

DECISION DOCUMENT

Modifications to Charter Vessel and Headboat Reporting Requirements



Generic Amendment to the South Atlantic Snapper Grouper, Atlantic Dolphin Wahoo, and Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources Fishery Management Plans

November 17, 2015

1.1 Background

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) is considering alternatives that would change the method, frequency, and required data elements of fishery data reporting by for-hire operators. The Council is considering several changes that would require electronic reporting for the Snapper Grouper, Dolphin Wahoo, and Coastal Migratory Pelagic (CMP) species for charter vessels and modify the requirements for headboats. The Council recognizes that improved data reporting in these fisheries could reduce the likelihood that ACLs are exceeded and accountability measures are triggered. The harvest from charter vessels and headboats contributes to recreational landings that count towards the recreational ACLs and quotas. Charter vessel landings and discards are monitored with the Marine Recreational Information Program a voluntary dockside intercept survey. Fishing effort is calculated based on a monthly phone sample (10%) of federally-permitted charter vessels in the Council's jurisdiction. Headboats (catch and effort) are monitored through the Southeast Regional Headboat Survey (SRHS) administered by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center.

The current for-hire data collection and monitoring system is reported in 2-month waves for all South Atlantic States. This current combination of data collection and monitoring systems is inadequate for in-season monitoring for stocks with short recreational seasons, resulting in large ACL (quota) overruns. Also, the survey methods (i.e., catch and effort estimates) can be imprecise for some species leading to greater scientific and management uncertainty that requires larger buffers to prevent ACL overages and may prevent the OY from consistently being achieved. The proposed changes could reduce uncertainty in catch (i.e., landings and discards) and effort data for this component of the recreational fishery increasing the likelihood that the OY will be achieved and ACL overages will be avoided.

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

- Responsible for conservation and management of fish stocks
- Consists of 13 voting members: 8 appointed by the Secretary of Commerce, 1 representative from each of the 4 South Atlantic states, the Southeast Regional Director of NMFS; and 4 non-voting members
- Responsible for developing fishery management plans and amendments, and recommends actions to NMFS for implementation

National Marine Fisheries Service

- Responsible for data needed by the Councils for management
- Responsible for conservation and management of fish stocks
- Approves, disapproves, or partially approves Council recommendations
- Implements regulations

This amendment affects headboat and charter vessel reporting requirements for species managed in the Fishery Management Plans (FMPs) for Snapper Grouper of the South Atlantic, Atlantic Dolphin and Wahoo, and CMPs (**Figure 1.1.1**).

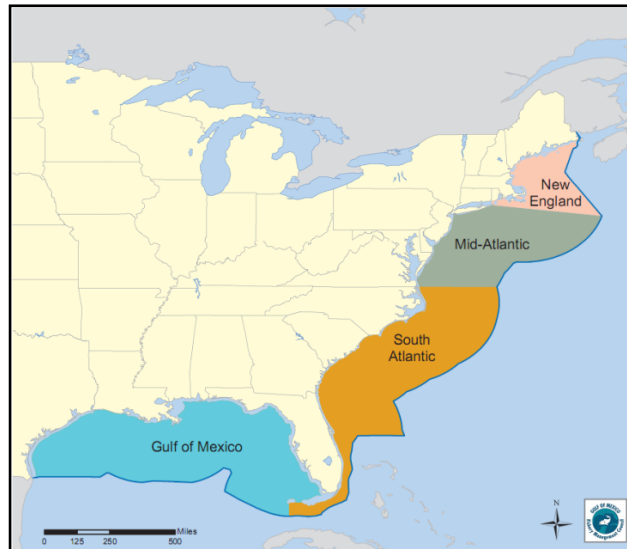


Figure 1.1.1. Jurisdictional boundaries of the Gulf of Mexico (blue), South Atlantic (orange), Mid-Atlantic (MAFMC; green), and New England (NEFMC; peach) Fishery Management Councils.

1.2 Purpose and Need

The *purpose* is to increase the accuracy and timeliness of landings, discards, effort and socio-economic data of federally permitted for-hire vessels participating in the South Atlantic managed fisheries.

The *need* for this action is to improve charter vessel and headboat fishery data used for management and to improve monitoring and compliance of federally permitted for-hire vessels in the South Atlantic managed fisheries.

Note: The Council may want to add to the need: Standardize for-hire reporting requirements by implementing the headboat requirements for all federally-permitted charter vessels.

COMMITTEE ACTION:

OPTION 1. KEEP THE EXISTING WORDING FOR THE PURPOSE AND NEED.

OPTION 2. MODIFY THE NEED TO READ:

The *need* for this action is to improve charter vessel and headboat fishery data used for management; to improve monitoring and compliance of federally permitted for-hire vessels in the South Atlantic managed fisheries; and to standardize for-hire reporting requirements by implementing the headboat requirements for all federally-permitted charter vessels.

OPTION 3. OTHERS??

1.3 What is a Charter Vessel?

A charter vessel is less than 100 gross tons (90.8 metric tons) that meets the requirements of the U.S. Coast Guard to carry six or fewer passengers on a for-hire trip and that engages in charter fishing at any time during the calendar year (50 C.F.R. § 622.2). The number of federally-permitted charter vessels in the South Atlantic is shown in **Table 1.3.1**.

Table 1.3.1. Total number of federally-permitted charter vessels in the South Atlantic.

Year	FL	GA	NC	SC	Other States	Total
2010	1,124	24	396	144	453	2,141
2011	1,110	25	392	138	451	2,116
2012	1,131	25	365	143	455	2,119
2013	1,124	28	343	149	410	2,054
2014	1,071	32	332	157	392	1,984

Source: NMFS, Southeast Regional Office, Permits Office.

1.4 What is a Headboat?

Headboats are generally defined as vessels that hold a valid Certificate of Inspection issued by the U.S. Coast Guard to carry more than six passengers for hire. However, the SRHS includes only large capacity vessels that sell passage to recreational anglers primarily as headboats (i.e., charges by the “head”). Currently, a vessel is selected by the Science and Research Director (SRD) to participate in the SRHS if it meets all, or a combination, of these criteria:

- 1) Vessel licensed to carry ≥ 15 passengers (Gulf); > 6 (South Atlantic).
- 2) Vessel fishes in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) or state and adjoining waters for federally managed species.
- 3) Vessel charges primarily per angler (i.e., by the “head”).

The number of headboats surveyed in the South Atlantic by the Southeast Region Headboat Survey (SRHS) by state from 2010 through 2015 is provided in **Table 1.4.1** (South Atlantic).

Table 1.4.1. Total number of headboats in the South Atlantic participating in the SRHS 2010-2015.

Year	FL	GA	NC	SC	Total
2010	47	3	10	20	80
2011	43	3	10	21	77
2012	43	3	11	21	78
2013	44	3	11	18	76
2014	45	3	10	18	76
2015	46	3	9	18	76

Source: NMFS, Southeast Regional Headboat Survey

CHAPTER 2. MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Action 1: Modify Frequency and Mechanism of Data Reporting for Charter Vessels

Alternative 1 (No Action). The owner or operator of a charter vessel for which a charter vessel/headboat permit for ~~Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) or~~ South Atlantic coastal migratory pelagic (CMP) species, ~~Gulf reef fish,~~ South Atlantic snapper grouper, or Atlantic dolphin and wahoo has been issued, or whose vessel fishes for or lands such ~~Coastal Migratory Pelagic (CMP)~~ species, ~~reef fish,~~ snapper grouper, or Atlantic dolphin or wahoo in or from state waters adjoining the applicable ~~Gulf,~~ South Atlantic, or Atlantic exclusive economic zone (EEZ), and who is selected to report by the Science and Research Director (SRD) must maintain a fishing record for each trip, or a portion of such trips as specified by the SRD, on forms provided by the SRD. Completed fishing records must be submitted to the SRD weekly, postmarked no later than 7 days after the end of each week (Sunday). Information to be reported is indicated on the form and its accompanying instructions.

For South Atlantic snapper grouper, charter vessels selected to report by the SRD must participate in the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)-sponsored electronic logbook and/or video monitoring program as directed by the SRD. Completed fishing records may be required weekly or daily, as directed by the SRD.

Note: The requirement to participate in a video monitoring program if selected is not changed by any of the alternatives in this amendment.

Alternative 2. Require that federally permitted charter vessels submit fishing records to the SRD weekly or at intervals shorter than a week if notified by the SRD via electronic reporting (via NMFS approved hardware/software). Weekly = Tuesday following each fishing week. [Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel preferred.](#)

Alternative 3. Require that federally permitted charter vessels submit fishing records to the SRD daily via electronic reporting via electronic reporting (via NMFS approved hardware/software). Daily = by noon of the following day.

Note: The following wording applies to both **Alternative 2** and **Alternative 3**.

It is the intent of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) that during catastrophic conditions the use of paper forms for basic required reporting may be authorized by the Regional Administrator (RA) through publication of timely notice. During catastrophic conditions, the RA also has the authority to waive or modify reporting time requirements. An electronic report not received within the time specified is delinquent. A delinquent report automatically results in a prohibition on harvesting or possessing the applicable species by the permit holder, regardless of any additional notification to the delinquent permit owner and operator by NMFS. This prohibition is

applicable until all required and delinquent reports have been submitted and received by NMFS according to the reporting requirements. If no fishing activity took place during a reporting period, the permit holder would be required to submit an electronic report stating that no fishing activity occurred and this report must be submitted at the same time interval specified in the regulations (local time). A preliminary list of data elements for charter vessels participating in the effort portion of the MRIP For-Hire Survey is shown in **Table 2.1.1**.

COMMITTEE ACTION:

OPTION 1. KEEP THE EXISTING WORDING FOR ACTION 1, ALTERNATIVE 1.

OPTION 2. MODIFY ACTION 1, ALTERNATIVE 1 TO READ AS SHOWN

BELOW:

Alternative 1 (No Action). The owner or operator of a charter vessel for which a charter vessel/headboat permit for ~~Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) or~~ South Atlantic coastal migratory pelagic (CMP) species, ~~Gulf reef fish,~~ South Atlantic snapper grouper, or Atlantic dolphin and wahoo has been issued, or whose vessel fishes for or lands such **Coastal Migratory Pelagic (CMP)** species, ~~reef fish,~~ snapper grouper, or Atlantic dolphin or wahoo in or from state waters adjoining the applicable ~~Gulf,~~ South Atlantic, or Atlantic exclusive economic zone (EEZ), and who is selected to report by the Science and Research Director (SRD) must maintain a fishing record for each trip, or a portion of such trips as specified by the SRD, on forms provided by the SRD. Completed fishing records must be submitted to the SRD weekly, postmarked no later than 7 days after the end of each week (Sunday). Information to be reported is indicated on the form and its accompanying instructions.

OPTION 3. SELECT ACTION 1, ALTERNATIVE X AS PREFERRED

OPTION 4. OTHERS??

Discussion

Charter vessels are operationally defined as for-hire vessels that carry six or fewer passengers that also meet the requirements of USCG. To date, none of these vessels have been selected by the SRD to submit fishing records as described in **Alternative 1 (No Action)**. Rather, these vessels have been monitored through the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) For-Hire Survey (measures effort) and the MRIP dockside intercept survey (measures catch). The MRIP For-Hire Survey includes charter vessels operating in the South Atlantic from eastern Florida through North Carolina. Charter vessel operators are required to report all trips taken during selected weeks (effort only) whenever they are selected to participate in the survey. Charter vessel operators are contacted by telephone (a weekly sample of 10% of the fleet) to collect these data (**Table 2.1.1**). Catch data are collected in a separate dockside intercept survey of anglers. Adjustment factors for active charter vessels that are not in the sample frame (new to fleet, no contact information known, etc.) are produced from field intercept survey questions and applied to the raw effort estimate.

Table 2.1.1. Required data reporting elements for charter vessels participating in MRIP For-Hire Survey.

Reporting Elements
Area fished
Number of anglers who fished
Hours of actual fishing activity
Method of fishing
Target species (if any)

To enforce the mandatory reporting requirement for federally permitted charter vessels in the telephone component of the For-Hire Survey, permit holders who refuse to participate in the survey are notified by letter of their obligation to report as a condition for permit renewal. However, if a charter vessel operator cannot be contacted after five attempts for a selected week, the final interview status is “unsuccessful contact”. It is impossible to identify permit holders who are deliberately evading the survey. Telephone contact rates vary by wave (i.e., MRIP 2-month sample period), state, and region, and the percent of selected vessels that are unable to be contacted by phone is quite high in some strata.

Alternative 2 would require federally permitted charter vessels participating in the subject fisheries to submit fishing records weekly or at intervals shorter than a week via electronic reporting (via NMFS approved hardware/software). **Alternative 2** could improve fishery dependent data in several ways. For example, fishery data would be available for inclusion into the science and management process faster, potentially reducing the likelihood of exceeding annual catch limits (ACLs). **Alternative 2** could also improve data accuracy as reports would be completed shortly after each trip, potentially reducing problems associated with recall errors and reporting by Tuesday would standardize charter vessel logbook reporting with commercial logbook reporting (and headboats if **Alternative 2** is chosen for **Action 2**). However, **Alternative 2** would reduce the timing flexibility for report preparation by charter vessel operators and this burden could be acute during peak season when the number of trips taken, the number of passengers carried, and catch are greatest.

Alternative 3 would require charter vessels participating in the subject fisheries to submit a report for each day. As with **Alternative 2**, this report would be submitted electronically and received by NMFS (due noon the following day). **Alternative 3** could further reduce the likelihood of exceeding ACLs with reduced recall error compared to **Alternative 1 (No Action)** and **Alternative 2**. However, **Alternative 3** would add additional burden and reduced flexibility compared to **Alternatives 1 (No Action)** and **2**.

The South Atlantic Council’s intent is to have charter vessels, in fisheries managed by the Council, meet the minimum data elements currently collected for charter vessels and headboats in South Carolina (see **Appendix C**) and for federal headboats (see **Table 2.2.1** and **Appendix D**).

Additional data that could be collected on a sample or voluntary basis from both charter vessels and headboats includes:

- releases/discards measured and specific location (depth) of release recorded
- retained catch at specific location (depth) recorded
- economic data (similar to what is currently being collected from commercial fishermen)
- social data

COMMITTEE ACTION:

OPTION 1. RETAIN THE ADDITIONAL DATA TO BE COLLECTED ON A SAMPLE OR VOLUNTARY BASIS AS DESCRIBED ABOVE.

OPTION 2. REMOVE THE ADDITIONAL DATA ITEMS.

OPTION 3. OTHERS???

2.2 Action 2: Modify Frequency and Mechanism of Data Reporting for Headboats

Alternative 1 (No Action). The owner or operator of a headboat for which a charter vessel/headboat permit for Gulf or South Atlantic Coastal Migratory Pelagic (CMP) species, Gulf reef fish, South Atlantic snapper grouper, or Atlantic dolphin and wahoo has been issued, or whose vessel fishes for or lands such CMP species, reef fish, snapper grouper, or Atlantic dolphin or wahoo in or from state waters adjoining the applicable Gulf, South Atlantic, or Atlantic exclusive economic zone (EEZ), and who is selected to report by the Science and Research Director (SRD) must submit an electronic fishing record for each trip of all fish harvested via the Southeast Region Headboat Survey SRHS. Electronic fishing records must be submitted at weekly intervals (or intervals shorter than a week if notified by the SRD) by 11:59 p.m., local time, the Sunday following a reporting week. If no fishing activity occurred during a reporting week, an electronic report stating so must be submitted for that reporting week by 11:59 p.m., local time, the Sunday following a reporting week.

Note: The catastrophic conditions provisions, delinquent reporting, and the requirement to participate in a video monitoring program if selected are not changed by any of the alternatives in this amendment.

During catastrophic conditions, the use of paper forms for basic required functions may be authorized by the Regional Administrator (RA) by publication of timely notice. During catastrophic conditions, the RA also has the authority to waive or modify reporting time requirements.

When an electronic report is not received within the time specified, it is delinquent. A delinquent report automatically results in a prohibition on harvesting or possessing the applicable species, regardless of any additional notification to the delinquent owner and operator by NMFS. This prohibition is applicable until all required and delinquent reports have been submitted and received by NMFS according to the reporting requirements.

For South Atlantic snapper grouper, headboats selected to report by the SRD must participate in the NMFS-sponsored electronic logbook and/or video monitoring program, as directed by the SRD. Completed fishing records may be required weekly or daily, as directed by the SRD.

Alternative 2. Require that headboats submit fishing records to the SRD weekly or at intervals shorter than a week if notified by the SRD via electronic reporting (via NMFS approved hardware/software). Weekly = Tuesday following each fishing week. [Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel preferred.](#)

Alternative 3. Require that headboats submit fishing records to the SRD daily via electronic reporting (via NMFS approved hardware/software). Daily = by noon of the following day.

COMMITTEE ACTION:

OPTION 1. KEEP THE EXISTING WORDING FOR ACTION 2, ALTERNATIVE 1.

OPTION 2. MODIFY ACTION 2, ALTERNATIVE 1 TO READ AS SHOWN BELOW:

Alternative 1 (No Action). The owner or operator of a headboat for which a charter vessel/headboat permit for ~~Gulf or~~ South Atlantic Coastal Migratory Pelagic (CMP) species, ~~Gulf reef fish,~~ South Atlantic snapper grouper, or Atlantic dolphin and wahoo has been issued, or whose vessel fishes for or lands such CMP species, ~~reef fish,~~ snapper grouper, or Atlantic dolphin or wahoo in or from state waters adjoining the applicable ~~Gulf,~~ South Atlantic, or Atlantic exclusive economic zone (EEZ), and who is selected to report by the Science and Research Director (SRD) must submit an electronic fishing record for each trip of all fish harvested via the ~~Southeast Region Headboat Survey~~ SRHS. Electronic fishing records must be submitted at weekly intervals (or intervals shorter than a week if notified by the SRD) by 11:59 p.m., local time, the Sunday following a reporting week. If no fishing activity occurred during a reporting week, an electronic report stating so must be submitted for that reporting week by 11:59 p.m., local time, the Sunday following a reporting week.

OPTION 3. SELECT ACTION 2, ALTERNATIVE X AS PREFERRED

OPTION 4. OTHERS??

Discussion

Historically, headboat vessels reported logbook information using paper forms. Beginning January 1, 2013, vessel owners/operators have been required to submit electronic logbooks. Vessel operators selected to report are required to report 100% of their vessel trips, regardless of whether the trips occur in the EEZ or in state waters. The current reporting requirements place the responsibility for submitting required information directly on the permit holder, and compliance is monitored and enforced as a condition for permit renewal. If a vessel is delinquent for any trips, an email reminder is sent to the vessel owner after the reporting week ends. If the vessel continues to be non-compliant, the Permit Office is notified to place the vessel permit renewal on hold. In some cases the vessel permit is not up for renewal for several months; if a vessel in this status remains non-compliant, law enforcement is notified to prohibit this vessel from harvesting and possessing federally managed species. The obligation to report is reinforced annually via certified letter to each permit holder.

The SRHS, which is administered by the NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center, includes approximately 76 large capacity headboats operating in the South Atlantic from Florida through North Carolina (**Table 1.4.1**). Vessels included in this survey are required to report catch and effort data weekly to NMFS (**Table 2.2.1**).

Table 2.2.1. Required data reporting elements for headboats participating in the SRHS.

Reporting Elements
Depart Date:Time
Return Date:Time
Vessel Name
Captain Name
Number of Anglers
Number of Paying Passengers
Number of Crew
Fuel used (gallons)
Price per gallon (estimate)
Minimum depth fished
Maximum depth fished
Primary depth fished
Latitude/Longitude Degrees
Latitude/Longitude Minutes
Species caught
Number kept
Number released

Alternative 1 (No Action) requires headboats participating in South Atlantic Snapper Grouper, Atlantic Dolphin Wahoo, or Gulf and South Atlantic CMP fisheries, if selected by the SRD (Note: The headboat amendment required all headboats to report.), to submit electronic reports weekly (or at intervals less than a week if requested by the SRD) due seven days after the end of each week (Sunday).

Alternative 2 would continue the requirement for headboats participating in the subject fisheries to report weekly or at intervals shorter than a week if notified by the SRD via electronic reporting (via NMFS approved hardware/software). The difference between **Alternative 1 (No Action)** and **Alternative 2** is the difference in delay between the end of the fishing week (Sunday) and report submission. **Alternative 1 (No Action)** allows 7 days to prepare and submit reports while **Alternative 2** would allow only 2 days. **Alternative 2** could improve fishery data in several ways. Fishery data would be available in the science and management process faster, potentially reducing the likelihood of exceeding ACLs. **Alternative 2** could also improve accuracy as reports would be completed soon after each trip reducing problems associated with recall errors and reporting by Tuesday would standardize headboat logbook reporting with commercial logbook reporting (and charter vessels if **Alternative 2** is chosen for **Action 1**). However, **Alternative 2** would reduce the flexibility of the headboat operators for the timing of report preparation and this could be acute during peak season when the number of trips, the number of passengers, and catch are greatest.

Alternative 3 would require headboats participating in the subject fisheries to submit a report each day. This report would be submitted electronically and would need to be received by NMFS (by noon the following day). **Alternative 3** could further reduce the likelihood of exceeding ACLs and reduce recall error compared to **Alternative 1** or **Alternative 2**. However, **Alternative 3** would add additional burden and reduced flexibility in comparison to **Alternatives 1** or **Alternative 2**.

2.3 Action 3: Modify Electronic Reporting Requirements to Require Vessel or Catch Location Reporting

Alternative 1 (No Action). Charter vessels participating in the For-Hire survey are required to report area fished (inshore, state, or federal waters), if selected as part of the survey. Headboats participating in the Southeast Region Headboat Survey (SRHS) are required to report latitude and longitude of area fished (degrees and minutes only; within 1 nm² area).

Alternative 2. Require federally permitted charters vessels to report location electronically manually by latitude/longitude in degrees and minutes or by clicking on a headboat chart grid. Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel preferred.

It is the South Atlantic Council's intent to extend the reporting requirements of this amendment through the Mid-Atlantic and New England Councils' areas for federally permitted for-hire vessels harvesting species managed in South Atlantic Council FMPs (Atlantic Dolphin and Wahoo, Coastal Migratory Pelagics, and South Atlantic Snapper Grouper). Further, it is the South Atlantic Council's intent not to have duplicate reporting by individual vessels; one report submitted to, for example, Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) would then be available to each agency needing the data. One issue to be resolved is the timing for reports: any South Atlantic permitted vessel would be required to report electronically via the charter vessel logbook the Tuesday following the end of the week (Sunday) whereas the vessel reports for the Greater Atlantic Region permitted vessels are currently due on or before 11:59 pm the Saturday following the end of the fishing week that is Sunday through Saturday

COMMITTEE ACTION:

OPTION 1. KEEP THE EXISTING WORDING FOR ACTION 3, ALTERNATIVES 1 AND 2.

OPTION 2. MODIFY ACTION 3, ALTERNATIVES 1 AND 2 TO READ AS SHOWN BELOW:

Alternative 1 (No Action). Charter vessels participating in the For-Hire survey are required to report area fished (inshore, state, or federal waters), if selected as part of the survey. Headboats participating in the Southeast Region Headboat Survey (SRHS) are required to report latitude and longitude of area fished (degrees and minutes only; within 1 nm² area).

Alternative 2. Require federally permitted charters vessels to report location electronically manually by latitude/longitude in degrees and minutes or by clicking on a headboat chart grid.

OPTION 3. SELECT ACTION 3, ALTERNATIVE X AS PREFERRED

OPTION 4. OTHERS??

The NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) will develop the specific details of how the system would operate and will provide the Council the opportunity to have input into the system design. The system would include the following items as recommended by the Technical Sub-committee:

- a) Logbook data collected via authorized platform, ex. web, tablet, phone, or VMS application
- b) Data submitted to ACCSP or GulfFIN (Gulf Fisheries Information Network);
- c) Data integrated by ACCSP or GulfFIN into single composite data set;
- d) Composite data set distributed to appropriate agencies for analyses and use.
- e) NMFS and/or ACCSP/GulfFIN are to develop a compliance tracking procedure that balances timeliness with available staff and funding resources.
- f) NMFS is to use validation methods developed in the Gulf of Mexico logbook pilot study **and the MRIP/SC validation project** as a basis to ensure that the actual logbook report is validated and standardized validation methodologies are employed among regions.
- g) NMFS is to require and maintain a comprehensive permit/email database of participants.
- h) NFMS is to include procedures for expanding estimates for non-reporting.
- i) NMFS is to allow multiple authorized applications or devices that can transmit data from sea to report data as long as they meet required data and transferability standards.

Two Alternatives Considered

Section 1502.14(a) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) states that “agencies shall: rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives....” Two reasonable alternatives for this action, including the no action alternative, have been identified by NMFS and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (South Atlantic Council). The Council is considering requiring charter vessels to report catch location in the same manner as is currently required for headboats. Therefore, the South Atlantic Council and NMFS have determined it is not reasonable to include additional alternatives for modifications to the reporting requirements for location of catch.

Discussion

Charter vessels that are surveyed using the MRIP For-Hire survey (i.e., 10% weekly) are asked to report area fished (i.e., area fished, state, or federal waters) in addition to the other elements listed in **Table 2.1.1**.

Alternative 1 would maintain the current self-reporting systems in place, that is, report area fished if selected in the For-Hire survey (charter vessel) or latitude/longitude of area fished within 1 nm² area (headboat).

Alternative 2 would require charter vessels to report location fished manually by latitude/longitude in degrees and minutes or by clicking on a geographic grid; the same alternatives are currently required for headboats in the South Atlantic.

The South Atlantic Council's goal is to have the for-hire sector's landings available weekly similar to commercial landings. Headboats are currently required to report data weekly and, once this amendment is implemented, charter vessels will also be required to report weekly. Having the for-hire catches updated weekly would help inform the projection process for the private recreational sector's catches that are available 45 days after a 2-month wave.

Currently headboat catches are being reported 45 days after each 2-month wave at the same time the MRIP catches are available. Part of the delay is that the Council has specified the recreational ACL in pounds and this requires the numbers of fish to be converted to pounds. Generating catch estimates in pounds requires the integration of mean weights collected by angler intercepts. This is accomplished for the headboat catches during the 45 day period after a 2-month wave. The MRIP catches are reported in numbers and weight. However, the SEFSC has developed a methodology for generating weight that they concluded is more accurate for the southeast. This adds an unspecified period of time after the MRIP data are released for the SEFSC to apply their conversion factors and provide a catch estimate in weight.

Electronic reporting will facilitate the availability of catch in numbers sooner than catch in pounds. The South Atlantic Council is considering specifying recreational ACLs in numbers of fish so that the headboat sector (and the charter vessel sector once this amendment is approved) can be tracked weekly. Specifying the recreational ACL in numbers of fish will also reduce the delay in using the MRIP data to track recreational ACLs.

The system design addresses the following recommendations from the Technical Subcommittee (**Appendix E**):

3. Development of compliance tracking procedures that balance timeliness with available staff and funding resources.
5. Use validation methods developed in the Gulf of Mexico logbook pilot study as a basis to ensure that the actual logbook report is validated and standardized validation methodologies are employed among regions.
8. Require and maintain a comprehensive permit/email database of participants.
10. Include procedures for expanding estimates for non-reporting.
11. Allow multiple authorized applications or devices to report data as long as they meet required data and transferability standards.

The subcommittee recommended a multi-faceted approach where a number of reporting

platforms can be used so long as the minimum data standards and security protocols are met. Data standards would need to be developed and the subcommittee agreed that NOAA Fisheries, the GulfFIN (for Gulf data), and ACCSP (for Atlantic data) could work collaboratively to develop appropriate standards.

The subcommittee recommended this process for data storage and management:

1. Logbook data collected via authorized platform, ex. web, tablet, phone, or VMS application
2. Data submitted to ACCSP or GulfFIN;
3. Data integrated by ACCSP or GulfFIN into single composite data set;
4. Composite data set distributed to appropriate agencies for analyses and use.

This process could eliminate duplicate reporting for some participants (e.g., South Carolina headboats and charter vessels) so long as appropriate data standards are in place and the respective agencies agree to confidentiality standards, which would allow sharing and accepting one another's data for use. Elimination of duplicate reporting (e.g., separate state and federal reports) would be a substantial benefit to participants in this survey program and could mitigate any additional reporting requirements for comparison to the current MRIP survey program.

The technical subcommittee recommended building upon the validation methodology developed in the Gulf MRIP pilot study.

The subcommittee recommended use of an MRIP certified methodology for validation with the following elements: Gulf MRIP pilot study methodologies, including dockside validation of catch and vessel activity, and maintenance of site and vessel registries.

The subcommittee recommended dual survey methods (existing and new) for no less than three years. Data from the new program would not be expected to provide management advice during the first year of operation. Moreover, this would allow the possibility of an initial phase-in or limited implementation to identify and solve significant problems prior to implementation for all participants.

The subcommittee recommended that the Councils move forward with development of a reporting system that includes federally permitted for-hire vessels while also exploring ways to determine the impact of state permitted vessels on landings estimates of federally managed species. Long term, the subcommittee recommends that both state and federally permitted charter vessels participate in this census to include the entire fleet of charter vessels harvesting federally managed species.

Weekly electronic dealer and headboat reporting are fully implemented. However, there are still delays in having updated landings available to the public for their use in planning trips and to the Councils for monitoring ACLs. A solution, in the Atlantic, would be to have the raw weekly data fed to ACCSP and made available to the public via the ACCSP website. The "official" numbers for quota closures would continue to be the numbers maintained by NMFS and available on the NMFS website but this would provide more

timely and useful updates to the public for charter vessels and headboats.

The result would be updated and current catch data (weekly for charter vessels and headboats; 45 days after a wave for private recreational vessels) available on a daily basis for the public, states, NMFS, and the Councils to use in monitoring ACLs and planning fishing trips.

The Council concluded it is important for the public to understand the timing of full implementation:

1. Council approves document for formal review – June 2016
2. Document review by NMFS and approved/partially approved/disapproved – late 2016
3. Target implementation date – January 1, 2017. Charter vessels and headboats required to report minimum data elements according to the specifics in the final amendment. Begin collecting data submitted electronically.

Timing:

- December 7-11, 2015 (Atlantic Beach, NC) - Council reviews document, picks preferred alternatives, and approves for public hearings.
- January 25-February 3, 2016 – Public hearings from NC -> FL
- January 19, 2016 – informal Question & Answer Webinar
- February 8, 2016 – Webinar Public Hearing for Mid-Atlantic and New England fishermen
- February 10, 2016 – Written comments due by 5 pm
- March 7-11, 2016 (Jekyll Island, GA) – Council reviews public comments, modifies preferred alternatives as required, and approves all actions. Public comment on Wednesday, March 9th beginning at 5:30 pm
- June 13-17, 2016 (Cocoa Beach, FL) – Council reviews complete document and approves for formal review. Public comment on Wednesday, June 15th beginning at 5:30 pm
- June 30, 2016 - Send for review and implementation by Secretary of Commerce/NMFS
- January 1, 2017 – target date for regulations to be effective; operators of charter vessels begin electronic reporting and new deadline effective for headboats

COMMITTEE ACTION:

OPTION 1. DO NOT APPROVE THE FOR-HIRE AMENDMENT FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS

OPTION 2. APPROVE THE FOR-HIRE AMENDMENT FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS

OPTION 3. OTHERS???