

**Data Collection Committee Report**  
**October 23, 2023**  
**Ms. Susan Boggs, Chair**

The Committee adopted the agenda (**Tab F, No. 1**) and approved the minutes (**Tab F, No. 2**) of the August 2023 meeting as written.

***Joint Amendment for Commercial Electronic Reporting (Tab F, Nos. 4a-c)***

The Committee reviewed the summary of public comments for the amendment, the document's purpose and need, and draft codified text. One public comment requested a "grandfather"-type exemption for program participants to continue using paper logbooks. Representatives from NMFS stated that allowing this type of exemption for only a handful of individuals would be problematic as complete transition to electronic reporting would ideally maintain consistent program reporting requirements. The commercial coastal logbook program currently has staff to help participants with their reports and will continue providing that service for electronic submissions.

The Committee recommends and I so **move: To recommend the Council approve the Joint Amendment on Commercial Electronic Reporting and that it be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for review and implementation, and deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate, giving staff editorial license to make the necessary changes in the document. The Council Chair is given the authority to deem any changes to the codified text as necessary and appropriate.**

*Motion carried with no opposition.*

***Development of Gulf for-hire data collection program (Tab F, Nos. 5a-c)***

Drs. Jessica Stephen and Michelle Masi (Southeast Regional Office [SERO]) provided three presentations to the Committee regarding for-hire data collection in the Gulf. The first presentation provided an overview of sampling survey designs and current for-hire data collection programs in the Gulf. Dr. Stephen was asked if the 8.5% of trips intercepted at the dock (validation) in the Southeast Regional Headboat Survey was considered adequate representation of the fleet, and she responded that it was. She continued that estimates from this survey have previously been directly used in several stock assessments. A Committee member asked if survey question order had been examined for the federal for-hire telephone survey, similar to what has been recently done for the Marine Recreational Information Program's Fishing Effort Survey (MRIP-FES) pilot study. NMFS staff indicated a similar study had not been initiated for the for-hire data collection program, but stated the for-hire telephone survey asks questions on weekly fishing effort which is expected to have less recall bias than that observed in MRIP-FES.

The second presentation provided a summary of data collected in 2022 through the Southeast For-hire Integrated Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) program. The Committee requested additional summary information be presented in the future, including: the number of boats participating in each fishery; information to highlight movement patterns of the Gulf for-hire fleet; proportion of vessels intercepted during dock-side validation; and, identifying any particular areas of high non-compliance to help focus future outreach efforts. Discussion then focused on the SEFHIER program's economic

questions. SERO and Council staff replied that these data are used to inform disaster relief funding and quantify sector revenues and costs when developing policy documents.

The final presentation provided an overview of data usage and next steps. A question was asked regarding how website mining methods would be used for a data collection program. Staff replied that NMFS economists had used business webpages to collect information on trip fees. Staff further stated that this approach only provides a general estimate of advertised prices, as webpages can be outdated and not reflective of current trip fees.

The Committee discussed next steps for a new program. Several Committee members expressed the need to keep any new program as simple as possible. Other Committee members agreed but also stated that some form of validation would be required to satisfy program objectives. The Committee decided a necessary first step would be to begin drafting language for a program purpose and need.

#### ***SSC discussions on MRIP-FES pilot study and next steps (Tab B, No. 4a)***

Dr. Luiz Barbieri (Scientific and Statistical Committee [SSC], Vice Chair) presented the SSC's discussions of the recent findings of the MRIP 2023 pilot study into the FES. The study reviewed the effect of sampling in one-month waves versus two-month waves, which found that surveys over a single month yielded higher effort estimates than a survey of two individual months together. The study also investigated the order of questions regarding the frequency with which a respondent went fishing within prescribed time periods, which was found to result in an overestimation of overall fishing effort, and thus landings. These studies were conducted for four states over a six-month period; and thus, are a smaller sample size than the full-scale implementation of FES. Dr. Barbieri summarized the planned follow-up pilot study to be conducted in 2024 by the NOAA Office of Science and Technology, which will be followed by an independent peer-review in 2025. A revised survey calibration will be made available for evaluation by data users thereafter, likely in 2026.

Dr. Barbieri summarized a sensitivity run for SEDAR 81 for Gulf Spanish Mackerel, that tested the effects of the results of the MRIP-FES 2023 pilot study. This sensitivity run was not intended to be used to modify catch advice; thus, none was presented. Gulf Spanish mackerel is not subject to jurisdictional or sector allocations in the Gulf. In short, the sensitivity run, corrected for the bias in the MRIP-FES survey, did not result in a change in stock status for Gulf Spanish mackerel. However, the reference point values for the ratios of current fishing mortality to the maximum fishing mortality threshold (which determines overfishing status), and of current spawning stock biomass (SSB) to SSB at the minimum stock size threshold (which determines overfished status), did change by several percentage points. The resulting catch limit projections from the sensitivity run would have yielded catch advice that would have been approximately 25% lower than that recommended by the SSC at its July 2023 SSC meeting. The SSC will further evaluate how to address this added uncertainty from the MRIP-FES 2023 pilot study in the future.

#### ***Discussion of MRIP-FES inventory for the Gulf (Tab F, No. 7 and 7a)***

Given the recent results of the MRIP-FES pilot study, the Council expressed interest in an exposure analysis for stocks potentially affected by these results. Council staff presented a possible

hierarchical framework to categorize SEDAR and policy tasks based on the level of exposure to changes in MRIP-FES estimates. A Committee member asked if appropriate state data sources could be used in lieu of MRIP-FES where applicable. Council staff replied that would be an additional option and anticipated this could result in a modified exposure characterization. Council staff also produced a worksheet (Tab F, No. 7a) to help determine potential next steps. The Committee decided to wait until full Council to review that meeting briefing material.

***Summary report from Technical Coordinating Committee deliberations at the GSMFC meeting (Tab F, No. 8)***

Due to time constraints, the Committee decided to postpone discussion of this item until full Council.

Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.