our estimates are very different than what they turn out to be with the FES, and so the meeting that we had in New Orleans was the first step in engaging the states, the MRIP program, and the statistical consultants -- Now they have all that data in-hand, and we are going to start exploring what may be the causes, and several of the issues were brought up here.

To Dr. Mickle's question before about peer review and best available science, as you know, I was a member of the National Academy of Science review committee that looked at the MRIP review that we undertook in 2016. That committee really dug into the methodologies used in assembling survey theory in-depth, and we can assure you that the methodologies that were proposed by MRIP are actually sound, and they represent a significant improvement from the way that they conducted their effort and their intercept catch survey.

However, there might be issues still going on that we do not understand, and so you can have a methodology that is perfectly fine, but, as you start putting data through that process, you may end up in a situation where there are unknown biases that are causing things to come out different, and so just reinforcing that we are looking into this. There is a report that is being put together by that committee that met in New Orleans, and we want to come back and report to you on the outcome of that investigation. Mr. Chairman, that completes my report.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Thank you, Dr. Barbieri. Is there any questions for Dr. Barbieri? If there is none, I have a question for you real quick, Luiz, and it's something, I guess, for the committee here to think about.

We're obviously going to have to pay close attention to this, as a committee and as the council, and my question really, and you kind of answered it, was really going to be, well, what are we going to do, because I'm hearing from the SSC and the Science Center that we don't really know what to do, and we're kind of thinking about this.

In my mind, I'm seeing that, okay, no one was really happy with the first MRIP 1.0, or whatever we're calling it, and we changed the methodology, and it got accolades from the National Academy and everyone that it was a significant improvement, and then we get it back, and it's a lot higher.

Then, all of a sudden, we have these state things coming up, and hopefully John, in a second, is going to update us on what happened at the workshop, but I think the short story there is not a lot of resolution, as you pointed out, but then these state plans are kind of looking more like the original MRIP, and so I guess I feel like we don't really know what to do here.

My question to you is, as our science committee, you've got, I guess, the statistical teams working on it, or, really, what's the next step, so we can move this along and build these into the process?

DR. BARBIERI: Right, and I didn't mean to say that there is really nothing being done. Basically, what we do is, as scientists, we are looking at a problem, and we are looking at the application of scientific methodologies to data, and we are finding inconsistencies.

The process to look at this is to investigate further and to explore and try and find causes or reasons to identify some of the issues that we have been discussing that could be causing these differences.

At that meeting in New Orleans, actually, several probable scenarios were already discussed, but you cannot do this in a one meeting type of deal. It's a very complex issue, and so we will come back and report to you our SSC discussion on this matter. It's that we are looking at six-months to, at the most, a year to try and find some resolution, but we are going to have to look into this in more detail before I can come and give you a better-informed answer.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Thank you, Luiz, and I certainly didn't mean to imply that you weren't doing anything. I guess the question, from my point of this Data Collection Committee and the council, is do we need to charge the SSC with looking at that, or I know that Dave Donaldson's team is working on this as well, and Roy too, and so I guess I don't know if it's happening, or, in other words, you don't need anything from us to say that we obviously want to move this forward, but, at this point, it's in the works, so to speak.

DR. BARBIERI: Yes, but, Greg, it's not that you said anything to that effect. I mean, the other day, when I said, at that meeting, we really didn't come to any conclusion, and we didn't, but I am actually the chair of a group that is being coordinated by the Gulf States Commission that includes all the states and is working with the MRIP program and the NMFS Office of Science & Technology, which has control over the engagement of the statistical consultants, and, of course, we are talking to our Science Center as well and integrating all of these groups together, and so that process -- Remember that we started this five years ago.

That process is continuing, and we actually discussed potentially having an additional meeting by next summer, or next fall, that will be organized by the Gulf States Commission if we need to have a meeting to have those discussions more actively.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Okay. Thank you, Luiz. I appreciate that. Shannon, go ahead.

DR. SHANNON CALAY: I wanted to reiterate a comment that Roy already made, which is that, in order to proceed to put new recreational statistics into a stock assessment, we're going to need very firm guidance on what the best available science is, and it's not going to be sufficient to present a list of options, necessarily, because it isn't appropriate to run optional stock assessments and then choose which one you think you like the best.

We need to have firm decisions on what is the best available science and why were those conclusions drawn, and we need this really quickly. Honestly, it's rather urgent, because we do have a very busy 2019 stock assessment calendar planned, and we have no clarity right now on best available science for recreational statistics.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Dr. Mickle.

DR. MICKLE: Very quickly to that point, and so who is the body that identifies the best available science? That's a simple question.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Mara.

MS. MARA LEVY: Well, ultimately, it's the Secretary of Commerce. I mean, what happens when you -- The FMPs, the amendments, all of that, it has to be based on the best available science, right, and so, when that determination is made to approve some sort of FMP or amendment or rule, there is a determination that it's the best available science. I mean, that doesn't mean it's not informed by everything else that's happening, but, ultimately, it's through that process.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Well, and I do know the SSC sends us motions that it's accepted as the best available science, and so, at some level, the SSC is making a call on that as well. Robin, did you have a --

MR. ROBIN RIECHERS: I am not on your committee, but, given that response, and I don't -- What you're saying is you need the information so that the stock assessments can go forward, and what Mara is saying is that we've got to go forward with one of them so that it goes through secretarial approval, and then a decision is made about whether or not that then is, quote, unquote, best available science, kind of at the end of day, and so there has to be either an interim step that informs the first decision of whether or not to put it in or not put it in, and so help us with that, because I think that's what Paul was trying to get at, is who is going to make that decision before that last step of the Secretary of Commerce actually approving an amendment with new estimates in it or without new estimates in it.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: We will have to move on here, because the Chairman is looking at me, because we still have one more presentation, but, Dr. Barbieri, go ahead.

DR. BARBIERI: I just want to say that the SSC report that I presented the other day at the SEDAR Committee -- I mean, the committee made some recommendations, and they are explicit in our report, regarding the way forward. For now, really until we find some final resolution on this, that continuing using the state surveys is the best option at this point, because the advice that we are receiving from the statistical consultants is that neither one nor the other may be the final answer. It's not a matter of picking, but definitely defining an integrated estimate with weights for the amount of data that is coming from each survey. That might be the most suitable way to follow this.

What we would like to do is, for assessments coming up, if they have to be benchmark assessments, then all these issues can be explored on a species-by-species basis, but, in terms of these MRIP-lites, or any other updates that do not allow a full investigation of how this new data is impacting the reference point estimates and the other assessment outputs, we don't feel that would be the way to go.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: One quick follow-up, Robin.

DR. TOM FRAZER: Real quick, I think this is a very important discussion, and I think we'll have a couple more comments, and we'll make up the time.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Go ahead, Robin.

MR. RIECHERS: The only thing, and I really appreciate the real thoughtful discussion by the SSC, and you as well, Luiz, on this, but obviously this is a much bigger question than the Gulf Council and just the Gulf and our SSC.

This is really a larger question dealing with the FES survey as a whole across the nation, and so, like I said, I appreciate the thoughtful discussion. I just think there's got to be -- I think that's what people are grasping at, is where is that bigger question going to go to and how, ultimately, does it get resolved, and in what timing, and I realize if you all can't answer that at this point, but that's, I think, the questions that are out there.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: All right. Thank you, Luiz, and, seeing no other hands up, Dr. Froeschke, I know you were going to comment on the workshop that was talking about integrating these state plans, in light of the discussion we've been having, and I know we've had some discussion of what happened there, but is there anything else, or maybe you, Dave, would like to comment on that last workshop?

UPDATE ON RED SNAPPER DESIGN WORKSHOP

DR. FROESCHKE: Just real briefly, we have essentially reenacted part of the meeting, and so you have a good feeling for the kinds of questions that happened there. In leaving the analysis, or leaving, each of the states did provide their landings estimates from their state-specific programs to the consultants.

The consultants are taking these data and going back to their offices, if you will, and are going to chew on this, and we expect to have some additional, perhaps, results in mid-2019 for us to think about, and so that's the short answer.

If you will, the meeting was interesting, in that everybody kind of brought their bag of issues, and we piled it all together, and it was a pretty big set of challenges to deal with, and so I think the consultants probably got a better understanding of how complex this issue is and that it extends well beyond just the private recreational data, but stay-tuned, is kind of the message from that.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Thank you, John. Would you like to add anything, Dave?

MR. DAVE DONALDSON: The only thing I would add is that, and I think Luiz alluded to it, that we would -- If necessary, we are willing to convene another workshop to further explore this in mid-2019.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Thank you, and so, obviously, there is a lot more to discuss and deal with on that matter, certainly, and so, moving on in the agenda, up next is a presentation by Dr. Stephen regarding the new for-hire reporting and the workshop that occurred. While they are pulling up that presentation, John, did you want to talk us through that component of the action list of what we want to accomplish today regarding that agenda matter?

PRESENTATION: SUMMARY REPORT ON THE FOR-HIRE ELECTRONIC REPORTING WORKSHOP HOSTED BY THE QUALITY MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONAL SPECIALTY GROUP

DR. FROESCHKE: Thank you. Dr. Stephen is going to summarize the meeting results from QMPSG, and it’s a very long acronym for the Quality Management something. Anyway, this group was convened as a working exercise to review the for-hire implementation plan, and so she is going to summarize the results of that and give us an update on how the progress of the for-hire plan is going as well, and so it’s two-part.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Thank you, John, and this is Tab F, Number 5, if you’re following along, and, Dr. Stephen, whenever you’re ready, go ahead.

DR. JESSICA STEPHEN: As John said, we had a meeting back in July, and I’m going to kind of summarize the points from that. A little background first. The Quality Management Professional Specialty Group, which is that long name to say, came to us back in May, and they are part of a group under the Fishery Information System, run through NOAA Fisheries, and they were looking for a training exercise, in order to participate with their annual meeting, and they had heard about our project and thought we would be a really good idea to use as their training exercise.

The group, in general, likes to promote quality management, and it seeks ways to help NOAA Fisheries, in general, improve their data collection, through either engagement with different people, strategic planning, or using actual tools, so that when you implement a project, or have a project already implemented, you’re doing it in the best way possible.

We had a three-day meeting held in July, and the timing was due to QMPSG’s timing schedule, and so we didn’t have as much of a say, and so it was a little short timeline to get it together, but we were able to get really successful results out of this meeting.

For the training exercise, the QMPSG asked us to keep the group of people attending to a very small group. This is because the approach of how they use a training exercise is a very hands-on approach, and you need a small number of people there that are able to have open dialog among each other.

Based on their suggestion, we looked for a spokesperson from each of the different stakeholder groups that would be affected by the for-hire implementation, and so we looked to get some data providers, and this was -- When I explain, it was a joint meeting for the Gulf and the South Atlantic, since the bulk of the information we’re collecting is similar between the two councils.

We did have a charter and headboat captain. From the Gulf, we had Susan Boggs, representing the headboat captains, and Dylan Hubbard was representing our charter fleet. We also wanted to make sure we had the people that are providing the data that goes into this, such as our Permits, our VMS folks, and Law Enforcement, and the group is hosting all of our data, which is ACCSP.

The other idea was to get the people who are going to be using this result as the end process, and so we had representatives from the Regional Office, the Science Center, S&T, as well as the councils, and we had John Sanchez as a council member and John Froeschke as council staff that participated.

The gist of the three-day meeting is that we first did an overall of what QM is. Most people are not aware of it, and so we spent a little time going over the different types of tools and some background about the for-hire project, so that the QM members understood what we were talking about, and then we started applying these tools to our project, and this generated a lot of ad hoc discussions and then a mini-session on how to best do outreach for the project.

Overall, we were looking at some broad, general workshop goals. We wanted to make sure that we understood the data flow, what data goes in, what comes out, what is required, making sure that we're getting correct feedback loops in our process, and we have good measures and metrics.

This all kind of leads to the overall what are the business rules for the fishermen, what are the business rules for NOAA Fisheries, to make sure that we're going to implement this in the best manner possible, and that led into discussion of what are the expectations of the results of this project.

I am not going to go over all of these, but I wanted to highlight a bunch of the different types of concerns that came up at the first day of the meeting. We wanted to make sure that we are able to reduce burden and that we had benefits to what reporting was and that we had some standards, like the minimum standards, and overall what are the expectations and how do we make sure that we're communicating that understanding clearly to the participants who are in the program.

In general, the QM tools that we were using is just a way to kind of visualize what the process is of how the data flows, and so we actually broke into small groups and drew things out. One of the benefits to this type of tool is that you get to have insight and identify areas where you don’t know what is happening or you need an area of improvement. It also starts discussion among the different groups to figure out what have you missed or what do you need to enhance better.

Overall, we decided to break into four sub-groups within the committee. We had groups that were -- To talk about the first one, it was what happens when a trip occurs? What do I need before a trip occurs, during a trip, and directly afterwards? Then we were breaking into the kind of more what happens with the data that is collected and how is it compiled and how is it audited, and how is that information then integrated and analyzed for us, and then how do we disseminate that information?

Each of these groups went through their own process map flows, and what I am going to just do here is highlight the discoveries of each of these different groups, and so, when we were looking into what happens when the trip occurs, questions arose of what information do you need to have in a system prior to that trip occurring, such as a permit data or vessel data, what do the fishermen themselves need to enter, and what ancillary information might be needed to mesh with that trip information, which we’re commonly calling trip-related information? When you think of at-sea observers or dockside sampling, that’s all information that relates to a trip, but isn’t directly entered by the fishermen.

When we looked at data compilation and auditing, one of our primary concerns is that we had one central location for all the data to go to, and it has been chosen as ACCSP. This is another very technical term, and it’s called an API, an application program interface, but the gist of what that means is, when you enter information into a form, it’s got to get transmitted somewhere, and the API is what does that transmission and talking, to make sure that everyone is reporting in a similar format that it can be accepted by the system.

The API itself has a lot of QA/QC, and so we talked about what methods could be used to kind of QA/QC that data upfront automatically and what QA/QC would need to occur after the fact. Looking at data integration and analysis, one of our primary goals was to avoid duplicative entry, and so we don’t want to have someone enter data in the Mid-Atlantic and the South Atlantic and the Gulf if they happen to co-occur in all those regions, and we also want to figure out how do we integrate any reporting information we get now with existing surveys or other datasets that are out there.

Some of the data you would also want to integrate with are things like biological samples or, in South Carolina, they have an existing charter reporting program, and we wanted to make sure that they would merge well together.

When it comes to access and dissemination of the data, we knew that there are a variety of different people that needed access to data at a variety of different levels, and so we started to map out what some of those were, and some of the outputs would be reports that councils would see, but some of them would be data streams that are going to be fed into other scientific analysis, and we also wanted to consider that fishermen are putting a lot of time and effort into entering this information, and we want to have something that they can use for their own business practices as an output.

As we went through it, we had a couple of needs that we realized were occurring, and so, when you think about when a trip occurs, one of the important things that we want to make sure we are incorporating are feedback loops, that we're getting the right information the right way, so we don't have to look at the information months from when it was submitted to correct it.

Twenty-four-hour customer support was highly recommended, in order to allow a fisherman -- If there is a problem going on with whatever system they are using, that they find a way that they can report legally. Trip identifiers has been a key topic on a lot of our discussions, one way to match a trip throughout all the different elements that interact with it, and, of course, a very clear pathway for submission of the data.

When we were looking at compilation and auditing, these key components related more to making sure that we had notification of when trips were occurring, and so that allows the dockside sampling and enforcement, and that we had a clear pathway for how we allow either the VMS or the archival GPS, the location and position portion of the amendment, a clear pathway for that to get to the data sources.

Finally, with integration and analysis, a lot of discussion arose about how we validate the data and how we ensure compliance and how that leads to calibration, and I will touch on those a little bit more later.

As I mentioned, a lot of ad hoc discussions came up during the meeting, and, while the data flows are really helpful, I think what was even more helpful, in a way, was having these different types of discussions with the group, and that helped us realize some of the lack of clear communication that might have been going on beforehand.

One of the first questions that came up was scalability. We know the existing headboat survey program is out there, and there was a lot of confusion of why we couldn't just immediately upgrade that to include all the charter vessels, and so we had a little discussion about the headboat survey roughly has thirteen agents for 136 vessels across the Gulf and South Atlantic. That's about one agent to every ten vessels.

Across both the Gulf and South Atlantic, we have about 3,400 vessels, and it's not possible to have 340 agents to do that type of validation and compliance reporting that the headboat survey does, and so what that showed is that we need an alternative method to validate and look at compliance with it.

That, of course, led us into the next discussion that really was about compliance and validation. One thing we wanted to do was make sure that we were using the minimum number of compliance and validation agents. Boots on the ground are expensive, and so we want to make sure that we're using them in the most appropriate way to get the best data, but there is also a lot of technology aids that we can use in order to help with validation and compliance, and the Gulf Council kind of instituted a lot of these in the amendment, such as using the hail-out and the VMS or archival GPS. These both help significantly with reducing boots on the ground at the dock, but you do still need staff to monitor this information.

Calibration was another little tricky one, and, of course, you just listened to MRIP, and so the idea is calibration is a method to make sure that you can create a conversion factor between the two datasets. You want to make sure, if you see a difference in datasets, that you know whether it's coming from the change in survey method or an actual change in the fishery.

Typically, your best calibration occurs when programs are run side-by-side over multiple years, and the biggest thing is you can't really begin the calibration process until you know you have validation and compliance in place. Once you have all three of these, you are allowed to integrate the data that you're collecting now with past data collection, which kind of leads into overall how are we going to be using the data and making sure we're setting a correct expectation with that.

In the short term, the data is going to be used to validate the minimum estimates of fishing effort, but the long-term goal, once we have this validation and compliance and calibration, what we're hoping is that we'll have surveys to validate the accuracy and help estimate any incompliant reports, the multiple years of side-by-side comparison, and then we can use calibration surveys to integrate that data.

Of course, one of the questions that came up was the cost of the program, and so we have worked on getting some funding towards the program. We have gotten quite a few temporary grant fundings to put us forth as far as we are in the implementation process already.

We have done some estimates of what the staffing and infrastructure is to monitor these programs across the South Atlantic and Gulf, and, currently, that exceeds $5 million. Staffing that is needed is staffing to look at the data that were obtained, make sure it's staying in a database structurally, and that we're distributing the data and QA/QC'ing the data.

We also need monitoring and enforcement for it, which improves the compliance and validation of the program, and, finally, you need the staffing able to statistically estimate catch and effort.

The last section that we talked about at the meeting was outreach, and I'm not going to spend a lot of time on here, and we spent half-a-day on it, and the lessons we learned from that were incorporated in our current efforts to create outreach materials. The three main kind of aspects that the group felt were important was outreach materials and how to report, so fishermen have a clear understanding of what they need to do and when, what the expectation is of the program and how we use the data, and then funding and program costs.

If there are any questions about the QMPSG, I will take them now, and then I'm going to pass it over to Rich Malinowski, and he'll give you an update on the timeline for implementation.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: Thank you, sir. I'm not on your committee, but I was wondering, since you're building this system from the ground up, and I'm thinking about the system that's already in place that is sort of similar to this on the commercial side, and a request that I heard, both from our anglers, our commercial fishermen here, and around the CCC table from other councils, and that was for the unique trip identifier.

As you're building this -- There seems to be some hurdles trying to do that on the commercial side, because the system is already in place, and so it's going to be a little more difficult, but, as you're building this program, are you thinking about that now, and do you think you'll be able to implement that?

DR. STEPHEN: A lot of our discussions with ACCSP is how to get that unique trip identifier throughout the entire system. In general, for-hire has less components, because you don't have a dealer component as well as the fishermen component that you have to match, and so ACCSP is doing research towards that end.

We think it might still probably be a little bit of time before we've worked out all the bugs on how to create it effectively, but our key point there is also to match data that's being used maybe by states as well as the federal government on the same trip, and so we were looking towards that.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Okay. Thank you. Mr. Malinowski, go ahead when you're ready.

UPDATE ON SOUTHEAST FOR-HIRE INTEGRATED ELECTRONIC REPORTING

MR. RICH MALINOWSKI: Good morning, council. My name is Rich Malinowski, and I work at the Southeast Regional Office for NOAA Fisheries. I am going to hopefully update you with the SEFHIER program.

As we know, the amendment was approved on September 19th, and we found out yesterday that the proposed rule is going to publish this Friday, and so be on the lookout in the Federal Register for that. The comment period on that will end on November 26, and then we will push forward to publish a final rule, and these are tentative timelines from here on out, by January 31. We will have some training sessions, once that publishes, to begin getting set up for the first phase.

That first phase is going to be effective on April 15th, tentatively, and then Phase 2 of the program, which will be the GPS portion of it, will be October 1. These are tentative dates, and so just keep that in mind as we're moving forward.

ACCSP, as you're aware, has been selected to be our data housing unit, and we have a data sharing agreement already in place. Right now, they're currently going through a federal audit, to make sure the security and privacy measures are safe and we can trust them, and there is also modifying their systems, since we have given them now the finalized data elements to adopt their systems to accept those data elements, or either add them or change them a little bit, and those data elements took about a year to coordinate with GARFO and the South Atlantic and the Gulf and MRIP and a lot of entities, in terms of what these data elements really are going to be.

There are some slight differences between the charter boats and the headboats, and there is probably five less elements that the headboats have to report, because they have a system already set up that they figure these things out already, and, in addition, there are some new economic questions on there, which we know fishermen are hesitant to provide us, and so we want to make sure that you guys are aware of that.

Here are the data elements that we're going to go forth with. I'm not going to run over all of these right now, but you can take a look at them. The one that did change is we're going to end port and start port in there, since the South Atlantic wanted start port with us, and we're going to have a GPS unit, and so we'll know where that start port will be, and so that's the only change on this one here.

You can see the economic questions down there, sort of the five on the bottom there, the number of anglers, the number of crew, trip fee, fuel used, and price of fuel, and so they're standard questions, and they should be simple to answer, and so we figured we would include them, based upon the economists' requests, so that, when we do have disasters, we can figure out how much you guys are spending and then play those numbers into more of the economic assistance, when needed.

For the GPS units and the Gulf vessels here, we're going to have a hail-out, which will be done using your app or the logbook, or potentially a VMS system, and these elements here will be included, the vessel ID, trip type, detailed landing location, so our agents can meet you at the dock if they want to do some validation. A lot of charter vessels land at private docks, and there is no access. Well, it's something we need to really look at and see how we can provide validation for those vessels. You can see the rest of them there.

The GPS and VMS update is, right now, we've got the data elements finalized, and the next big step is to figure out how we're going to do the GPS and VMS transition and how we're going to send those tracks over to the ACCSP system, and so we're making a big push right now, and this is our next step. We're doing some pilot testing of five different GPS units, through the Beaufort Lab, on the headboat system, but also -- Like Dylan Hubbard is one of the folks testing this pilot equipment.

The test is going to run from November of this year to June of next year, which we'll figure out -- We're looking at five or six different elements, the economics of it, the accessibility of it, how the fishermen like it, and so there's some elements that they are really reviewing in close detail.

At the same time, we're going to be developing -- VMS has a type approval system for their different fleets that they have throughout the country, and that's a huge thing that they do, and we have to figure out how we're going to develop these. The GPS units are a little different than the VMS units, and so we're going to have to figure out an approval system for that, to make sure that they can meet the ACCSP requirements, meet security requirements and such, and so that's a process that we're going to be working through right now.

In addition, we have been working with the VMS reimbursement program to get some additional funds added to that program for vessels in the Southeast, but it won't be able to be applied to GPS units. It's going to be VMS units, because that's the way their system is set up, and so that's where we're at with that. Any questions?

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: All right. Thank you, Rich. Any questions for Mr. Malinowski? Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: Hi, Rich. It's nice to see you. Reporting burden, Jessica brought it up a little bit, touched upon it, and, currently in Alabama, for the last couple of years, we've worked with the CLS America folks.

We were in on that NFWF project, and we were able to receive the red snapper information that we needed for our Snapper Check program electronically, once a captain reported through the CLS equipment, and so I'm just wondering if that is something that you all have been talking about, is access of that data for the states to comply with reporting requirements with each of the states on those federally-permitted vessels, to make sure that they don't need to also report a state report if that information is actually being captured through the VMS system.

MR. MALINOWSKI: So we're trying to eliminate duplicate reporting. That's a big push. We don't want that. It's a burden to the fishermen as well as to us to manage two data streams, and so the VMS systems are going to be incorporated into the system. For instance, the dually-permitted commercial and charter vessels with -- Commercial vessels already have a VMS, and so we're going to say to VMS, can you adopt your system for these data elements, to be included or create a form, so we can use that one system for that.

In terms of where the data goes, it's going to flow through ACCSP back down to the Science Center, and then over to us, and the Science Center has the ability to distribute it to who they choose or whoever asks for it. Does that answer your question?

MR. ANSON: It does. It sounds like it's able, I guess. We're willing, on the state side, to receive that information and to work with you all to make sure that it happens, and so I just want to make it a point that we would be very interested. I know our captains would be very interested, when that time comes that you will be using those units, to send us the information in real-time. Thank you.

DR. STEPHEN: I just want to add to that. With ACCSP, we can authorize different people to have access to data for people from their state, and so that's a conversation we can start with them at the beginning, as we're designing it, and we can have a conversation with you about which people in particular will have access to that level of data.

MR. ANSON: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Okay. Thank you. Seeing no other questions, I just have a quick question, and this will maybe be for Roy or Shannon. In the one slide, I think, Dr. Stephen, there was a $5 million price tag on that. Part of it said that it was infrastructure, but part of it is staff, and I just -- I guess that's routine yearly charges, and so is that, I guess, accounted for, Roy or Shannon? There is funds to pay to continue this?

DR. CRABTREE: There still is a funding need to fully implement the program, and we don't have a budget at the moment, and so nothing has changed there, and so the tab still is in the $6 million neighborhood for both the Gulf and the South Atlantic programs. There is some language in some versions of budgets that make reference to it, but I don't know what Congress will ultimately do.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: All right. Thank you. Mr. Swindell.

MR. SWINDELL: Just a quick question to the staff of the council and to you. Are we going to be able to -- This is a very important step in our data collection system. Are we going to be able to get even a brief report, as the council meetings progress, each time here in the next year? I would love to have one.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Ed, are you referring to a brief report -- Do you mean like on the landings or a report on the updates of where they're at with the program?

MR. SWINDELL: A report on the general -- How the system is working. Are people really using it right? Is it working or not working? I would like to really know that, and not necessarily on a resource basis, but on just the system itself, to make sure that we are getting somewhere with this system.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Right, and I think we would certainly, as a committee, clearly follow up on the progress and status of what's going on, not only from its implementing, right, but landings as well, as Mr. Gerhart presents those, as she does every meeting or whatever, but I have Ms. Boggs. Tom, did you have a comment to that point? Ms. Boggs, go ahead.

MS. BOGGS: I just wanted to clarify -- So we are going to -- The plan is to start the electronic logbooks on April 15 of 2019, and has that platform been designed and ready to go?

MR. MALINOWSKI: In terms of the platform, it's basically going to be a web-based platform. Currently, eTRIPS Mobile is available for use. We just need to approve it through our process that we're going to have.

The other GPS units and tablets or applications, we're going to send out to the vendors and say, okay, here is the elements, and now create your forms. I am saying, yes, it's going to be ready by then.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Any follow-up to that?

MS. BOGGS: A follow-up to that would be a comment about the funding, and we begin data collection in April of 2019, and will that data be useful at all?

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: Well, so 2019 is going to be the year to stand up the program and work the bugs out and the things that didn't work, and it will take most of that year to get all of the equipment onboard and training and things, and so I suspect that it won't be until 2020 that we actually start seeing landings that we can look at.

In terms of when we can get to actually using the landings that are reported, that is contingent on how well the system works and the compliance rates and our ability to do the validation and the other parts of the program that we right now don't have funding for and get through the whole certification problem.

This is a process that's going to require several years to work through, and I don't think anyone should expect that we're going to come in a year from now and be using the data from this program to track landings. It's going to take quite a bit longer than that.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: This might be a question for Dr. Stephen, or even Dave, but has there been any discussions on utilizing the states to help with the validation portion of the program or any portion of the program utilizing the state staff?

MR. MALINOWSKI: You mean in terms of being out in the field and utilizing the agents and such? Yes, we have to develop that, and we're going to be reaching out to them in these training sessions and having sort of a state session, or a regulator session more, and a public training session, to say, okay, port agents, law enforcement agents, if you want to learn about the program and begin using your ability to meet the boats, to help us validate, and we can talk about it then, but that's a plan we need to really walk through yet.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Ms. Guyas.

MS. GUYAS: I had a question about the cost. I think, when we were talking about this just for the Gulf, that alone was $5 million, at least when we were doing the amendment and the flow chart. The South Atlantic's program is a little bit different, and so I'm just kind of wondering if it's $5 million now for both Gulf and South Atlantic.

DR. CRABTREE: No, the price tag of approximately between $6 and $7 million is for both programs. The cost of fully implementing the South Atlantic is actually higher than it is in the Gulf, for a variety of reasons. They have more vessels in the South

Atlantic, and the validation is more of a challenge, because of the nature of the way they set the program up, but that is a cost for both programs.

MS. GUYAS: Okay. I just was trying to understand if something got cut, and, if that's still the case, then okay.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: Mr. Donaldson.

MR. DONALDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. To Kevin's point about utilizing the states, potentially utilizing the states, for validation and compliance reporting, I would suggest that you work through the commission to help coordinate that activity. We're willing to help. We do that with a variety of different programs, and we're willing to do that, and so just a point of clarification.

CHAIRMAN STUNZ: All right. Seeing no other questions, thank you, Rich. Thank you, Dr. Stephen, and that will bring us to our next item in the agenda, which is Other Business. Is there any other business to bring before this committee? Seeing none, thank you.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on October 24, 2018.)

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