GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

DATA COLLECTION COMMITTEE

The Lodge at Gulf State Park Gulf Shores, Alabama

April 6, 2022

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Jonathan Dugas.....Louisiana
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Peter Hood.....NMFS
Michelle Masi.....NMFS
Jessica Stephen.....NMFS

Laurilee Thompson.....SAFMC
John Walter.....SEFSC

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The Data Collection Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council convened at The Lodge at Gulf State Park on Wednesday morning, April 6, 2022, and was called to order by Chairman Susan Boggs.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA
APPROVAL OF MINUTES
ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS

CHAIRMAN SUSAN BOGGS: I would like to call the Data Collection Committee to order. Tab F, Number 1 is where you can find the agenda. Item Number I is Adoption of the Agenda. May I have a motion to approve or any changes to the agenda?

DR. GREG STUNZ: So moved.

MR. DAVE DONALDSON: Second.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Thank you, and I was remiss. I did not name the members of the committee. It's myself, Susan Boggs, as Chair, Greg Stunz as Vice Chair, Chris Schiele, Kevin Anson, Leann Bosarge, Dave Donaldson, J.D. Dugas, Bog Gill, Jessica McCawley, Peter Hood, and Troy Williamson. With that, we will move to Item II, which is Tab F, Number 2, Approval of the January 2022 Minutes.

I have a couple of changes, and does anyone else, before I do that? Okay. Seeing none, on page 7, line 38, "on" should be "one", and, on page 52, line 24, "moment" should be "movement". If there is no other changes, may I have a motion to approve?

DR. STUNZ: So moved.

MR. BOB GILL: Seconded.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Thank you. Okay. We will move down to Number III, Action Guide and Next Steps, Tab F, Number 3. Dr. Hollensead, would you please take us through Items IV and V?

DR. LISA HOLLENSEAD: Thank you, Madam Chair. For Agenda Item IV, we will be looking at the draft framework action, and this is the modification to location reporting requirements for for-hire vessels, should an unforeseen malfunction occur. As you recall, at the January meeting, the committee selected preferreds for this document, but we're going to have council staff, Ms. Carly Somerset, provide an update on the IPT discussions associated with this document and update the committee with that.

Additionally, we will have Dr. Jessica Stephen from the Southeast Regional Office provide a presentation update, and she will be going over some of the technical aspects from their staff and their office from implementation of this framework action, and, sort of wrapping up our SEFHIER discussion, Agenda Item V will be an update from Dr. Michelle Masi for the SEFHIER program.

For Agenda Item IV, the committee can review what NMFS and council staff has updated them with, and, if they would like to move forward, council staff and NMFS staff will begin preparing that document for final action at the next meeting.

For Agenda Item V, the committee should ask any questions of SERO staff about the SEFHIER program. Additionally, now that the program has begun being implemented, the committee should consider whether they would like updates at every meeting, or perhaps every other, depending, and so that's just something for the committee to consider. Madam Chair.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Thank you, Dr. Hollensead. All right, Ms. Somerset, are you ready?

MS. CARLY SOMERSET: I am ready. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Proceed.

DRAFT FRAMEWORK ACTION - MODIFICATION TO LOCATION REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR FOR-HIRE VESSELS DOCUMENT

MS. SOMERSET: Bernie, if we could bring up the document. While Bernie is doing that, I will just provide a bit of additional information that Dr. Hollensead provided, and so, looking at the modification to the location reporting requirements for for-hire vessels, again, and you all saw this at the last meeting, and so I'm just going to go over some of the additions that we made, and they're pretty minor, and we do have some more that we need to add to the document prior to it going final, which I think the idea was to do that at this meeting, but it will be -- We will try to do that at the next meeting, in June, because we have a few things we need to add to Chapters 3 and 4.

If we go to Table 1.1.1, here, I just wanted to point out -- I just wanted to make a note of a few things that have been added since you last saw this document. There was an additional cellular unit that has been type approved by NMFS, and so that

has been added to the table, and so now there are four cellular units that are available for permit holders to use on their vessel as a VMS unit.

Then, Bernie, if you could move to Chapter 2, I will just make a note of, in Chapter 2, we have added the preferreds that you picked at the last meeting, and so there is one action, and the preferred alternative -- The first preferred alternative was Preferred Alternative 2, and so that's creating an exemption to the VMS requirement to address equipment failure and set a limit on the number of calendar days that the NMFS-approved exemption is valid for vessels with charter vessel or headboat permits for reef fish and/or coastal migratory pelagics, and the preferred option that was chosen was Preferred Option 2b, the exemption will be valid for up to ten days from submittal date.

Then, also, Preferred Alternative 3 is create an exemption to the VMS requirement to address equipment failure and set a limit on the number of times a permit holder can request an exemption each calendar year, per vessel, and the preferred option that was chosen was 3b, the permit holder may not request more than two exemptions per vessel per calendar year, and so that has been added throughout the document, to make note of the preferreds.

Additionally, at our IPT discussions after the council meeting last time, we discussed some additional analyses that need to occur before the document is finalized, specifically Chapters 3 and 4, and it's mostly economic, and that relates to the administrative burden that will be put on NOAA with getting this implemented on the backend, tracking all of it, and so we will continue to work on that.

The last thing I wanted to note here is that, as part of the IPT discussion, we also talked about the use of permit holder versus vessel owner-operator, and so you see that quite a bit in the document. Some of the discussion revolved around what is the most appropriate use of either or both of those, and so, just to let you all know, the discussion was based on whether permit holder or vessel owner-operator was the best term to use throughout the document.

Some of the ideas that were thrown around at the IPT is that, if we use the permit holder, that could create an additional burden on the vessel owner-operator. If they are the ones that find the VMS fails, they would then have to contact the permit holder, and so it would be an additional step. On the opposite end, the permit holder is the one that is responsible for the

VMS units. They hold the permit. It is their vessel, and so the onus should be on them to make sure that it is properly working, even if they are not the captain of that vessel.

I just wanted to make note of that for all of you, if you wish to discuss it or have any other questions about it, but, other than that, that was the majority of the changes in the document, and I'm happy to take any questions.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Thank you, Ms. Somerset. Does anyone have any questions? I do have one. We discussed, I believe at the last meeting, to maybe add language, and I don't remember where it went, and I didn't see it in the minutes, about looking at this document maybe in a year or two, to monitor the frequency of failures or anything like that, and did we add that to the document? I saw where we kind of clarified the stacking of exemptions, but I didn't see this.

MS. SOMERSET: You're referring to having the updates on how the program is going? That request was -- We discussed it at the IPT, in that we could bring that up at council meetings, if it's appropriate in looking at it, possibly over the course -- If it doesn't need to be a year or longer, just to see how the program goes, but that's definitely something that can happen.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Well, I certainly think we need to maybe look at it at the end of this first year, of the vessel -- Of the VMS units being in place, to see how frequently this is happening, and so I would like to, you know, make that request, that we look at it maybe again in January of next -- Well, I guess it would be March, since it's only been on the water since March 5. Any other questions for Ms. Somerset? All right. Seeing none, Dr. Stephen, are you with us this morning?

DR. JESSICA STEPHEN: I am. Can you hear me?

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Yes, ma'am. Please, whenever you're ready.

EQUIPMENT FAILURE EXEMPTION IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

DR. STEPHEN: All right. If you will bring up the presentation. One of the reasons we wanted to give this presentation is that, oftentimes, what the council and the stakeholders see is the end product in that user interface behind any data collection, and we wanted to kind of highlight all of the behind-the-scenes decision points and work and requirements building that goes into collecting data, even something as simple as the equipment failure form.

The goals, when we were looking at the equipment failure exemption, was we wanted to make sure that the process that we developed was easy for the fishermen to understand, as well as for council staff and NOAA staff to understand the process, and we want to automate, to the extent possible, the process, so that people are well aware that the power-down exemption gets approved by NMFS OLE and that takes human involvement, and what we were looking for here was to not have that human involvement and have an automation, so that we could rapidly approve things on off hours.

We were also looking to make sure that we have compliance and enforcement integrity when we were working within creating the exemption failure, and that would be a mechanism that fishermen can show that they do have the approval for the exemption to law enforcement, and that's an easy way to submit the documentation of why that equipment failure occurred, and then, finally, what we wanted to look at was also ensuring the data integrity, and so, to Susan's point earlier, we wanted to be able to analyze any of the exemptions and look at them in combination with SEFHIER compliance and catch-and-effort estimates.

Last, but never least, is we wanted to make sure that we can spread the awareness with equipment failure requirements through a variety of different outreach efforts.

In order to go to this, we gathered various subject matter experts, and we formed six different working groups to look at different topics that were useful for that subject matter expertise, and, in the next slide, I'll go into each of these working groups.

One of the first things was defining what an equipment failure was, so that we're able to tell fishermen what is exactly an equipment failure and what is not, and, in order to do this, we're working with the different VMS vendors and gathering some information about their different units and how different protocols will be used to make sure that it is working right, as well as gathering vendor information on their warranties and how often they fail.

The next step after that was developing an online form, and so we were looking to balance a collection of information that we need from the fisherman submitting the form with what the program needs in order to connect that information to other existing data collection programs and to analyze that information. This is a typical what we call Paperwork Reduction

Act, the burden balancing, to make sure that we can gather enough information.

When we want to analyze that information, we do want to look at tracking of the submissions, in order to make sure that people are complying with regulations, and we will also want to look if there are certain vendors or types of units that fail more often, and so we want to be collecting information on the type of VMS and then ways to look at annual summaries and patterns of behavior for looking at this equipment failure down the road.

In order to start that online form collection, we did not start from scratch. What we did is we looked at the power-down exemption form and began with that as our template.

Some of the really behind-the-scenes things that are critical is how the agency actually develops the structure to store that data, in order to analyze it and collect it efficiently, and so we worked with developers in order to look at those different requirements and build it out. This is really critical, because, if you don't gather the information and store it in the correct way, that analysis, later on, may be impacted.

Some of the things we would need to connect to are the SEFHIER compliance database, our permits system, and sharing information with the various different enforcement data systems. Along the lines of how we do that is, because we wanted to do this rapid collection and turnaround of a conditional approval, we also need to build in quite a lot of quality assurance validations ahead of time, so that we can do that rapid initial confirmation or denial of an equipment failure.

Just a few examples that I've listed here is we need to make sure that the vessel being submitted actually exists within our permit system, so we don't allow for typos or misidentification of a vessel. We also need to look at whether it was dually permitted with a reef fish vessel, which would create an automatic denial, as a reef fish vessel is not allowed to work under an equipment failure exemption.

Then, finally, looking at some of the different types of exemptions, based on what the council would choose for preferreds, to make sure that they have not gone over their required amount of times to submit per year.

Also, along those lines of the development side was how do we do this rapid confirmation or denial, and so we need to create a process for online submission as well as a way to send that

information back to the submitter about either their confirmation or denial, and we're going to work with an email automation program to do that, and then, finally, the last kind of working group we were looking at was defining what the document failure is and the process to submit documentation for the failure, and so this would be looking into the timeline to later submit the documentation about the failure, and so we want to approve rapidly, but we want to have that documentation submitted at a later date.

Then a way to upload that information, a way to process that and store it within the system, linking to the initial exemption, and then also ways to give information to them about to troubleshoot before thinking about applying for an exemption failure, since they are limited annually.

We also recognize that we do need to think about how this may affect the permit renewal and transfer process, if a vessel is currently under equipment failure, while there is still a requirement to show that the VMS is working, and so we are working hand-in-hand with them and looking at how that would affect the renewal transfer process and creating automated code, so that that awareness is put through to the permit processor.

We also need to share that information with law enforcement, and so we're looking for ways to take the equipment failure and have it be shown within the VMS database system that officers and agents look at, as well as a way for them query, on any day, the vessels that are currently under an equipment failure.

In the end, what we also want to do is make sure that we develop sufficient outreach materials, and we use some of our normal processes, by developing FAQs that have certain scenarios within them, give them information about how to submit that proof of documentation of a failure, and then explanations of why there is an automated approval or denial, as well as suggestions to troubleshoot your unit.

Because of the rapid order of how we want to get this equipment failure in here, because the VMS units are out there and operational, and looking at the timeline of this amendment, what NOAA is going to do is we're going to create a short-term storage solution, in order to collect this information, and that is going to be using a simplistic online form with our minimum security requirements. That does require a little bit more backend work, to merge that data with the other database systems and share the information as necessary.

Simultaneously, we will be working on a long-term storage solution for that. Part of the electronic technologies implementation plan is to make sure that NOAA stops siloing their data systems and use them together, and so our intention is to build this into our permits system.

There is a lot of benefits to doing this. One is that the amount of information that has to be entered by the stakeholder can be great reduced, because that information is already contained within permits, and they would simply select their vessel.

Another thing would be to improve the QA/QC of the submitted data, so that we know we have a one-to-one match of all the data and that doesn't create errors later, in ensuring that the approval was granted to the correct vessel, and, finally, the data security for transmission and storage is much stronger within our permits system.

As you all know, there's been a lot of increase in data security over the last couple of years, and NOAA has been increasing what those security measures are, and permits will meet any future standards needed.

Then the last comment here would just be our short-term solution may require us to update the regulations and PRA later, when we're working within that permits solution, and we're hoping to actually build it into the regulations to match the permits system, but we may need changes later, when we push it into the permits system.

I do just want to pause, and we've gotten a lot of emails about confusion of power-down exemption and equipment failure exemption, and so I wanted to leave up this slide here for the council and for the fishermen to look at, to see the difference of what is a power-down exemption, which is currently possible, and what is an equipment failure.

In a power-down exemption, the vessel, once it is under a power-down, cannot move on water, versus an equipment failure, and they would be allowed to move on water for either the seven, ten, or fourteen days that the council chooses. For a power-down exemption, currently, you only can power off your unit after you have received approval, and then it must remain powered off for a minimum of seventy-two hours.

With an equipment failure, because of that automatic approval or denial, you would be able to power off the unit once you get

that, and there is no minimum time limit for how long it stays off, and it's until it gets fixed.

The submission process currently for a power-down was paper, and we are working right now on moving to an online form that is combining both the commercial and the for-hire. Keep in mind that a power-down exemption will apply to both fisheries that have that VMS requirement on the same vessel.

Then, with submission limitations, there is no limitations for power-down exemptions throughout a year, whereas the equipment failure would be limited to either one, two, or three times per year, and the approval process works a little differently between the two. Currently, power-down exemptions require a manual double-check of them before they are approved, and that means that, if you submit it on a Saturday, it might not be looked at until a Monday.

We are working on ways to automate that currently, working with our law enforcement group, whereas the equipment failure will give you that conditional approval immediately and provide a timeframe for you to later provide the documentation of that failure. Likewise, in this documentation, power-down is just a simplistic form, whereas equipment failure is both the initial form and then the documentation, and I think that is my last slide, and I'm happy to take any questions about the process.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Any questions for Dr. Stephen? Dr. Stephen, I do have one thing that I don't think some people clearly understand, and I don't know how we get the message out, other than just sitting here having this conversation, but the dually-permitted vessels cannot apply for an equipment failure exemption, and is that correct?

DR. STEPHEN: Yes, that is correct, because this is only applying to the for-hire regulations. The reef fish regulations still require that you must have a transmitting unit to move on the water, and so, if you're dually-permitted, you would be denied an equipment failure, because it's not -- It's for the permit.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Thank you, and then I do have one other question, and I think you touched on it and I didn't quite understand, and is there anything in place -- Well, first of all, have you all had any requests, because of failures, equipment failures, and, if so, how have they been handled thus far?

DR. STEPHEN: So far, the SEFHIER program has not received any requests for an equipment failure, to date. We would probably currently handle it on a case-by-case basis, with the recommendation that you are required to have it, and so you cannot move on the water without a functional unit.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Okay. Thank you. Any other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you, Dr. Stephen. Next, we'll go direct to --

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS: Ms. Boggs, you have J.D.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: I'm sorry, J.D. I didn't see you.

MR. J.D. DUGAS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I don't know if the question is for Dr. Stephen, but we talked about the vessels moving within the marina for fuel and bait and ice, and I don't recall where we went with that. It seems like it's going to be an issue still, and could someone clarify?

DR. STEPHEN: Michelle will be presenting next and will touch on those topics.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Okay. With that, Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I had a question, and I think this goes back to the document that Ms. Somerset presented, and are you all looking for a recommendation from the council regarding whether the equipment failure would be tied to the permit holder or the vessel owner-operator, because, right now, it's written kind of both ways in here, and is that something that the agency is looking for from the council, so we can kind of clean that up in the document?

DR. STEPHEN: We talked with some of our lawyers, and, because it's an exemption to a permit, the agency feels that the permit holder needs to be providing that exemption. Also, because it is limited in scope, they need to be aware of it and providing the --

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Sorry, but, just to make sure I understand, you're saying that decision has now been made and the document will have to be updated with the permit holder, and is that correct?

DR. STEPHEN: My understanding is that this is a NMFS agency

decision.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Okay. Any other questions? Okay. I think we're clear now. Dr. Masi, are you ready?

DR. MICHELLE MASI: I am. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Whenever you're ready, please proceed.

UPDATE ON SOUTHEAST FOR-HIRE INTEGRATED ELECTRONIC REPORTING (SEFHIER) PROGRAM

DR. MASI: Okay. Thank you so much, and so just a reminder that I'm Dr. Michelle Masi, the SEFHIER Program Manager, and I just wanted to note that I have actually revamped the SEFHIER presentation that you guys have been kind of accustomed to seeing for the last few meetings. Today, I wanted to focus more on some of the --

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Michelle, can you please slow down a little bit? We're having trouble hearing you across the webinar.

DR. MASI: Yes. No problem. Is that better now or still bad?

MR. DALE DIAZ: No, that's a little better. Just, if you slow down just a little bit, I think that might have been part of the problem.

DR. MASI: Sure. No problem. On this slide, I wanted to provide some program compliance metrics to the council. As of March 25, we have 1,328 Gulf for-hire federally-permitted vessels, and we have 951 VESL and eTRIPS reporting accounts that have been set up by our Gulf for-hire permitted vessels.

We also have over 291,000 total trip reports that have been received from Gulf and South-Atlantic-permitted vessels, to date, and that's as of program inception, and so January 4, and we have received over 35,000 logbooks and over 46,000 declarations from just Gulf for-hire-permitted vessels, and, finally, we have received, or made, over 8,000 SEFHIER program and compliance-related calls through our SEFHIER call center.

Regarding VMS updates, we currently have ten satellite and four cellular VMS units that are type approved, and I know Carly just showed those, but, if you want to access them on our website, and we update those when anything gets type approved, and the link is provided on the slide, and then bolded here is just a

reminder that the VMS requirement became effective as of March 1, and that third bullet is that we recently heard from a constituent that there were supply chain issues, and so we reached out to the VMS vendor, and they noted that there aren't any ongoing issues. The particular issue in question was just an isolated dealer issue, and that was quickly resolved.

Regarding the VMS compliance statistics, as of March 25, we have over -- We currently have 178 dual commercial reef fish and for-hire-permitted vessels that have a VMS, and there are over 600 Gulf only for-hire-permitted vessels that have a VMS unit. However, as of March 25, we had about 727 vessels that still did not have a VMS unit, noting though that the vessels that have permits requiring a VMS are presently having permits withheld during the application process, and so we are expecting to see compliance improve over the coming months, and, also, I received an update on these numbers on Monday, and that 727 is now down to about 620, as of Monday.

I have a few updates here regarding the VMS reimbursement, and so, first, SEFHIER reimbursement requests are being prioritized through the end of this month, and then, after that, any incoming reimbursement requests will be handled on a first-come-first-served basis.

The second bullet is that the cellular VMS reimbursement maximum has been decreased to $950, and that was after analysis of the cellular unit costs. For satellite VMS, the reimbursement maximum is undergoing review, but, when a cellular VMS unit is available to the fishery, which is the case for the for-hire fishery, the max reimbursement will be $950, unless the vessel is dual-permitted for a fishery that only allows satellite VMS, and then, finally, vessels that received the Triton VMS unit from the NFWF grant will not be eligible for reimbursement, as they already received a free unit.

Regarding VMS and federal permits, to start off, just a brief permit refresher that federal permits are associated with vessels and the permit holders listed on the permit, and so, if there are any changes to the permit holder, or holders, and the vessel associated with a specific permit, then this constitutes a permit transfer. Also, any permits associated with a specific vessel must have the same permit holder.

The VMS must be installed and activated in order to renew or transfer the permit, and so, for transfers, the receiving permit holder needs to have the VMS activated on the vessel that's associated with the permit, and, once the VMS is activated, the

vessel may get a power-down exemption, or a PDE, noting that the PDE is for the vessel under that permit, and it applies to any VMS-required permit on that vessel, and so, for example, if you are a dual commercial reef fish and Gulf-for-hire-permitted vessel, then one PDE would cover both fisheries.

Regarding the power-down exemptions, or PDEs, the PDE form is now available online, and I provided the link here on this slide. You will just go to that link and then fill out the form, and there's an example of what that looks like here, an image provided, and you're going to need to have your vessel ID and your permit number, and then you click "confirm" to submit that. Again, this form can be used for both commercial and Gulf for-hire PDE requests.

The final bullet here is just that, in vessels that show an active VMS status in permits are going to be automatically approved, and so, when you click "confirm", you will get an automatic approval response back. If an active status isn't listed in permits, then we're manually checking for an activated VMS before the PDE request is approved, and, as of right now, that isn't a long process, and you still should hear something back within one business day.

On this slide, I wanted to show just some general SEFHIER discussion items, and so first that we've updated our FAQs, in order to support the industry's request for some clarification on the purpose of the required trip fee and fuel price questions that are in the logbook, and so, in order to best answer these questions, we worked with the SERO economists, and we developed the answers to the FAQs that I am showing here.

For trip fee, an accurate value is critical for cost-benefit and economic impact analyses for providing reimbursement after a disaster, and it's required for proposed regulatory changes. Note that, for any charity trip, where you don't receive any revenue, you should enter a trip fee of zero. For fuel price, an accurate value is critical for representing economic performance of the for-hire vessels and how or why it differs between vessels, and so you should provide the best estimate of the price paid for fuel on each trip.

On this slide, I have an update for the council on the declaration burden issue that has been raised by our for-hire constituents, and so, in listening to a variety of potential solutions, we considered the simplest, easiest to implement, and easiest to understand solution, and we found that the regulations can be modified to require a declaration under the

following circumstances.

For a fishing trip, a declaration would always be required, regardless of fishing trip type or duration. For a non-intended fishing trip, if the intended trip duration is less than sixty minutes, then a declaration would not be required, and so, for example, if the vessel is moving to get fuel or ice, and the sixty-minute timeframe was selected based on input from enforcement about the feasibility of tracking and enforcing this.

Regarding next steps, we would like feedback from the council and our stakeholders at this meeting, noting that the regulation change requires council action.

For the declaration burden associated with dual federal commercial and for-hire permitted vessels, the request is to do one declaration for these dual-permitted vessels. Some challenges that we found are that these declarations for each program collect different information fields and have different means of submission, and so, for commercial, you can submit declarations through the phone or VMS. For SEFHIER, you submit it through the app or VMS.

Given that, the proposed solution would be that this would only apply to those vessels that have a VMS unit that is type approved for both programs, and remember that we currently have ten satellite units that are approved in both sectors and have forms. Also, you must use the VMS to submit the declaration, and this would not apply to vessels in the Southeast Region Headboat Survey, because that program requires declarations to be submitted using the VESL app.

For applicable vessels, there would be a strict pathway for submission, based on trip type, where any commercial or out-of-fishery trips would be reported using the commercial declaration, and any for-hire trips would be reported using the for-hire declaration, because remember that requires the hail-in information.

Regarding next steps, the regulations would need to be modified to allow one declaration for both programs, but we believe that this one can be handled administratively without council action.

Finally, I want to emphasize that we're standing by to assist our constituents who have any questions about the program or are confused about the reporting requirements. We're definitely here to help you, and you can reach us at our customer service

number or the email that's listed at the bottom of this slide, and, if you want to reach out to me specifically, my email address is on the first slide, and, with that, I just want to thank everyone for listening to our SEFHIER updates today, and I will open the floor now.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Thank you, Dr. Masi. Ms. Bosarge.

MS. LEANN BOSARGE: Thank you, Dr. Masi. You always give a wonderful presentation. You give a lot of detail, and I appreciate that. I did have a question about Slide 4, or two questions, actually.

The first bullet says, after April 30, reimbursements will be first-come-first-served for all requests, but that doesn't have anything to do with not having enough money to cover all these reimbursements, right, and you just mean that, obviously, reimbursements may be coming out of New England, and they may be coming out of Alaska, and they may be -- You know, all over the country, and this program handles everybody's, and is that what you mean, that the SEFHIER in the Gulf won't automatically jump to the top of that list for processing, and it has nothing to do with running out of money though, right?

DR. MASI: Hi, Ms. Bosarge. I'm going to actually ask that Jessica answer this question, because she has a bit more of an understanding about it.

DR. STEPHEN: Leann, for the first amount of time, the SEFHIER reimbursements will be prioritized, and so you're correct on that, and then, after that date, we would start prioritizing by the first date received for any of the other nationwide VMS programs. That said, funding for this is always subject to the annual amount of money we're given and how much money we can put into that grant, and so there is concern, with the number of SEFHIER vessels, that this fund may be drawn down low this year, with the amount of money being put into it.

MS. BOSARGE: Okay, and so that kind of leads me into my second question about this VMS reimbursement maximum, and so it says the maximum for a cellular VMS is going to be $950 that they will be reimbursed. I'm guessing that's the cost of the most expensive cellular VMS, but then we went on to say that, if you're in SEFHIER, essentially that's your maximum period. Although there is fourteen units that you can choose from, there is only four that you can actually get fully reimbursed for, I'm assuming.

I feel like we're changing the rules on these people after we have implemented this. They went into this with the understanding that, hey, don't worry, and you can get reimbursed for the cost of your unit, and that won't be a financial burden to you, and now we're saying, well -- You have all these options to choose from, and you can do satellite or you can do the cellular, but now we're telling them that, no, you actually only have four units that you can choose from if you want to be reimbursed, and even that is kind of iffy, because we might run out of money. I don't know, and I just -- I feel like we're fishtailing on our stakeholders here.

DR. STEPHEN: I will give a few comments to that, and so, one, the VMS reimbursement program is a nationwide program not in control of the Southeast Region, and so these are decisions coming out of the nationwide program, based on a lot of cost allocation policies that have been going on within electronic technology programs as a whole.

You got notice nearly as soon as we did, and we had a little bit of back-and-forth and misunderstandings about whether it was just the cellular units or the fishery as a whole, and, very recently, VMS cleared up that it's the fishery as a whole, and that was not something the Southeast Region had a say in at the time.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Thank you, Dr. Stephen, and, just real quickly, I will comment to that. We got that notice on Monday, and so Bob Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Dr. Masi, for your presentation, and, on your first few slides, I note that we have significant non-compliance in this program, which is concerning, and so a two-part question. One is you have given us considerable detail, and you've done considerable outreach, in order to try to boost the compliance amongst the industry relative to this program, and it seems like, at this point, it hasn't been very effective, and so part one is what is your plan relative to compliance going forward, and the second part is, given that, after all this effort, there is still an amazing amount of folks that are not part of the program, what's the -- If we don't do a whole lot better, and say we're asymptotic to where we're going to be, what's the impact on the efficacy of the program as a whole, in terms of the data collection and the rationale for the program's existence, as it stands? Thank you.

DR. MASI: I will try to speak to that, Mr. Gill, and then, if needed, Dr. Stephen can come on and fill in any gaps, and so how

we're handling is, of course, we've spent -- I started in July of last year, and we've spent the duration, and, before that, we were doing outreach and expanding outreach and trying to reach our constituents as best we can, and so, at this point, we're ready to turn on the compliance module in permits, which means that, if a permit comes up for renewal, not only are they going to be looking to see if they're VMS compliant, and so if they've submitted their trip reports, and so I think, once that's turned on, we'll start to see compliance improve.

We've been talking about turning it on for a long time now, and we're at the point now we're ready to actually go ahead and turn that on, and so hopefully, by the next time I come and present, we'll see these numbers have improved substantially. I am going to stop there and let Jessica fill in anything, if she wants to.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Dr. Stephen, do you have anything to add?

DR. STEPHEN: No, and the only thing I will mention is that the logbook compliance, of course, is when the permit is renewed, and permits are renewed on a revolving basis, and so I figure, by the end of the year, we'll have the bulk of people having to submit their logbooks or having their permit held back until that submission is put through. Also, with the VMS, we'll be able to better track people who are not submitting logbooks and knowing that they are out at sea and need to be submitting them.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Okay. Thank you. Dr. Stunz.

DR. STUNZ: Thank you, Madam Chair. I wanted to follow-up with a couple of things that both Leann and Bob said, because it concerns me a little bit as well, and, by the way, thanks for the presentation. That was very informative, but it has to do mainly with the non-compliance, or really the efficiency, and we had a lot of discussion around the table about buy-in, and really getting the buy-in, and, for a successful program, we really want the captains to embrace this program, and I think that that's really important, that we really hand-hold and nurture it along, especially during this formative stage, but I wanted to deliver a message.

I know that a lot of the captains are listening here, because, at least what I am hearing in the western Gulf, is there's a little bit, or more than a little bit, of confusion, and they're not really getting the support that they need, or at least that's what I'm hearing, and so I'm kind of delivering this message, but I wanted to make sure, since they're listening, that we get it very clear on the record of who do they need to

reach out to to get their questions answered.

I think, by doing that, that would increase the compliance that Bob is talking about and some of the issues that Leann -- Then also curb issues right in the beginning, to make sure this is going to be a successful program, but I just want to read this, and, you know, I'm not accusing anyone or anything, but I just want to -- But this is the kind of feedback that I get, and they asked me to convey that the department, and, by the way, I don't know who the department is, but the department answering the phone line isn't actually giving any answers, and they keep saying goodbye and hanging up on the fishermen, and the guys keep -- Well, the guys tell me that they can't get any answers.

While that's just what someone is saying, and I'm sure that -- Who knows what really happened there, but it concerns me a little bit when they're trying to reach out, and, in some cases, they're not getting the right answers, and maybe they're calling the wrong people, but I just want to make sure, while they're listening here today, that it's very clear what they need to do to get any questions answered. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Dr. Masi, would you mind -- I am not looking at the slide, but you said the information was located on the first slide, I believe, and maybe, for those listening, could you state that information on the record, so that, if anybody needs to refer back to it, they could?

DR. MASI: No problem. Thanks, Dr. Stunz, for that information. On the very last slide is our SEFHIER customer service information, and we're standing by there, and that's Eastern Standard Time, but 8:00 to 4:30 every day, for non-federal holidays, and, if they reach the line and there isn't a live person to speak to, then, of course, they could leave a message, and someone would get back to them within the next business day.

I will note that, for every phone call that we take, we write down the information that was discussed, and I know for a fact that nobody on our SEFHIER team is hanging up on anybody. I regularly check those correspondence logs, and I read through them, to see what the conversations are about.

Now, there might be another line that they were contacting, and so I apologize if there was some line that they were contacting and getting hung up on. We will certainly look into that and try to take care of that. If at all else, if everything else fails, my email address is on the first slide, and they can reach out to me directly.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Go ahead, Dr. Stunz.

DR. STUNZ: Thank you very much, and that's exactly what I wanted to accomplish here, is to make sure they knew exactly and ensure they were in fact calling the right number, because I suspect that you guys would be very helpful, but I just wanted to make sure that they're at the right place, where they need to be, to get their questions answered.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: One more question, and so you're starting to finally receive some data from these units, and it sounds like you've got about -- Well, I would have to go back and look, and I don't know if all six-hundred-and-something of them, or 700, are actually pinging right now, but they should be pinging, pretty soon, to law enforcement, and that's half the data that's going to be going to OLE. How is that database handling that over there?

I know that they -- When we were talking about shrimp and bringing our 500 units online, if we went to VMS, that they were going to have to increase their capacity to handle that data, and so how's it going with you all? Have we heard anything on that, Jessica?

DR. STEPHEN: When we started the SEFHIER program, we did hire two additional VMS tech support that are specifically dedicated to the SEFHIER program. They have access both to the SEFHIER database and the VTrack database, and we are actively working at the communications between the VTrack database and our SEFHIER database, to import information into that.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: No, I'm talking about the NOAA OLE database that all that goes into, all those pings.

DR. STEPHEN: Yes, and that's the VTrack database system that the Office of Law Enforcement runs, but the Southeast Region has access to the information in that system. We just need to make that database connection to our -- We hired techs, and we work directly in that system, to see those pings.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: All right. Anybody else? Mr. Diaz.

MR. DIAZ: Thank you, Dr. Stephen, and thank you, Dr. Masi. I

appreciate your presentations. I have a couple of questions, and you all might have said this and I missed it, and I apologize if so, but, of the 1,328, do we know how many of those permits are latent permits and might just be out there for sale or people just aren't using them?

DR. MASI: I can probably answer that one, and so we don't have an exact measure of latent permits, and we have estimated it to be about 20 to 30 percent. However, once we see better compliance with the VMS, we'll know if that vessel is just sitting there with the permit and not actively fishing, and so we'll be able to better address that question probably in the next year or so.

MR. DIAZ: Okay. Thank you, and I noticed that you mentioned this reporting time, where they have to file a report, and you all are throwing out that sixty minutes, and I actually think that's a pretty good idea. I know folks have been talking about having to report for just moving around to get ice and fuel and things like that, and I think probably most of that could be accomplished in sixty minutes, and I am curious to see if we'll get any public testimony on that here. Have you all heard much feedback so far from the for-hire community about that idea, and I guess I would also pose that question to Ms. Boggs, also. Dr. Masi.

DR. MASI: Thanks for the question, and so we did do some outreach with some of our constituents on the timeframe, and we had a few options, and lengthening to as much as possible was recommended by our constituents. The reason for the sixty-minute selection is we heard from them, and then we took that back to OLE, and the sixty-minute was selected over the other options, given that -- Over the longer option, given the fact that the position occurs, for the VMS, every hour, and so, in order to track that, it's easier for OLE to just do it based on a one-hour position rate. Does that answer your question?

MR. DIAZ: Thank you, Dr. Masi. Ms. Boggs.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Thank you, Dr. Masi, and so I honestly have not had the opportunity to talk to any of the captains about this, and I think we'll hear a lot about it in public testimony, and so I have a few questions, but, so we don't run out of time, Dr. Masi, I understand that, on Slide 8, we need -- The council needs to take action to make these changes to the declaration, correct?

DR. MASI: That's correct, and I will probably open the floor to

Mara Levy, if she's on, to better address that, if that's okay.

MS. MARA LEVY: Yes, and so it's going to require council action, because the amendment that put this in place said that, every time you depart for a trip, you need to declare, and so, if we're going to make an exception to that, the council is going to need to do that, and it can probably be through an abbreviated framework action, and, I mean, I know the agency is recommending sixty minutes, and we'll probably look at a couple of options, right, and so you're going to do an abbreviated framework document, if the committee and the council make a motion to do that.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Okay. Any discussion on this possible change? J.D.

MR. DUGAS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't think sixty minutes is enough. I know, in Louisiana, the marinas get jammed up in the middle of the season, and pumping on 300 or 400 or 500 gallons of fuel at a time, and it's going to go over sixty minutes, and so we might want to address that.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: As Ms. Levy stated, we might have to look at a couple of options in the document. Does anybody want to make a motion to start a document? Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: I will make that motion. I don't, obviously, have it, but maybe it would be to direct staff to develop an abbreviated framework document addressing the temporary exclusion or --

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: It would be trip declaration requirements, I believe.

MR. ANSON: Okay. **Addressing trip declaration requirements.** That's good enough, Dr. Simmons? Is that good enough?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Yes, and that's the way I understand we're looking at changing regulations in that section, and is that correct, Ms. Levy?

MS. LEVY: Yes. I think we understand what this is asking.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Do we have a second?

COUNCIL MEMBER: Second.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Okay, and so we have a motion on the board to

direct staff to develop an abbreviated framework document addressing the trip declaration requirements. Is there any opposition to this motion? Mr. Donaldson.

MR. DONALDSON: I don't have opposition, but I have a question. We're creating a separate document than the framework action that we're working on? It has to be a separate document, and we can't -- I am just thinking of if we can be efficient and include it in an already existing document, but I don't know.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Ms. Levy.

MS. LEVY: I mean, you can. I guess it depends on timing, right, and like how fast we want to move. I don't know, and maybe staff can talk about whether it would be more efficient to put them together or not, and I don't know, in terms of where are in the process. Are we supposed to take final action on the -- That's why. Okay. You're supposed to take final action on the other document.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Ms. Somerset and Dr. Simmons.

MS. SOMERSET: To Mara's point, it was supposed to be final action at this meeting, but we have the additional mostly economic analyses for gag, the administrative burden, and so it is not complete yet, but it would slow it down just a bit, and I think the idea was to go final at the next meeting.

MR. DONALDSON: Never mind.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to commend Dr. Masi and Dr. Stephen for helping us come with solutions on these two issues, and I hope we can move it through the process quickly. I did have a question about when -- The council will develop this document, but do you all have a good idea if the software will have to be modified with the vendors to accommodate this change? Thanks.

DR. MASI: The answer to that is no, since we're changing the regulations, which is why this was the preferred solution. Does that answer your question?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Yes, ma'am.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. ANDY STRELCHECK: I recognize that the VMS requirements are just newly implemented, and we haven't had any instances where someone has requested an exemption for failure, but, given the comments earlier, I would certainly lean toward if we could delay that framework action until August and incorporate this into the framework action, and let's get everything kind of addressed all at once and take final action at the August council meeting. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: We have a motion on the board. Do we want to incorporate it in with -- I mean, I understand what Andy is saying, and I appreciate Dave's question. We haven't experienced any failures, and it seems like the SEFHIER team has been very helpful in addressing all of the issues, and I haven't been able to comment, but, Dr. Masi, I really appreciated this presentation, because you have addressed a lot of the questions, and it appears that, as things come up, you all are addressing them, and we're getting through without any disruption to the fishermen, and we may have to hear some comment this afternoon, and so what is the desire of the committee? Do you all want to -- Do we need to go ahead and vote this motion up or down and then come back and discuss it? Ms. Levy, what do I do?

MS. LEVY: Well, I mean, I guess, if you decide you want to incorporate it into the current document, you could -- The motion maker could change the motion, and you could amend it. I mean, I don't -- It's up to you how you want to proceed, but Carrie looks like she has something.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Dr. Simmons and then Mr. Anson.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and so I guess, Andy, do you think that we could just leave this kind of flexible and just put in the committee report that we could try to incorporate this and take final action in August, because we always think these things are easy, and then we get into the IPT level, and we always get into hiccups, and I would hate to delay the VMS equipment failure document too much longer, and so can we have a little flexibility there and just put that into the report as the intent of the council?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, I'm certainly fine with that approach, and I think the recommendation we brought forward is pretty straightforward to consider, and I think the question is about the timing, which has been some of the discussion today about that, and we will need to work through that before the next council meeting.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: I guess I'm fine with a delay, if it's in August, if we are going to incorporate this into the other document, and it's just two more months, I guess, relative to if we were to take final action in June, but, in deference to the comments and concerns that the charter boat operators have brought to us, that prompted us to develop the other document, and there could be some potential for impacts to business, and so the two months more --

You know, is it kind of a little bit of a Russian roulette here, in my mind, as to whether or not -- So certainly, to the extent that the agency has been very amendable, or sensitive, to those types of issues, if maybe they can extend that window a little bit more, if and when those circumstances occur, I guess is all -- You know, if this were to go to August, and so that's all. I mean, I can -- We can amend it, or we can just leave it as-is, if staff is comfortable and everyone is comfortable with trying to get it in for an August timeline.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Okay. Ms. Bosarge, I will recognize you, but I want to ask a quick question to Kevin's point, and, Carrie or Mara, and I'm not sure, but, when we vote on this motion and we move forward, we note the flexibility, but, even if we go final in June with the current document, it won't be on the books, and, I mean, you're already going to be through summer, and that's kind of my thinking, and so, if we just marry them, and then we just get it all out there for the first of next year, but let's hear what Ms. Bosarge has to say.

MS. BOSARGE: Well, I think I would prefer to go final in June with what we have, and then this part might not get -- Might not be available for them until next year, but, if we go final in June, and if the agency would give it some priority, that six-month window, you might have it in place before the end of the year, but, if we wait until August -- I don't know, and you know how it goes around Thanksgiving and Christmas, when it comes to trying to get anything done, and so I think we probably should go --

These people are trying to get these on the boats and functioning right now, and that's going to be the biggest burden on the supply chain for these things, when they all rush in there to get them, because we've only got half the fleet outfitted right now. Then that leads to possible issues with, you know, the functioning of the unit, and I don't -- I think it needs to go faster, rather than slower, and I prefer June.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: All right, and so here we go. **We have a motion on the board to direct staff to develop an abbreviated framework document addressing the trip declaration requirements. Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.** Ms. Somerset and then Mr. Anson.

MS. SOMERSET: Mr. Anson can go first. I have a question about document clarification, and so I will hold.

MR. ANSON: Actually, mine is not related to this topic, and I just wanted to -- Actually, I might bring it up under Other Business. How's that?

MS. SOMERSET: All right, and so, just for my edification and clarification for when I'm updating this document, and sorry to go back, but I just wanted to ask one more thing about the permit holder versus the vessel owner-operator, so that, when I'm making these changes -- Most of the VMS regulations in Part 622 refer to the vessel owner-operator and not the permit holder, and so I just wanted to clarify that this EFE, the equipment failure exemption, would be permit holder, but a majority of the others, including the power-down exemption are the onus of the vessel owner-operator, and I understand that several -- There are captains who are also the owners and the permit holders, but the permit holder is not always the captain or operator.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: I will let Dr. Masi and Dr. Stephen speak to this, but -- I am kind of asking this as a question, but I think it needs to be consistent in all of the documents. Otherwise, it could get a little messy, if you're trying to do different things in different areas, and I thought, with Dr. Stephen's presentation, that it said permit holder, and so I don't know what you all have to do, the agencies, to get on the same page.

MS. SOMERSET: Right, Madam Chair, and that's why we wanted some clarification, because it could cause some confusion, because the other requirements point towards the vessel owner-operator, and so I just wanted to point that out.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Okay. Thank you. Dr. Masi, does that take care of what you needed us to take action on?

DR. MASI: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Okay. Ms. Bosarge and then Mr. Diaz.

MS. BOSARGE: While we have Dr. Stephen on the phone, or the webinar, I had one more question. That $950 that you all came up with as the maximum reimbursement that you can get -- I was looking at some old paperwork that I had, but one of those cellular units is just at $2,000, and it's $1,995, and it's about twice what you're willing to reimburse for one of them, and how did you come up with that maximum of $950?

DR. STEPHEN: I reached out to VMS as well, when I saw the dollar amount, and so their analysis is they took an average of the units, and now that most expensive cellular unit is actually a hybrid unit that is cellular and satellite, and so they discounted it from their analysis.

MS. BOSARGE: So how many units can you actually get on the cellular side, and, I mean, we have fourteen units, and it looks like now we're down to three that you can actually get fully reimbursed for, and are those three less than $950, the last three remaining?

DR. STEPHEN: I would have to look at their analysis again, but I think at least three of those units that were strictly cellular would have the reimbursement cover the full cost. Now, if you choose a more expensive unit, you don't get reimbursed for the full cost, but you do get reimbursed up to the $950 amount.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Mr. Diaz.

MR. DIAZ: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think most of us probably received an email from one of the captains in Florida, and he was talking about some of the fields on the app don't auto-repopulate, and it might be just specific to certain units, and so, in his email, he specifically talked about he returns to the same dock every day, and he uses hook-and-line gear every day, and he has the same number of crew virtually every day.

Anyway, he was making a comment about it would be good if they could auto-populate, and so, Dr. Masi or Dr. Stephen, can you all speak to that, about where we're at with that, or if that's just with some units, or if there's any options there for the future? Thank you.

DR. MASI: Thanks for that question, and so the reason we have chosen not to allow certain fields to auto-fill is just for scientific integrity. We hope to be able to use the data someday, and we want to ensure that we're getting an accurate representation of those values from the for-hire fishery.

If a field is always auto-filled, then you run into the situation where if, in general, you do the same thing all the time, but, in a rare instance, you happen to change something, you might not remember to change that field, because it's already filled in for you, and so we just want to try to eliminate the potential to overlook it, if possible.

Now, there are some options, and we do allow vendors to take the path of a favorite, and, in VESL, for instance, if you have a field, the value that you most often fill in will be listed at the top of the list, in bold, and so easy to select from all the other options, and so you just hit that, and it will fill in for you. The other app we have is eTRIPS, and we're currently working with them right now on the auto-fill.

MR. DIAZ: Thank you, Dr. Masi.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Okay. I have two quick questions, or, actually, I have three. Dr. Masi, the 8,000 compliance calls that you referenced on Slide 2, could you very briefly, just maybe a couple or three bullet points, and what are the highlights, or what are the high-liners, that people are calling in about, or what are the compliance issues?

DR. MASI: I can touch on that, and so, essentially, this changes over time, right. When the program started, and so remember this 8,000 is from January 4, 2021, and we, obviously, had a lot of questions about how to get set up with the different apps, how to set up an account, things like that.

Over time, we saw things like, and we would call out to people, that you're missing a logbook, or you potentially had a field filled in wrong, or you were missing a field, and so things like that over time. More recently, of course, the calls have been largely focused around either missing reports, but also a lot of calls about VMS requirements and how to get set up with that and how to get the reimbursement.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Thank you, and, as I said earlier, I'm going to put on the record the telephone number that needs to be called, and so, if anyone is listening, and they don't have that number, and so to Greg's point of maybe they are calling the wrong phone number. It's 1-833-707-1632, correct?

DR. MASI: That's correct. Thanks, Ms. Boggs.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Okay. We do have a question for you, Dr. Masi,

and Dr. Stephen, for Other Business, and will you all remain on the line, or do we need to go ahead and take care of that now?

DR. MASI: I can remain on the line.

DR. STEPHEN: I will be on the line as well.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Okay. Thank you. All right. Dr. Hollensead.

DR. HOLLENSEAD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just for a little housekeeping, SERO has been really good about these reports and these updates on SEFHIER, and I just wanted to ask the committee about the frequency of these reports. What would you all like to do?

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Bob Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to weigh-in on that one. We have a new program, and, everything else being equal, my thinking is we don't need a report every meeting, but this program has some hiccups at the get-go, the non-compliance, in my mind, and so I'm thinking an appropriate frequency might be every other meeting, to get an update on where we are and where we're going, with an idea to broaden that out when things seem to settle down.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: I mean, I'm fine with that. I mean, I think it's very important, until we get some of these issues resolved, and as we continue to hear from the captains, and that might too determine the frequency, and we're hearing a lot of issues, and I will let Dr. Stunz weigh-in.

DR. STUNZ: I actually would like maybe to see it every meeting for the initial beginning here, Bob, and I think for sure we could back off once we feel like, okay, well, it seems to be, you know, headed where we want it to be, but, with the compliance, and the issues we just talked about about maybe not getting all the information they need, for the next few meetings, I would prefer --

It doesn't have to be that extensive, as we've discussed today, but just a brief update about, you know, here's the users, and here's the latent, the ones we know about, and here's non-compliance or whatever, just so we kind of keep a close finger on what's going on, and then back off, a little later down the line, but I'm not going to fight that too hard, if it's not possible.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: I would just add that, when the time is appropriate, any, you know, kind of twenty-thousand or thirty-thousand-foot level summary statistics of the analysis, any QA/QC issues or something that has arisen, that we might be able to discuss here at the council and be able to get back out to the community, if there are certain things that are impacting the data, but no set timeline that you have to bring anything back for the next meeting, but just, at some point, it would be nice to see some data start to populate, and then, if you do identify any issues related to data collection, that the council might be a good place to advertise those. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Mr. Donaldson.

MR. DONALDSON: I just want to agree with Dr. Stunz, and I think, initially, we probably should do it every meeting, and then, as the program matures, we can adjust as necessary, but I think, for right now, there's enough issues that a presentation every meeting would be a good idea.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Dr. Hollensead, I would agree, until we kind of get all of these issues worked out, because I think we're going to continue to hear, especially through the summer, as it really gets ramped up, and then maybe, Bob, next year, we get a presentation in January and say, okay, we'll look at it again in June, and so I would say every month from here. Okay. The next item --

MR. STRELCHECK: Susan?

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: I'm sorry, Andy. Go ahead.

MR. STRELCHECK: I have my hand raised, but it's sometimes being seen and sometimes not, and so I guess a question, based on the comments that were just made, and, you know, I hear people, obviously, talking about they want the presentation at every meeting, and there was a mention of every other meeting, but the discussion centered around because of all these issues and compliance, but I guess what I'm struggling with is what is the council -- What do we want to bring to the council, in terms of decisions before the council?

This presentation was a very good one, in my opinion, because we were being very reactive and responsive to feedback and information we've heard and some key decision points that we felt that we needed to lay back out to the council or convey to

fishermen.

If the information you're desiring, going forward, is kind of similar to that, then I guess my argument would be that staff would need to help decide at what point are there things that the council needs to weigh-in on, versus just kind of summary statistics and data, to kind of let you know these are the changes that have taken place between meetings, and I don't see that nearly as helpful and informative to the council as the larger discussion that we've had around a lot of issues today, and so I wanted to get some feedback, or reaction, to that from those that have already weighed-in, and let's see if we can have a little more flexibility in deciding like at what point do things come back to the council, versus every meeting we have to report-out, even if there's really not a lot of changes or information that we would be bringing back to you, other than some kind of updates on statistics.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Well, I will start that discussion. I mean, I would certainly like to see -- We would have to go back to I think it's Slide 2 or 3, where it gives us the statistics, how many -- Because, I mean, this is something that the captains asked for, and the council took a lot of time and worked through this, and it's Slide 3.

Basically, in just a short -- I don't necessarily guess that we have to have a presentation, but, you know, what is the compliance, and is there any issue out there that -- I mean, I understand that we made -- We took action on one specific issue today, because it was requested, but just for us to understand the compliance, and, if the compliance continues to be an issue, then what is the reason? What needs -- Does the council need to take action to help with that?

So I don't think it needs to be as elaborate as what we saw today, but I think, until we get this at least through its first full year, with both VMS and reporting, just a little update. Thank you. Dr. Stunz.

DR. STUNZ: Susan, that's exactly it. Nothing extensive, Andy, and I would -- The slide we're looking at right now is all I would be looking for, kind of like how we do landings, something really quick, because my concern is, if it's every other meeting for now, in this initial phase, if something comes up and then it's not time to address it at that meeting, and then it goes to another -- You could be months down the line, and we're not being probably nearly as adaptive, or responsive, as we need to be, and hopefully everything goes fine and then we back off,

but, at least for now, I would prefer something just as simple as this slide right here.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Madam Chair, and so I am in the minority here, I guess, but that's okay. I am thinking, Andy, along the lines that you're thinking, and that is that the process is going along, and our interaction is fairly limited and unlikely, and I'm sure, if there's a problem that arises that needs council attention, then you all are going to bring that to us, whether we have a presentation or not, but I am satisfied that you're going to be working the problem, like you have, and it's going to move on, and so there's no action item that I see the council really getting involved with that needs that frequency, and I was thinking of the workload and what's the value, and so I am still persuaded that I don't see a need for every meeting.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Another thing too, Bob, I think too is there is several captains out there, when they see these numbers, they're going to find those folks and find out why aren't you doing this, because they want people to be compliant, and they want this program to be successful, and I don't know, Dr. Hollensead, if it's just something that SEFHIER can just send it and you provide the update, just a very simple one-pager and here it is, but I am like Greg, and I would like to see it monthly, at least for now. Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: Yes, and I think this is, you know, a big enough program, and it's really light years ahead of the type of reporting that you had before, and I think this is the true implementation, right, and everything is finally mandatory, for, what, thirty-five days now or something, and so we're not well into this yet, and I think we need an update at each meeting.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Is that what you need, Dr. Hollensead?

DR. HOLLENSEAD: Yes, ma'am.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: All right. Well, then would you take us through Action Item Number VI, please?

NMFS-SERO USE OF COUNCIL FUNDING UTILIZED BY THE PERMITS OFFICE

DR. HOLLENSEAD: Okay. Agenda Item VI, Mr. Strelcheck will give a verbal update on the SERO's use of council funding utilized by the Permits Office. If you recall, the council funded $94,000 that have been applied to updating the SERO permits software

system, and this is informational for now, and no action needs to be taken. As I understand it, Mr. Strelcheck will sort of tee-off a more in-depth presentation from a representative from the permits staff that will occur at the next meeting.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Mr. Strelcheck, whenever you're ready, sir.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Madam Chair. Recall that, last year, I approached the council about providing some funding for our permits online system. This is a multi-million-dollar overhaul of our permits system that had reached end-of-life. Previously, you were only able to renew permits, with our old system, and we have now built the system and expanded it for all types of permit applications, and so it's still a work in progress, but it's largely developed.

We rolled it out back in August of last year, and so the $94,000 -- I can't say specifically what it went for, but what I can say is that money has been well spent, and the system itself is reducing the amount of time that it takes to renew a permit, and it has almost cut that timeframe in half at this point, because what is now happening is it's reducing the number of errors and the back-and-forth that we have to have, in terms of sending paperwork to and from permit applicants.

You're also seeing a growing number of people that are using the system, which is going to make it more efficient and timely for them to receive their permits and renewals and for us to process those permits and renewals, and so we are spending a lot of time now working on some outreach and education, and there is certainly an emphasis, obviously, on trying to drive people towards the permits online system and for them to utilize it effectively, and so, at this stage, we are continuing to put additional funding from NOAA Fisheries to support both the operations and maintenance of the system, but the continued development to enhance the system.

Kevin McIntosh, my Permits Branch Chief, I have talked with Carrie Simmons about having him present at an upcoming council meeting, and what he can do is provide a much more in-depth presentation of how the system looks and some of the statistics we're seeing and the outreach and education efforts that we're doing for educating permit applicants, and so, with that, I will answer any questions you have. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Thank you, Andy. I will say it works very well. I've had a couple reach out to -- A couple of captains reach out to me, and they've had issues, and Kevin has been very

responsive and has very quickly addressed the issues, and so I think it's working well. Any other questions or comments for Andy? All right. Seeing none, Dr. Hollensead, would you take us through Agenda Item VII?

UPDATE ON WORKSHOP TO EVALUATE STATE-FEDERAL RECREATIONAL SURVEY DIFFERENCES

DR. HOLLENSEAD: For Agenda Item VII, we're going to have an update on a workshop that was held at the end of February looking at state-federal recreational survey differences. The states had an opportunity to provide some of their data and survey information to some consultants, who then got to provide some feedback and then, at this workshop, sort of have a broader discussion of those topics, and so Dr. Richard Cody, I believe, is on the line to provide that update to you.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Thank you. Dr. Cody, are you with us this morning?

DR. RICHARD CODY: Yes, I'm here. Can you hear me okay?

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Yes, sir. Please go ahead.

DR. CODY: All right. As Dr. Hollensead mentioned, we had a workshop in late February to address congressional mandates for an independent review of the surveys and make improvements to those surveys, but also to complete, or to start the process to complete, the transition for the state surveys, and so, basically, this was a two-and-a-half-day workshop, and it focused on two approaches, or two dual approaches.

One was to develop the research needed to address the congressional mandates, and, also, the second part was completing the transition process, and the idea was that we had to have both occurring at the same time, to make progress on the transition, and we couldn't have one bottleneck any kind of progress with the other.

The workshop basically outlined the plan that would be a dual approach, as I mentioned, and, since then, there has been the development of an outline of a transition plan, and, next week, the transition team working group will meet to discuss the next steps with the workshop and to flesh out who is responsible for certain parts of the transition plan.

In the workshop, there was some discussion of the data management aspects of the Gulf surveys, and, generally, the

approach taken there was, with the help of Gulf States, was to have the Gulf States take charge of management, given that this was going to take some time to develop, or it's getting to a point where it was satisfactory in the long-term.

Then the other aspect that was mentioned in the workshop was the communication related to the work of the transition team, and so, right now, we're in the process of identifying members from the different states and regional entities that will populate this communications team.

As I mentioned, the working group will meet next Tuesday, and, basically, the discussion will focus on some of the products from the workshop. We have two main products that are expected, and one is a report from the workshop chair, Paul Rago, and this will basically summarize the workshop proceedings and hopefully integrate some of the information from the consultants relative to their research recommendations. Paul is still working on his part of that, and so the workshop report, and what he has right now is he has transcripts of the workshop, and he has notes taken by staff members that recorded the workshop, and then, also, he has the draft report from the consultants, which we just received, that outlines some of the recommendations.

Those recommendations, I can say, are both broad and then specific to the states as well, and so there are some broad recommendations that focus on survey types and surveys that have effort, separate effort and catch components, versus the recapture methods, and then, also, they have some specific recommendations relating to the actual states themselves, and so directed more to the states, and so we will be sharing that with the team on Tuesday, plus, right now, we are in the process of, as I said, of finalizing that report that Paul will have for us some time, we hope, later this month.

One other point to make is that, related to the transition process, some specific -- I mention today probably the gag calibrations related to the stock assessment for gag, and so we were charged with developing specific TORs, terms of reference, for inclusion of the gag calibrated estimates in the assessment process.

We have received input from the Southeast Science Center, and also from the consultants, and shared those with Florida, and so Florida now is working to address those TORs, and we will be having a meeting with some Florida representatives and Bev Sauls to discuss -- Just to make sure we're on the same page, as far as the expectations for those terms of reference.

I will mention, also, that related to some of the information that was presented in the workshop, we have a meeting coming up next month, and so with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, regarding their calibrations, and so we'll be discussing that, and that's relative to the use of calibrated estimates for the upcoming red snapper assessment.

I think that's basically where we are at this point. The meeting next week will be, I think, pivotal, in that it will determine kind of the next steps. Since we do have a draft of the consultants' recommendations, the idea will be to focus on how best to complete the resources needed to address those recommendations. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Thank you, Dr. Cody. Are there any questions for Dr. Cody? Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Dr. Cody. I appreciate the update. Recognizing it's a work in progress, but also recognizing the importance of that work in progress, and following up on our discussions during the workshop, my concern about the timeline comes up, and I would like to ask if you could give a broad overview of what that timeline looks like, and I'm not looking for specifics, but kind of how long it's going to take before transition is complete or some indicator of where we are and when we hope to end up. Thank you.

DR. CODY: I can address that, I think, broadly. Obviously, the research components will address the need for some improvements to each of the surveys, and the consultants have specific recommendations related to non-sampling as well as sampling error, and so those are going to take some time to complete. However, that shouldn't, I think, be a bottleneck for the transition plan, but they will still need to be accounted for in that process.

I would say, realistically, the research plan is going to take, depending on identification of funding and getting things through the approval processes and so on, it could take between two and five years, and so that's obviously an extended timeline, but it doesn't probably help with transition or anything, and so we're hoping that we can address and prioritize those research interests over the coming months, in conversations with the working group, and that will help us, I think, identify the major things that we can address quickly and put us in a position where we will have surveys that are --

I would say, as far as timelines are concerned, in the immediate future, I think our primary concern would be the gag assessment and having the review completed for the calibration, in time for that, and so Florida is working with us and is expected -- They expect a deadline of later this month for turning in their documentation for review, and we'll work with them to make sure that there is -- That we get that done.

Then it will pass to the consultants, and we expect to have that completed -- I think, yesterday, in the Reef Fish Committee meeting, a May 25 deadline was proposed there, and so we don't see an issue with meeting that deadline. It does bump up against some of the consultants, with their day-job work, but I think that we should be able to get that done.

In the immediate future, that deadline shouldn't -- But I would imagine that we should be able to identify, over the next few weeks at least, given that we have the consultant report in-hand, some manageable timeline, when it comes to transitioning the surveys, and I would be focusing on trying to get that done within the next two years, at the most, but at least have a plan outlined.

We may not have all the pieces in place, such as the data management aspects and things like that, but we'll be to a point where we're functioning and can move forward, and so sort of a non-answer, because I haven't given any specific dates, other than the ones for gag, but I think we would be happy to provide updates of the discussions that we'll be having with the transition team, because there are many moving parts to this. I mean, one is the big consideration of everyone's ability to address the different components of transitioning.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Thank you. General Spraggins.

GENERAL JOE SPRAGGINS: Dr. Cody, thank you so much. I just wanted to tell you that we appreciate the efforts that NMFS has made to address our differences in the surveys and all, and we appreciate the workshop, and I can tell you that we are trying to do something now, and we have a consultant that we're working with, as I briefed yesterday, about the possibility of trying to find improvements to our system and the way that we can work better with data collection, and I look forward to working with you all in the very near future, to make sure that we can make a better effort with this. Thank you very much.

DR. CODY: Thank you, General Spraggins, and I will just add to that that Trevor has been very upfront and forthcoming about

sharing information with us, and so we appreciate that, also. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Thank you, Dr. Cody. I don't see any other -- I do. Never mind. Mr. Diaz.

MR. DIAZ: I also want to thank Dr. Cody for the efforts of Science and Technology and the stuff that you all are working on. I am very interested in hearing further updates on this transition team regularly, and I think this is very important. I do think that -- I know the State of Mississippi has been working closely with your team, Dr. Cody, and I do think they've made a -- They've presented some compelling evidence that there is some real issue with low sample size and the numbers that we get out of that, and so I'm very interested to hear what comes out of this transition team and some of the recommendations that are made on the sampling and non-sampling errors, and so I would urge that we get regular updates on this transition team, at least for the next few meetings, and see how this is going. Thank you again, Dr. Cody.

DR. CODY: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Dr. Cody, for the update. I think, as you said, there's a lot of moving parts here going on, and we don't have -- You said the report is not yet available for this transition workshop. When that report is complete, I think it would be imperative, and I plan to ask for it at the SEDAR Steering Committee meeting in May, that the document that was developed with your agency, the Science Center, and the Southeast Regional Office, and that document is "The Recommended Use of Current Gulf of Mexico Surveys for Marine Recreational Fishing in Stock Assessments", and I really think that document needs to be updated based on the results of the transition team.

There is outdated dates in there regarding those options, and any of the things that would occur, based on that workshop, it's not clear how that will translate into the assessment and management process, and so I would really urge all those folks involved to please consider updating that when that report is complete, and that is a document that we can look at at the council level, and staff can look at, and the public can review as an understanding of where we are in this process and how we see it flowing through stock assessments and into management. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Dr. Cody, do you have any response to that?

DR. CODY: Well, I would say that I agree. We did identify some exceptions in the workshop that I think need to be specifically addressed. That said, I think, also, and I haven't had a chance to do a deep dive into the consultant recommendations, but there is some information there, I think, that is relevant to that document and could be used to update it.

The other thing I will mention too is the consultants did make some specific recommendations related to, as Dale pointed out, sample size and rare-event species, and so there is some input there, and I would be happy to provide updates as we continue this work.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Thank you, Dr. Cody. All right. Seeing no other hands, we'll go to Other Business. Mr. Anson.

OTHER BUSINESS

MR. ANSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am a little hesitant about bringing up this topic, because I don't want to alarm anybody, but, since Dr. Masi and Dr. Stephen were here present for this committee, this is an issue that kind of reared its head at the Ecosystem Committee meeting, and it relates to the FEP that we've been discussing relative to the notion of one of the aspects, or one of the ideas, that was brought forward during that committee regarding cooperative research.

I was just curious if Dr. Masi or Dr. Stephen could just provide a simple answer as to this question I have, and that question is if, in the future, it is decided that cooperative research could be introduced through the for-hire sector, is the process that was set up to establish SEFHIER -- Is that process in a position where it could accommodate the addition of either a module that would be created specifically to an ecosystem issue, a fishery ecosystem issue, or additional questions that could be added to the current suite of questions?

Again, I'm just trying to think ahead, and I'm not promoting it, because, again, it's nothing that we decided at the Ecosystem, but I'm just curious to see if that could be easily implemented through what's been established through the SEFHIER program.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Dr. Masi or Dr. Stephen?

DR. STEPHEN: I'll take a stab at this one. Sorry, and I wasn't

in the Ecosystem meeting, and so I didn't hear how the conversation went there, but if you're asking, if we add additional questions to SEFHIER -- I will give you kind of a layout of how that works.

We would need to get PRA approval, which is the approval we need to add any questions to the system, and so that's kind of a paperwork aspect to it, and it does need to be approved throughout the process and have strong justification.

The next step then would be reaching out to the different vendors and establishing a timeline for them to do the development work, in order to add those questions to not only their application, but we would also need to reach out and establish the infrastructure within the data receiving systems, in order to get that information as well, and so well within the realm of possibility, and it's the timeline of it that I might get a little bit concerned on, if it's expected to occur rapidly.

Because these were all outside applications and not applications owned by NMFS, we're a little bit limited in asking for them to add additional questions, and that's just they need their development time within their other businesses to do that development. Did that answer what you were looking for?

MR. ANSON: It did. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: That was a very good question, Kevin, and I agree with you. I mean, that would be a way to gather additional information. Any other business? Peter and then John Walter.

MR. HOOD: I just wanted to mention that the South Atlantic Council, at their meeting last month, has started working on an electronic -- A commercial electronic logbook amendment, and we're -- I know you'll be talking about this at the June meeting, and I think Carrie had mentioned that it would be on the agenda there, but we're recommending that that perhaps be a joint amendment between both of the councils, because the coastal logbooks are used by a variety of fisheries, both in the Gulf and the South Atlantic. Again, it would be helpful, at least when you get into that conversation, about thinking about doing something jointly with the South Atlantic. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: John Walter.

DR. WALTER: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to follow-up

on Mr. Anson's comment about how this could potentially facilitate CRP work, and I think that it definitely could, and perhaps some of the models are on how fishermen could help with surveys, or how their data could be helped to inform things, which we might not have very much information on, and I think we talked about that in the fireside chat last night, in particular, and there's a number of species for which there are fisheries for, but we really either don't have surveys, and we could perhaps develop indices based on their fishery-dependent information, which this could really facilitate, and then, also, in perhaps designed surveys that would utilize fishing vessels, and I think, in that case, there is a good example, in the South Atlantic, with a deepwater longline survey that's operating on commercial longline vessels and actually getting us really good data for a lot of the species that we previously didn't have data for.

Cooperative research is something that I know is high on the agency's list of priorities, in terms of being able to harness the information and the expertise of our fishermen to support the science. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Thank you, Dr. Walter. Anything else for this committee?

MR. STRELCHECK: Susan, I do have something.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Okay. Go ahead, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I just wanted to follow-up on Peter's comment, and so, as he stated, the South Atlantic Council is moving forward with a logbook action. They are going to look at an options paper in June, and I think the goal is to try to take final action as early as December of this year, and so I would ask Carrie. Do you need a motion from the Gulf Council to proceed at this point with a joint amendment with the South Atlantic Council? I certainly recommend that, and I think it would be prudent to go ahead and do so.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Madam Chair. No, and, actually, we've been talking about this for a while, and I think we had a motion from February of 2013, and so it's been on the list for a while, and so we are planning for a joint amendment, and I hope we can make it happen and there's no divorces, but we'll have a discussion and try to get involved with the IPT and the South Atlantic to bring, hopefully, draft options, if not a

presentation, in June.

MR. STRELCHECK: Great. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Ms. Bosarge. Dr. Simmmons, we don't need a motion, or Dr. Hollensead?

DR. HOLLENSEAD: I think Carrie is indicating that no motion is required, because it's been several years ago, but I actually had a question, and maybe Mr. Strelcheck, or perhaps Mr. Hood, can answer this for me. I know there has been -- We have brought the commercial electronic logbook topic to the Reef Fish AP and the CMP AP, and there has been interest from our APs that, if the paper logbooks, as they exist, go to an electronic framework, that there is strong support for that.

I guess my question is, and it seems like that perhaps could be moved quickly, but, just for clarification, is that what the South Atlantic is working on, or are they also talking about adding other fields, reporting a hail-in before offload, because those things, you know, our APs indicated they would want some input on, and perhaps some workshops, and so that would take a little bit longer, and so just some clarification on that would be helpful.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Certainly John Walter can weigh-in here, but my understanding is that it's a kind of simple, streamlined action that the South Atlantic Council was pursuing and that it would be essentially just allowing for electronic submission of the same variables and data that are submitted currently on the paper-based forms, without expanding out the requirements.

DR. HOLLENSEAD: Thank you for that clarification. I appreciate it.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: So a different topic, if that's okay, if there's no more feedback on that.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Yes, ma'am.

MS. BOSARGE: Okay. I was wondering, and this is for you, Dr. Walter, and the wenchman -- We've had a discussion, and, since Susan has got six more minutes in her committee, we might as well use it, right, and we had a discussion about wenchman at

the fireside chat last night too, kind of going in line with what you all were talking about on cooperative research and getting information from the fishermen on some of these species where maybe you don't have as much information.

We need to get that topic before the SSC, to really start moving on that and doing anything with it, and it's my understanding that the Science Center is going to provide, obviously, that last stock assessment, that data-poor assessment, that we did I believe, or tried to do, on using the mid-water snapper complex and any other information that you may have, and what do you think our timeframe has on you getting any and all wenchman data that you all might have, mid-water snapper depth complex data you might have, over to council staff, so they know when they can put it on the SSC agenda?

DR. WALTER: Thanks for that question. I can't say what the timeline would necessarily be, because I don't exactly know all the information sources that we might be able to get that from, but I can get back to you, and back to council staff, on when that might be kind of a useful conversation that is seeded by data for the SSC.

One thing that I will comment on is that, given that there are funds available, through the competitive Cooperative Research Program, which often the scientists take on, but they have to be partnerships with the industry as well, so the industry can look to trying to really target those particular topics of interest and then find a scientific partner to go in on, and those can be both within the agency as well as external, and so I think that's a resource that we need to start to consider, because that allows proactive -- It allows the industry to take the action that they may want to take and find the partner to make it happen and then bring that science and data, because, while I would love to devote our resources, the Science Center resources, to all of these, there are a number of pressing resources, and we just can't get to all of them with the attention that people may want.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: A follow-up, Ms. Bosarge?

MS. BOSARGE: Yes, and that sounds excellent, and I like those kind of ideas. All right. Well, if you -- Maybe by the committee report during Full Council tomorrow, if you have any feedback on the timeline for -- Because I think it's just stuff you're going to pull, and it's not new things you will have to do, but you're just going to have to find whatever data you have and send it to staff, and so maybe if you can get us an update

by Full Council, and that will give me a better idea, before we leave this meeting, of what SSC agenda that we'll see that topic on. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I know you're trying to wrap up. Just along the cooperative research idea, I mean, I do think that's a good idea, but, historically, it's been quite competitive, and it's been not a lot of money, and it's been only for one year, and so I think we have to think about perhaps expectations with that.

You know, when you're trying to answer some of these difficult questions offshore, it's not really possible to do it in that amount of time with that little amount of money, and so perhaps we should think about revamping some of those programs to meet some of these needs, and then, on top of that, it would have to flow through the priorities as well, to get some of this mid-water and deepwater species to the top of the list. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Quickly, to that point, there's also the MARFIN program that allows longer timeframes than the CRP program, and typically is better funded, that might also be used.

CHAIRMAN BOGGS: Anything else to come before this committee? Seeing none, that concludes our committee.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on April 6, 2022.)

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