

**Data Committee Report  
October 26, 2020  
Mr. Kevin Anson, Chair**

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab F, No. 1**) as written and approved the minutes (**Tab F, No. 2**) of the June 2020 meeting as written.

***Review of Potential Regulatory Changes from Commercial Electronic Logbook Program Implementation (Tab F, No. 4 and 4a)***

Dr. Julie Brown from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) provided a presentation to address questions posed by the Committee at its June 2020 meeting and outlined some suggested guidelines for potential changes to the commercial electronic logbook program. Specific objectives would consider set-level reporting of catch and effort in addition to more precise location reporting to improve estimates of catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) indices used in stock assessments. Electronic reporting vendors are developing hardware and software that could be approved for use in this program. Vendors were encouraged to make interfaces user friendly, include ways to reduce errors related to data entry, provide technical support, and be adaptable to future reporting modifications. Additionally, the economic survey portion could be included in the program for all fishermen. Dr. Brown indicated that results from a completed pilot program suggests fishermen were able to navigate reporting software programs on a variety of electronic mobile devices. From the pilot program, fishermen were fairly accurate (within 10%) in estimating weight of catch prior to offload. The SEFSC proposed a year of voluntary electronic reporting while developing appropriate regulations to implement a mandatory reporting requirement.

Ms. Martha Guyas inquired about how sets would be defined for commercial lobstermen. Dr. Brown indicated that a set would be defined as the soak time from when traps were deployed and when they were collected. Lobsters harvested per string of traps would be standardized across sets to calculate CPUE. Dr. Tom Frazer asked what sample size of fishermen were used to result in a weight of catch estimate within 10% before offload. Dr. Brown stated she would need to investigate that further and report later.

Ms. Mara Levy reminded the Committee that the program changes suggested by the SEFSC could be considered along with other alternatives when developing a regulatory document. Other options for reporting frequency and required data elements could be explored during the development of the document to achieve program goals. Dr. Carrie Simmons asked if multiple policy documents or a joint amendment with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) would be required to implement the program changes. Ms. Levy indicated that a number of approaches are available depending on how the Council wanted to proceed. Staff from the Southeast Regional Office indicated that the SAFMC had begun work on an amendment but had placed the document on hold. Dr. Simmons commented that continued work with SEFSC staff and reviewing the results of the pilot program, when made available, would be helpful to begin drafting a document. Ms. Levy indicated that identifying the specific program changes would be beneficial in focusing the development of a document. The Committee suggested that before developing a document, that the appropriate advisory panels be convened

to comment on the potential program changes and provide direction to the Council. The Committee acknowledged that the timeline of voluntary participation in 2021 with mandatory implementation in 2022 is ambitious and may not be possible given other Council priorities and the time needed to develop similar programs in the past.

***Update on Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting Program (Tab F, No. 5)***

Mr. Peter Hood from the Southeast Regional Office (SERO) discussed the latest development to the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) program. The update included a review of program progress since June 2020 and outlined future work still ongoing. Phase I of the program, which includes trip level reporting, is scheduled to begin January 5, 2021 in the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf). For Phase II, which requires the use of a vessel monitoring system (VMS), will be begin on a later date. Mr. Hood indicated that nine models of commercial VMS units are now approved for use in the SEFHIER program.

Mr. Dave Donaldson informed the Committee that the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, the Gulf states, and NOAA had met earlier to discuss the validation portion of the program and that coordination would continue as the program is developed. Ms. Levy indicated that the addition of approved landing locations is less stringent for SEFHIER than what is required for the individual fishing quota (IFQ) program, and, as such, landing locations that are not approved for the IFQ program could be suitable for SEFHIER. Ms. Guyas asked why the effective date for Phase I of SEFHIER differed between the Gulf and South Atlantic and Mr. Hood indicated the difference was due to a procedural requirement. Ms. Susan Boggs asked whether the commercial VMS units listed on the NOAA webpage represented those approved for SEFHIER and inquired about the status of the program's outreach. Mr. Hood stated that the listed VMS units were approved and that approximately 10 other units were being considered by NOAA law enforcement. Ms. Emily Muehlstein indicated that paper outreach materials were scheduled to be mailed in early November. Additionally, educational webinars directed at NOAA port samplers, state agency employees, and law enforcement would be conducted in December, as these groups are likely to be asked questions about the program.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.