

**Data Committee Report
June 17, 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 October 2019 meeting as written.

Update on Commercial Electronic Logbook Pilot Project (Tab E, No. 4)

Dr. Julie Brown from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) outlined information regarding the justification, changes, and progress for developing an electronic log book program for commercial fishing vessels in the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf). The electronic program serves to improve the precision and efficiency in commercial data collection by monitoring data at the trip level and reduce errors by automating certain aspects of data entry. Additionally, she provided the results from a pilot study that was completed in 2015. Results from the pilot study indicated that fishermen found the additional data entry requirements feasible and favored the ability to use a variety of hardware to report catch. A timeline was also presented to inform the Committee as to when the SEFSC expects to formalize details of the program.

The Committee asked Dr. Brown what determination was used to define when a vessel was considered fishing. SEFSC staff indicated that the determination was somewhat subjective but that additional information collected from GPS units could help clarify when a vessel was deemed to be actively fishing. The Committee also inquired whether improvements in quantifying discard data would be possible with the new program. SEFSC staff indicated that it was still difficult to measure discards without associated observer data. However, the SEFSC has indicated that there are fewer instances of captains reporting no discards in the Gulf compared to the South Atlantic, indicating there is likely better reporting compliance. Still, the SEFSC indicated that discard information used in stock assessment would still be highly variable. The Committee questioned how GPS data collected in the program might be validated. SEFSC staff stated that an algorithm could be used to identify errors in a timely matter; however, captains still retained the option to input locational information at a later date which could cause lags in data processing. The Committee asked how many Gulf commercial vessels currently report to the SEFSC. SEFSC indicated that approximately 1,700 vessels report between the Gulf and South Atlantic but did not know how many vessels were specific to the Gulf. SEFSC indicated that they could provide that information to the Committee at a later date.

Mr. Kevin Anson mentioned that the implementation timeline with mandatory participation of the program expected to be in effect in late 2021 might be ambitious with the complications associated with COVID-19. Ms. Mara Levy also indicated that the development of an associated policy document could take time depending on how detailed the program requirements are. Ms. Leann Bosarge stressed the importance of securing and ensuring the data collected from the commercial fishing industry is appropriately used and access to the data should be limited.

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

Mr. Peter Hood from the Southeast Regional Office (SERO) discussed the latest development to the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) program. The presentation covered updated rules, timelines, status of the reporting system approvals, reimbursement for the purchase of equipment for the program, addressed some common questions from program participants, and outlined updates to program support. Mr. Hood indicated that the final rule for the Gulf is expected to be published in late June 2020 with an effective date of September 1, 2020. However, this effective date could be moved to early 2021 should the for-hire industry along with the Council request extra time due to delays associated with COVID-19. If the effective date is moved, Mr. Hood indicated it would still be advantageous for the effective date to be the same for both the Gulf and South Atlantic. Additionally, Ms. Levy presented an update to the language in the proposed rule and informed the Committee that most of the changes were made to clarify the formal language for the rule. Ms. Levy also indicated that the Gulf has not yet published the final rule, so if a change to the effective date was warranted, the updated date could be included in the publishing of the final rule. In the interest of time, all Committee questions associated with SEFHIER were postponed until the full Council meeting.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.