

**Data Committee Report
April 12, 2021
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 October 2020 meeting as written.

AP Recommendations for Proposed Commercial e-logbook Requirements (Tab F, No. 4)

Council staff reviewed excerpts from the Reef Fish and Coastal Migratory Pelagic (CMP) Advisory Panel (AP) summaries regarding discussions on the proposed changes to the commercial electronic logbook program. Overall, the panels agreed that timely and accurate data collection is important and were supportive of moving away from paper forms. However, the panels voiced a number of concerns about duplicative and burdensome requirements, difficulty of hail-in reporting on small open console vessels and during inclement weather, and the sharing of proprietary locational information. Mr. Martin Fisher, the CMP AP chair, echoed these concerns to the Council and questioned the scientific benefit of the proposed increase in the number of reporting requirements.

Dr. John Walter asked Mr. Fisher what he advised for engaging commercial stakeholders and proposed a workshop for addressing the panels' concerns. Mr. Fisher stated that he identified two separate objectives for the program. He recommended that a move towards electronic reporting for the current paper logbooks could happen quickly and would be an improvement. However, the proposed newer real-time reporting requirements would need to be modified and that more input from industry would be beneficial for achieving program goals. He was amendable to having the panel work with Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) staff through the Council process to develop program solutions. Several Committee members agreed that more engagement was appropriate and strongly encouraged continued transparent communication on the development of the program.

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

Mr. Rich Malinowski provided an overview of the progress of the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting Program (SEFHIER) program. Since the implementation of Phase I in early 2021, approximately 1,300 vessels have created accounts. Program participants have identified some software issues which have been addressed by providers. Several instructional webinars have been scheduled and these will provide an opportunity for fishermen to ask questions about the program. An option for submitting an "Issues Form" is being contemplated to allow for compliance in the event of reporting equipment failure. A tentative date for Phase II implementation has been proposed for December 1, 2021.

A Committee member inquired as to whether software developers were planning on providing instructional videos to help captains navigate the reporting software. Mr. Malinowski stated that both VESL and eTrips were in the process of creating videos and those would be made available on the SEFHIER web page. Another Committee member reported that fishermen had not been aware of the program and were not likely to be exposed to online resources and inquired when

the dockside validation portion of the program was expected to begin. Mr. Malinowski stated that, when available to do so, more in-person outreach would be considered and that the validation portion is tentatively scheduled to begin in September. Dave Donaldson added that the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission was reaching out to the states to discuss the feasibility of validation and were targeting September for implementation. A Committee member asked for clarification about transmission of data through the cellular reporting software. Mr. Andy Strelcheck stated that the cellular unit logged positional information and then transmitted data once in cellular range. Addressing equipment malfunction, a Committee member indicated that reporting equipment failure was rare and that she had never experienced an occasion where she was prohibited from completing a trip for that reason.

Presentation on Methodology used for Recreational and Commercial Discards (Tab F, No. 6)

Dr. Shannon Cass-Calay presented an overview on the methodology used to quantify commercial and recreational dead discards data for use in SEFSC assessments, and monitoring of annual catch limits (ACL), and how discards are accounted for in assessment models. Additionally, the presentation included information on estimating uncertainty in the amount of estimated discards and provided examples for red snapper, red grouper, and king mackerel. Recreational and commercial discard data are collected differently. Recreationally caught fish in the National Marine Fisheries Services' Angler Access Point Intercept Survey that are landed and observed by interviewers (Type A records) are summed with fish reported as harvested by fishers, but unavailable to dockside samplers (Type B1 records). B1 fish include fish discarded dead at-sea, used for bait or part of landed catch that was not available for viewing by the sampler. Fish released alive (B2 records) are used in calculating the number of fish that die after being released alive (release mortality). The A and B1 records are summed to obtain recreational harvest and the total is used to track against the recreational ACL. The presenter noted that the number of fish released dead is small. B2 records are fit in the assessment model using species-specific levels of uncertainty (CV's associated with release estimates) and post-release mortality is calculated by multiplying number of released fish by a discard mortality rate which are generally species-specific and could also be fishing fleet-specific. B2 records are not included in calculation of catch limits.

For the commercial fishery, only fish landed and reported through seafood dealers are counted against the commercial ACL. Commercial fishing trips are sampled for the disposition of released fish (alive, dead, used for bait, etc.) using the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Observer Program (RFOP). SEFSC staff provided the rates of dead fish that were brought to the vessel and those fish used as bait from 2007-2019 and indicated that the level of dead discards using this method is small, however, it may underestimate dead discards. SEFSC staff also noted reef fish used for bait is currently prohibited, however, only a small percentage (approximately <1% for the example species presented) of observations met this criterion and SEFSC staff do not expect these observations to have implications for management. Unlike for recreational ACLs where B1s are included in the harvest estimate and deducted from the ACL, the similarly classified fish that are dead on arrival, released as dead or used as bait during commercial fishing trips, are not included with landings and tracked against the commercial ACL. As with recreationally caught fish, the release mortality associated with commercial live discards are not included in calculation of catch limits.

Due to time constraints, follow-up discussion was postponed until full Council.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.