

Data Collection Committee Report
April 8, 2024
Capt. Ed Walker, Vice chair

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

Discussion on For-hire Data Collection Program (Tab F, No. 4a and b)

Discussion of fisheries economic data collection

Council staff provided an overview of metrics typically used to assess economic effects in fisheries management. Economic effects to the commercial sector include changes in individual fishing quota shares and annual allocation values, ex-vessel revenues, producer surplus to commercial fishermen, and consumer surplus to seafood-buying consumers. For the recreational sector, metrics include changes in consumer surplus to anglers, changes in for-hire target trips, and associated changes in producer surplus to for-hire operators. Staff noted that for-hire producer surplus is computed by subtracting variable costs (mainly fuel and labor costs) from revenues. Revenues are determined by trip fees and number of trips. The Committee asked how private anglers' satisfaction can be measured. Staff stated preference choice experiments are among the approaches used to estimate anglers' satisfaction. Committee members asked why fixed costs are not included in the determination of for-hire producer surplus. Staff indicated that fixed costs, which must be incurred even if trips are not taken, should not be included in trip-level estimates, such as producer surplus.

Dr. Michael Travis (Southeast Regional Office) discussed the importance of revenue data in fisheries disaster determinations and allocations. Dr. Travis noted that in the past, disaster determinations were only for commercial fisheries and losses in other sectors were not considered. However, changes to the Magnuson-Stevens Act under the Fisheries Resource Disaster Improvement Act (FRIDA) added for-hire captains and fish processors in disaster determinations. Dr. Travis compared the outcomes of a scenario based on the old disaster determination approach to another which includes for-hire revenue data. He noted that for disaster determinations and the allocation of disaster funds, the commercial and for-hire sectors are both better off when for-hire revenues are included. Committee members asked whether disaster relief information came from self-reported data or from tax returns. Dr. Travis replied that the agency has never requested tax returns and relies on the states for this information. Dr. Travis noted that an additional administrative burden to NMFS could result if South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico for-hire economic data collection programs differ.

Dr. Christopher Liese (Southeast Fishery Science Center [SEFSC]) gave a presentation on economic data and results in Southeast for-hire fisheries. He discussed trip-level expenditure surveys, including the Marine Recreational Information Program For-Hire Telephone Survey (FHTS) and a 2002/2003 costs and earnings add-on to FHTS. He noted that the evaluation of data from the costs and earnings survey concluded that charter fees are vital data that should be collected regularly in a standardized and statistically valid way on a per trip basis. He discussed a 2009 economic survey of the for-hire fishing sector and a 2012 charter price data collection. Dr.

Liese discussed the SEFSC efforts to collect website charter fee data advertised on websites. Since 2002, a stratified sample of permitted commercial vessels report economic data for all logbook trips during a year. In addition, these vessels complete a supplemental annual cost survey collecting fixed costs. Dr. Liese provided an example of the standardized reports that are produced for each segment of interest (SOI). For a given SOI, (e.g., Gulf red snapper) the report provides trip-level and vessel-level information.

Dr. Liese also discussed preliminary results derived from the 2022 Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting logbook data. He discussed pros and cons of data collection options for the for-hire sector including collecting fees for all trips (census) or a sample of trips, collecting annual economic data by conducting annual economic surveys, and administering ad-hoc voluntary economic surveys. He noted that economic data are not secondary to, or independent of, biological or other fishery data and re-emphasized that the single most important economic variable to collect is the charter fee. He indicated that a logbook is the right place to collect charter fee data. If data are collected only for a sample, then it would be efficient to add gallons of fuel, fuel prices, and crew size as a proxy for input prices and quantities (costs). Committee members stated that charter operators are looking for a minimally burdensome data collection program. The Committee noted that a sample would be more desirable than a census. Committee members asked what would constitute an appropriate sample size. Dr. Liese replied that a greater sample size would correspond to tighter confidence intervals. Committee members inquired about the modalities for random sampling with electronic logbooks. Dr. Liese indicated that one option could be the use of a random number generator and he reiterated that the most important elements to collect are charter trip fees, gallons of fuel used, fuel price, and number of crew members.

Amendment document: Draft options

Council staff presented a draft document that considers modifications to for-hire vessel reporting requirements in the Gulf of Mexico and reported that the Interdisciplinary Planning Team (IPT) would continue to develop the introduction section while the Council discusses what elements will be included in the next iteration of the for-hire data collection program. The Committee provided feedback on the background section, purpose and need, and the range of alternatives within each action. Specifically, the Committee requested that the IPT work to include considerations for economic data collection for the next version of the document.

The Committee recommends and I so **move: To have the IPT explore how to incorporate economic data collection into the amendment.**

Motion carried with no opposition.

For next steps, the IPT will discuss the Committee's recommendations on the document and continue development of the background and management actions sections of the document for Committee review at a future Council meeting. Additionally, future discussions regarding approaches for program validation measures will be required to finalize the amendment.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.