

**Data Collection Committee Report**  
**June 24, 2024**  
**Susan Boggs, Chair**

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab F, No. 1**) and approved the minutes (**Tab F, No. 2**) of the April 2024 meeting.

***Discussion on For-hire Data Collection Program (Tab F, Nos. 4a - c)***

Discussion of the draft document

Council staff reviewed the latest version of the amendment highlighting recent additions to the introduction and management measures. The Committee requested staff select appropriate terminology and retain that consistent wording when referencing the headboat and charter components of the for-hire sector throughout the document, including the purpose and need. Specific to the need statement, the Committee provided recommended language to be incorporated in the next revision of the document.

The Committee recommends and I so **move**: **The need for this action is to improve management and monitoring of the federally permitted for-hire and headboat component of the recreational sector of Gulf reef fish and CMP fisheries to prevent overfishing while achieving, on a continual basis, the optimal yield.**

*Motion carried with no opposition.*

Council and Southeast Science Center (SEFSC) staff provided an overview of Action 4 which considers methods for collecting economic data within the program. In Action 4, options under Alternative 3 were developed, discussed, and reviewed by a subset of the Interdisciplinary Planning Team (IPT) with expertise in survey design related to collection of fisheries economic data. Staff reminded the Committee that as proportion of for-hire trips sampled increases, the uncertainty about the estimates decreases.

A Committee member inquired if a minimum percentage of sampled trips could be identified and implemented. SEFSC staff answered that minimum value was variable depending on research objectives. For example, since most for-hire vessels in the Gulf target red snapper during the season, a relatively lower percentage of sampling would be warranted. However, if the Council was interested in economic estimates on a less targeted species, such as gray triggerfish, a relatively larger sample size would be needed to generate those estimates with a comparable level of confidence. SEFSC staff stated that, for most purposes, a sampling of up to 20% would suffice for most management objectives but reiterated that more rarely targeted species would likely suffer from less precise economic information.

Southeast Regional Office (SERO) staff cautioned against considering levels of sampling within the document and stressed the importance of flexibility to the SEFSC when developing survey approaches. A Committee member advised avoiding past pitfalls from the previous for-hire data collection program. He continued that many program participants expressed frustration with being asked financial questions when they were not aware those data were going to be collected when the original program was developed. Several Committee members expressed the desire to keep the

program simple for the participants while also collecting the level of data required to meet management needs, understanding that rarely targeted species may continue to be data limited.

#### Discussion of Highly Migratory Species Economic Data Collection

The Office of Atlantic HMS is also developing an electronic reporting program for their fisheries and are similarly considering alternatives for collecting economic information. One stop reporting has been suggested as an approach to avoid duplicative reporting for stakeholders that own federal permits across multiple fisheries. When developing data collection programs across regions simultaneously, there is a question of what would happen should different sampling approaches be selected. Dr. Banks reported, that during the most recent HMS Advisory Panel (AP), it was also unclear how a potential conflict would be resolved. The HMS AP is scheduled to meet again in September and the topic of electronic reporting will be discussed. Council staff indicated that HMS staff do participate on the for-hire data collection IPT, so HMS is aware of how the Council's program is being developed.

#### Presentation on Options for Effort Validation

SERO staff provided a presentation outlining potential effort validation methods for reducing the uncertainty for quantifying non-reporting. A few Committee members emphasized the need for trip validation in a Gulf program. They reminded the Committee that the South Atlantic does not have this component in their program and this omission contributes to the determination that the program is not appropriate to inform management or stock assessments. A Committee member advocated for the removal of Automatic Identification System (AIS) as a potential validation method since that information is publicly available. Another Committee member reiterated the sentiment, from earlier discussions on collection of economic data, that effort validation approaches should be as agreeable to participants as practicable while reducing uncertainty in estimations of effort.

#### ***Discussion of NOAA Fisheries Guidance on MRIP-FES Transition Document (Tab F, No. 5)***

Staff from NOAA Office of Science and Technology (OS&T) indicated that the year-long study examining question order and time frame on the effort mail survey was ongoing. To date, the side-by-side surveys were being returned at a similar rate and that the surveys had been completed through waves one and two. OS&T staff indicated that it was premature to report out those results with only two waves of data received.

#### ***Update on Status of the Commercial ELB Document***

SEFSC staff reported that implementation of commercial electronic reporting was still pending until the permits database is fixed. The SEFSC is looking to solicit a group for voluntary reporting sometime in late 2024 with the goal of required reporting by mid-year 2025. SEFSC staff indicated that a list of potential volunteers had been created based on past participation in voluntary programs but stated that if anyone was interested in being considered for this group, they should contact the SEFSC.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.