



THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

# Comprehensive Amendment Addressing Electronic Reporting for Commercial Vessels

*Public Hearing Summary*

## Public Hearings Date and Time

July 25, 26, 27, 2023 at 6:00pm

## Registration Link and More Details

[Public Hearing Page](#)

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## Background

The South Atlantic Council is developing this amendment jointly with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council to require commercial logbooks be submitted via electronic reporting forms instead of the currently used paper-based forms. The proposed change would affect permit holders participating in the NMFS Coastal Fisheries Logbook Program, which collects data from commercial vessels in the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico.

In the South Atlantic, commercial fishermen holding Snapper Grouper, Dolphin Wahoo, or Coastal Migratory Pelagic permits are required to fill out a paper logbook within 7 days of completing a commercial fishing trip and mail it to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC).

A subset (20%) of commercial coastal logbook participants is selected to also fill out an economic or discard survey for a year. These supplemental surveys are mailed out separately from the logbook and they are mandatory only if selected.



## Why are the Councils considering taking action?

The Councils are taking action to improve the timeliness and efficiency of the commercial logbook data collection and management program. It is expected that electronic submission of logbook data will improve monitoring and compliance of federally permitted commercial vessels participating in the Coastal Fisheries Logbook program. Paper forms will eventually be eliminated.





## What is the intended outcome?

Improvements in:

- Timeliness and efficiency of commercial logbook data collection and management
- Monitoring
- Compliance
- “One-stop reporting”



## Who will be affected by the proposed changes?

All federally permitted commercial vessels reporting through the Coastal Fisheries Logbook program for the following fisheries:

- South Atlantic Snapper Grouper
- Atlantic Dolphin Wahoo
- Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico Coastal Migratory Pelagics
- Gulf Reef Fish

In addition, southeast-permitted vessels that also hold permits in the Greater Atlantic region and for Highly Migratory Species may also be affected.

## When will e-reporting go into effect?

Timing	Council Action
July 2023	South Atlantic Council conducts public hearings
August 2023	Gulf Council conducts public hearings
September 2023	South Atlantic Council considers public comment and approval for formal review
October 2023	Gulf Council considers public comment and approval for formal review
Winter-Summer 2024	NMFS conducts rulemaking and issues vendor specifications
Early 2025?	Regulation changes effective.



## Which reporting platform will be required?

The Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) and the SEFSC are developing and testing an application, e-Trips, that accepts electronic submissions and is currently being used successfully by other partners. Use of e-Trips in the Southeast is not yet approved.

Other platforms may become available from different vendors in the Southeast. The NMFS will publish technical specifications for vendors to use in developing e-reporting applications.





## **Will the electronic logbook require the same information as the paper logbook?**

Almost. The electronic version of the logbook may have additional data fields, that are required, others that are removed altogether, and others that are slightly modified. This is necessary to make the information compatible with the existing database at ACCSP. However, the SEFSC and ACCSP are still working on development and testing of e-Trips and may need to make more modifications to ensure compatibility. They expect modifications to be minimal and likely to have little effect on the user.

The intent is to streamline data collection across federal and state agencies.

## **Are the supplemental surveys (economic and discard) also going to be electronic?**

Yes.

The economic information collected will not change. Filling out this portion of the logbook is *voluntary for those not selected* and mandatory for those permit holders that received a notification in the mail informing them of their selection to participate (20% of permit holders are selected annually).

Information on discards will be reported through the “catch disposition” field, in which a determination of “discard” may be selected. Again, filling out the catch disposition field is only mandatory for those permit holders selected each year to participate in the discard survey.





## Will the timing requirement change for vessels permitted in the southeast?

No. Commercial reporting will still be required within 7 days of the completion of a commercial fishing trip.

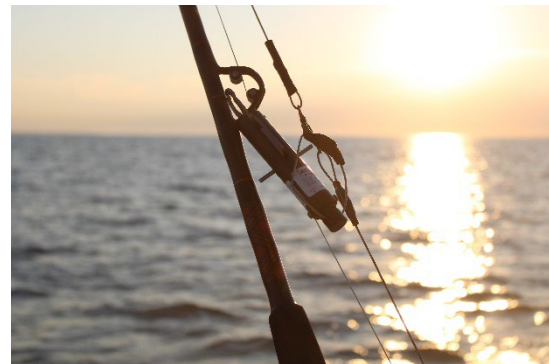
## What are the potential effects of the proposed changes?

### Biological Effects

This action is administrative in nature and therefore not expected to have any direct effects on the biological environment.

There may be long-term indirect positive effects from:

- Timeliness of data on catch and discards
- Fewer errors, ease of submission may reduce recall bias
- Improved compliance



### Economic Effects

- Commercial fishermen will need an internet equipped device such as a laptop, tablet, or smartphone – cost to those who do not have device but most likely have access already.
- Time savings to submit?
- Time and cost savings to process data and improved data accuracy.
- Cost savings associated with increased assurance for fishermen that the logbook entry was submitted.

### Social Effects

- Direct short-term effects from individuals adjusting to the new process would be mostly neutral or positive, as most users are comfortable.
- Short-term negative effects for fishermen unaccustomed or uncomfortable with the use of electronic reporting.
- Long-term effects are expected to be positive as e-submission will simplify data collection and improve data quality.

## Frequently Asked Questions

Here are a few questions that have come up during development of this amendment:

**Can I still report on the paper logbook if I choose?**

There may be a transition time during which the paper logbook will be phased out.

**How will I know if I have been selected to fill out the supplemental surveys?**

Commercial fishermen are currently notified by a mailed letter instructing them they have been selected to complete the survey. This will remain the same under the electronic system.

**Will the economic section always appear on the logbook form?**

Yes, it will always appear in the logbook form but will only be mandatory for selected vessels.

**Where do the reported data go?**

Data will be transmitted via secure servers to NMFS, then NMFS will review data for quality and use the data for monitoring and compliance.

**What is the expected timeline of one-stop reporting for vessels with multiple permits?**

NMFS is currently working on a One-Stop-Reporting application and program. The estimated timeline for the work will be a few years based on different collection requirements and needs.

**Who should fishermen call if they are having trouble with the submission process?**

The vendor that is supplying the application for software questions or issues. For questions about the logbook program call the Fishery Monitoring Branch at (305) 361-4581.



## How Do I Comment?

Comments must be received by **5:00 PM on Friday, July 28, 2023**. There are several ways that you can submit your comment to the Council:

### Comment during webinars

Tuesday, July 25, 2023, at 6 PM

Wednesday, July 26, 2023, at 6 PM

Thursday, July 27, 2023, at 6 PM

### Written comments

Written comments may be read and submitted using the online public comment form at the following links:

[Submit Comment](#)

[Read Public Comments](#)

### Comments by mail

Address to: John Carmichael, Executive Director; 4055  
Faber Place Drive, Suite 201; N. Charleston, SC 29405

### Comments by fax

843-769-4520