SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

DATA COLLECTION COMMITTEE

Doubletree by Hilton New Bern/Riverfront
New Bern, North Carolina

December 4, 2014

SUMMARY MINUTES

Dara Collection Committee:

Mel Bell, Chair	Dr. Roy Crabtree
Jack Cox	Dr. Michelle Duval
Dr. Wilson Laney	Jessica McCawley

Council Members:

Mark Brown	Ben Hartig
Zack Bowen	Anna Beckwith
Charlie Phillips	Chris Conklin
Doug Haymans	Chester Brewer

Council Staff:

Bob Mahood	Gregg Waugh
Mike Collins	John Carmichael
Dr. Kari MacLauchlin	Amber Von Harten
Kim Iverson	Dr. Mike Errigo
Julie O'Dell	Myra Brouwer
Chip Collier	Dr. Brian Cheuvront

Observers/Participants:

Monica Smit-Brunello	Kevin Anson
Dr. Bonnie Ponwith	Pres Pate
Phil Steele	Dr. Jack McGovern
Tracy Dunn	Dr. John Boreman
Capt. Rama Shuster	

Additional Observers Attached

The Data Collection Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened in the Grand Ballroom of the Doubletree by Hilton New Bern/Riverfront, New Bern, North Carolina, December 4, 2014, and was called to order at 4:47 o'clock p.m. by Chairman Mel Bell.

MR. BELL: I would like to call the Data Collection Committee to order. The first item on the agenda is approval of the September 2014 minutes. Any changes to the minutes needed? Seeing none; then the minutes are approved. The next item would be approval of the agenda. I do have one item under other business that you may or may not be aware of.

Gordon Colvin had contacted me after Thanksgiving and suggested that if we'd like and I thought it was a good idea; that Bonnie would be willing to give us a little update on some upcoming changes to MRIP.   Also, Dr. John Boreman from NC State has graciously traveled a few hours to be with us today and he will be providing support as far as questions that we might have about MRIP and what is going on. John has been involved along with Pres and others and Gordon in kind of putting the new face on MRIP and making some improvements; so we look forward to that.

MR. HAYMANS: Mr. Chairman, I'm not on your committee, but I did have one small item, if I could, when we get to the end just to sort of ask the states and Bonnie.

MR. BELL: All right, any other issues with the agenda; the agenda is okay. The agenda stands, then. The first item on the agenda is the status of work on bycatch reporting in the southeast; and that will be Jack McGovern. There is really no Attachment 1.

DR. McGOVERN: I'm just going to give you an update on what is going on with the Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology. Dr. Crabtree and Dr. Ponwith have established a workgroup to review standardized bycatch reporting methodology in the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic and Caribbean Fishery Management Councils and to recommend changes that could be considered through the regional fishery management council process.

This workgroup consists of Steve Branstetter from the Gulf Branch, me from the South Atlantic Branch, Bill Arnold from the Caribbean, Nick Farmer as the data analyst, and Jennifer Lee from Protected Resources, and Shepherd Grimes from GC. And then from the science center there is Jim Nance; and Jim Nance has been involved in authoring the National Bycatch Report, both evaluating bycatch in 2004 and the more recent update to that.

He has been very involved with the observer programs; and he is going to be a big asset to this group. We have met and we're now in the gathering process. We're gathering information about what is known for that bycatch for each council by fishery management plan and fishery. We're getting information on the variety of bycatch reporting and monitoring mechanisms that are being employed for various fisheries in the different regions. This includes studies that have been conducted, information on the level of bycatch, information from the National Bycatch Report and legal requirements for collecting bycatch information in different areas.

What we're doing right now is we're populating a spreadsheet that is on google spreadsheet for all the different regions. We're also producing a summary document on what is known about

bycatch in the different regions. We're going to meet again. We're scheduled to meet December 16th; and we're going to go over what we've gathered so far, identify any gaps in the information and discuss the next steps, which will probably involve analytical needs and gathering additional information. Then we hope to have something more complete and updated for this council in March.

MR. BELL: Any questions for Jack? Wilson.

DR. LANEY: Jack, as you're trying to pull the gray literature, I know North Carolina, for example, has got a lot of fishery resource grant reports that were bycatch studies in particular; some that involved birds as well as other protected resources, I know.

DR. McGOVERN: Yes; we're trying to gather as much information as possible so anything that you could provide would be very helpful.

DR. LANEY: Okay, great, yes, I've got a big file on my hard drive of studies and reports and things like a peer-reviewed paper, so I'll just send you the whole thing.

MR. BELL: Any other questions for Jack at this time? Particularly for the new members, if you look at the overview that Gregg has put together, it gives the history of how – I mean, we have been dealing with bycatch and trying to figure out how to best develop an appropriate way of documenting it for a while. It is not anything new.

It has been an ongoing process; and it was attached to CE-BA 3. He has kind of got the whole history in there for us, but this is good. We're making progress and we're definitely moving forward in a way that makes sense in terms of coming up with something that will work for us in our region and for our fisheries and something that will hold up. All right, the next item on the agenda is Electronic Technology Implementation Plan.

MR. WAUGH: Phil is going to do this; but, Phil, if I could just orient them for a second on where we are and then we'll turn it over to you. In the follow-up, Item B addresses where we are with the Electronic Technology Implementation Plan. If you remember, December 23rd we had a data workshop. We had George Lapointe give a presentation.

There was a National Workshop in January 2014. Out of that, the goals of the workshop are shown there. The committee discussed the workshop. We provided some input there. We had Dr. Strelcheck come and review the region's request; and I've included that as Attachment 2A for input at our June meeting. Indeed, we discussed that and the council provided their input; and that is included as Attachment 2B. That was in a letter dated June 30, 2014.

The workgroup reviewed the draft implementation plan on November 24th via conference call; and this is what you'll hear from Phil. Mel and I serve on that group the South Atlantic Council. We're going to get an overview of where that is. You have that document; it is Attachment 2C. That is the draft implementation plan. The intent is that we would provide some comments back to the regional office on this draft document. I'm sure Phil will cover the timing. The timing for input is relatively quick, into early next year.

MR. BELL: I sent out two e-mails this morning. The first one, I apologize for sending you the wrong attachment. The second had the actual draft plan that just mentioned; and that's why I wanted to make sure you had a chance to look at that because we're going to have a pretty quick turnaround on this in terms of input on it. Having said that, Phil, if you'd like to bring us up to speed.

MR. STEELE: Contrary to popular belief, ET is not some weird little space dude that came to earth and wants to use the phone. Electronic technology is all around us. Consider your smartphones, your tablets, your computers, just look around this room; it is more than just the way we do business every day either here at the council or at home or in our offices.

These technologies are fast becoming tools used to gather fisheries' data in the field. Advancements in electronic technology bring with them the promise of better data, better decision-making and for our fishermen better fishing. This has been a high-priority item for the agency. Given that, in 2013 NOAA Fisheries launched an initiative to evaluate emerging technologies for use in fisheries-dependent data collection.

The goal here is, like I said, providing timely and accurate and cost-effective information. George Lapointe, whom many you know, former commissioner of the Maine Department of Natural Marine Resources and northeast council member, headed up this process. Working with our council partners, our folks at the Southeast Fisheries Science Center and Southeast Regional Office, we developed the Southeast Regional Electronic Monitoring and Reporting Plan.

Gregg gave you the three documents that give you some background on this; 2A, which is NMFS' request for input on this; 2B is the South Atlantic Council's responses; and 2C is the implementation plan itself. Just so we're straight here, some definitions – what is electronic technology?

Basically it is any electronic tool used to support monitoring efforts both on shore and at sea, including electronic report, which logbooks, tablets and so forth and the systems used; and electronic monitoring, which would be more like VMS, video cameras and centers on vessels and such.

Given that, I'll give you a little background and go through the plan just a little bit and take about five minutes. For background, in May 2013 we published policy guidance on the use of electronic technology for fisheries-dependent data collection – emphasis on fisheries-dependent. The policy gave specific directives to NMFS to develop these regional EM/ER plans.

Why; because there was a growing need for more accurate and timely data in the southeast. The Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic Councils had both required the use of electronic reporting and/or VMS for their shrimp, commercial snapper grouper, headboats and federally permitted dealers. There was a growing interest in the expanded use of electronic reporting in the charter, private and commercial sectors.

The goals and objectives of the plan – as I mentioned earlier, the goal is to provide an operational strategy for implementing and expanding the use of electronic monitoring/electronic

reporting for federally managed species in the southeast region. The primary focus here is expanding the use of this electronic reporting to improve the quality and timeliness of fisheries' data, as you all know, so we can stay within our prescribed ACLs. Development and implementation of electronic monitoring, especially the use of video camera systems, is really considered kind of a long-term implementation goal than electronic reporting is for most fisheries in the southeast.

The plan development; development of the plan is ongoing, as you can see. We're still computing the cost and timelines for the implementation. The plan does incorporate input received from all three regional councils this past summer. Initial drafts of the plans have been reviewed by the NMFS Region, Science Center, SERO staff and an EM/ER working group comprised of council members and staff as well. NMFS staff has also reviewed the plan.

The contents; you can look at the plan yourself. We've got background, regional goals and objectives, current capabilities – what has already been implemented. There is a six-step process proposed for implementing any future EM and ER. That is on Page 5 of the plan if you want to look. Discussion of challenges; fisheries suitable for EM and ER; cost and infrastructure we're still working on; and the timelines for implementation, that is to be completed also; and also a process for reviewing the plan.

As far the South Atlantic priority fisheries go; we work with the South Atlantic Council on this, but would certainly need some of your inputs. The high priorities would be e-logbooks for the commercial snapper grouper fishery, golden crab, coastal migratory pelagics and dolphin wahoo; also e-logbooks for recreational snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagics and dolphin wahoo.

Lower priorities, like I said, deal with the video cameras on the commercial snapper grouper bycatch and maybe something like pingers on black sea bass pots and golden crab pot/traps and also electronic monitoring for the rock shrimp. The timeline for plan completion; the council review the draft plan at this meeting.

We're planning on having a public comment period probably in December or January. The way we'll probably do this is we will put out a Fisheries Bulletin to let the folks know that the plan is available. We will put it on our website and invite public comment for this thing. We're seeking input from you folks. Do you agree with the framework process for implementing EM and ER?

Is there sufficient opportunity for public and council input? Does the plan sufficiently identify council priorities? What time frame would the council ideally like to see the implementation of electronic reporting in the commercial and recreational fisheries, 2015, 2016? Does the council have recommendations on how plan progress should be assessed? That's it in a nutshell. There is a 50- or 60-page document there for the implementation plan; and you're certainly welcome to read over it and provide your comments. I'll be happy to answer any questions.

DR. DUVAL: Not really a question, Phil, but more just a comment. I've read through the draft implementation plan and it looks really good to me. I think that it accurately identifies the priorities here in the South Atlantic with regard to more of a focus on electronic reporting as opposed to monitoring at least sort of in the short term.

I think it is very thoroughly laid out, logical step-wise progression of identification of goals and objectives and reaching out to stakeholders for input. I think that's probably going to be one of the most important things; and I noticed there were a number of different avenues that you had identified in there for doing so, like it sounded like even state commission meetings.

I think it would be awesome if we could do something like that and maybe even employ some of these more creative mechanisms in use – like in the Mid-Atlantic to have sort of listening sessions; if you're looking for input, to get input from fishing communities with regard to the different types of technologies that are being considered. I think we could work with the council staff to try to employ those low-cost types of outreach mechanisms.

MR. STEELE: Well, kudos to Andy and Gregg and the council plan implementation team. I think we're doing a pretty good job. Remember, we did this for all three regions. As far as I can tell from other regions, we're a little bit ahead of the game; but thank you, and I'll pass it along. Any comments you'd like to provide, we certainly would welcome. We'll put this out pretty soon, probably late this month or early in January, for public comment.

MR. PHILLIPS: Mel, I'm sitting here going through the draft and I'm looking at the challenges, impending EM/ER implementation, and I think it is missing a box. The box that is missing is what do you do when the software doesn't work? I'm not being tongue-in-cheek, but I say that because right now I have not been able to download my electronic dealer reports since November 7th.

I have got e-mails dating back from the 18th on back and to trying to fix it. I love that we can do this, but what happens when you can't do it? We need a backup plan or something. I'm not blaming anybody; it just is. We assume that we can do this electronic reporting and everything works, but sometimes it just doesn't work. Doug's office has been great working with my people.

Today, even, they're talking. I can't ask for anybody to try harder, but sometimes there is bugs in it that just seem to elusive, as the lack of a better term. It is more than just putting it in place and it works. It doesn't necessarily work all the time.

This isn't the first time; I've had other issues with it before. If it was a one-time deal, forget it, but it doesn't seem to be a one-time deal. We need to figure out a plan or put something in here for how we're going to get this reporting in when this doesn't work. This is the ideal, but it is not ideal.

MR. BELL: Yes, that's a good point, Charlie, and keep in mind this is technology, this is stuff that we're doing new. It is not magic and it's not perfect. Any type of system like this or any software of anything, there is going to be hiccups and we're going to have to, as you say, have some mechanism or process kind of worked out to how we kind of work around those. We can't leave you hanging out there without being able to get your reports in on time, but that is a valid observation from the real world. Mark.

MR. BROWN: Gregg, is this the same plan or the same thing we saw the presentation on where they had the software for the boats in New England and is it going to run through that same process?

MR. WAUGH: Well, this is an overall plan. What you're referring to is the presentation using the ACCSP software. The council had it at our September meeting. The Snapper Grouper AP saw it at their last meeting. That's a specific piece of software using tablet platforms to allow reporting from the for-hire sector. We're going to talk about that a little bit when we get on the agenda item about voluntarily providing commercial logbook information electronically. That is one avenue; but what this document does is lay out the overall plan for how we're going to look at electronic reporting and electronic monitoring; so that is one part of it.

MR. BELL: So this is big-picture strategy; and again it is broken down. For our particular region we have our own plan or the southeast will have a plan; and then the different regions will have their plan. But what Michelle was saying earlier, when you kind and step back and look at what everybody is doing, we kind of had a different approach about things and different priorities and a different willingness, perhaps, in some of our fisheries.

Every region is going to look a little bit different; but within the context of our region, what you had mentioned might just be one tool that we might apply. Every individual region within the overall plan will have kind of a different approach, perhaps. You will see in other regions they're perhaps a lot more into the monitoring type of technologies and all than we are right now or that we're interested in. Wilson, you had a question?

DR. LANEY: It was more of a comment than a question. I haven't read the document in detail yet, but I did do some quick word searches. Charlie's comment, which I thought was excellent, prompted me to ask this question; and that is whether or not we're going to consider the archival quality of the storage media for all these electronic data that we generate.

I always like to cite the famous example or at least the one that is best known to me is of the Landsat Data, which were all stored on one-inch magnetic tape, I think, and then eventually that storage medium deteriorated. Some number of years there was a request in Science for all those scientists who had had the foresight to print out hard copies of Landsat Data, to please send it in because they were trying to reconstruct the database. They lost of those data.

I guess my concern is that so many of these new storage mediums have an unknown archival quality; so I would encourage us as a council – and I'm sure Mike Collins has probably looked into a lot of this stuff already and can probably give me an education about it; but I would just encourage us to make sure that Charlie's point, which is you need to have some sort of backup in place somehow; because so many of these data or these storage mediums are new, and we don't know how long they're going to last.

We don't know if they're going to last for centuries or if the data bits and bytes are going to fall off in six months. I would just encourage us to keep that in mind and hopefully maybe that is addressed or will be addressed somewhere document. Maybe that's beyond the scope of the document, I'm not sure, but I just thought I'd bring it up.

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MR. BELL: Really, if you go to Page 5, it kind of has the overall process laid out, and you'll see the steps. There is an identification of goals and objectives, which is essential for determining what it is you're trying to accomplish; but then you get program design. I know I provided some comments and I think Gregg did as well in the process we were involved in.

That is a very important point in that you have to think this thing through from the beginning and all the way through the end and to the future. That's one of the lessons I learned in Seattle was that you're talking about just – you could be talking about just mega-mega amounts of data. The IT folks, the programming folks, everybody has got to be at the table during that program design phase to deal with the kinds of things that you're talking about or try to deal with, okay, what happens if Charlie can't – you know, so that all has to be worked through.

DR. LANEY: And one of my IT guys is always telling me, well, you know, you don't need to worry about it, it is on The Cloud somewhere. Well, yes, okay, that works fine as long as the power is on.

MR. BELL: Any other questions or comments from you on this right now? Gregg, did you want to share some thoughts related to what –

MR. WAUGH: Yes; in terms of looking at some of our previous comments, a couple of the items that have been addressed to some extent; one dealing with showing ACCSP as a partner here at each step of the way. I've provided some of those comments to Andy. Andy has incorporated some of that, but I think that is one thing that is critical because ACCSP has software and processes that can help save money.

If we're looking at the industry to do cost-sharing, I think that becomes even more critical. Following up on Mark's comment, part of the thing that is so intriguing about that software that was demonstrated at our last council meeting and AP is that those data first go to ACCSP; and then NMFS Northeast pulls the data from ACCSP; so it gives a lot of fast access.

We had talked about in our previous comments that perhaps if we had data going to ACCSP, we could get a more timely quota-tracking using raw data. Then NMFS pulls that data, they are still the official counters. That is still the official numbers once they do their projections and so forth; but it would give a much faster turnaround for getting information out to the public on where we stand. That is another item that we could suggest.

MR. HAYMANS: Mr. Chairman, I'm not on your committee; but under that scenario, without the data – and I can't believe I'm one saying this; but any potential issues and data inputs, which I understand Fran's program looks for; but if you're letting that out to the public before it is fully proofed, then you find a mistake and then you've got to backtrack let the public know, hey, we made a mistake, which to me you'd really want to go through some – make sure that data is proofed before it is released to the public.

MR. WAUGH: Right; and there are steps in place to do some preliminary QA-QC on these things both at the input level and then when they're uploaded to ACCSP; but this same system has been operating in the northeast for years where they get daily updates on quotas. I agree

with you; that process needs to be there, but it is there in the northeast. It exists and it could be applied to this as well. Mel, I don't know if you want to have discussion about that when we were talking about Figure 3. This is on Page 21.

MR. BELL: I was thinking of that. Yes, Page 21, there is kind of a little wheel of – the Wheel of Challenges. We might take a look at that; but I think both Gregg and I were kind of hit by the same thing is that if you look particularly – and this all makes sense. The insufficient regulations; personally that is kind of a process thing that we're involved in.

That takes time and there is a process you have to follow. You have to do it correctly. I didn't regard that so much as a challenge as just part of the process; but I would suggest – and I think Gregg agrees with this, for sure – is that our challenge is and some of the stuff we were just talking about is the communication, the coordination and to how you're going to wire things together, who is going to do what?

Amy Dukes, my statistics section leader, had to leave early today; but I've had her sit down and just diagram the systems for me, reporting systems, whether it is how we do charterboats or commercial data in particular fisheries. If you draw it all out on a white board, it can be – and depending on if you're using bluefin or you're using SAFIS; and if you draw it out, it can be a rather interesting diagram that could be complex sometimes.

I think those sorts of things, the challenges of how you wire this, who does what, who has responsibility for what; that is probably, in my mind, a bigger challenge than the regulatory piece. The regulator piece is, again, what we do. It is pretty straightforward; it can take time. But, just something to think about as we move forward – and every state has their little different twist right now on how their systems are wired; so when you pull it all together, it can be rather complex. That I would regard as more of a challenge than – and that is maybe my opinion – than say the regulatory aspect of it. Gregg, does that make sense to you?

MR. WAUGH: Yes, definitely.

MR. BELL: What do you think about that or is there anything that is not in here that should be in here from your opinion? Phil asked us some – we can get to that in a second – some pretty specific areas that they're looking for input on; but anything related to challenges?

MR. WAUGH: On the previous page, Figure 2, in terms of priorities; it would seem that we'd want to show for our area one of the priorities would be timeliness of data availability. That has certainly been a huge issue; and that is certainly something that we can show some fairly rapid payback on is getting our data available much sooner. Perhaps we want to suggest adding that to this list of priorities here, timeliness of data availability.

MR. STEELE: Just a couple of things to kind of answer some of Charlie's concerns; as I mentioned, there is a six-step process to this. Step 4 and 5, which are pre-implementation, which is test of hardware and software; and 5 is implementation and then 6 is review. There is a whole strategy here for assuring that these systems will work to the best of our capabilities.

And let's remember our priorities revolve around the arena of electronic reporting right now. We're not jumping right to electronic monitoring, which is a lot more difficult. We do have some background and some experience on electronic reporting. We've got the headboat reporting and dealer reporting. We're working on logbooks for commercial and charter and so forth and so on.

It is not like we're unschooled in some of this; so we're halfway down the road on some of these things. Nothing is perfect, but we do have testing, pre-implementation plan set forth to make sure this thing works to the best of our capabilities before it hits the street. Hopefully, that will be the case.

MR. BELL: And there is always going to be a feedback loop in this; and that is true of anything that you're developing. It is almost an adaptive management kind of approach. Does it work; did you get the results; yes/no; and then you kind of work with it. Jack.

MR. COX: I'm a little frustrated because we're not more ahead of schedule than I feel like we should be, here we are at 2015, but that is just me talking. I know there was a pilot program that was supposed to be working with fishermen on this system. I had signed up for it and hadn't heard from anybody, and I think this system has been out for quite a while, you know, the pilot program. If so, I'm just wondering how that is working with other folks.

DR. DUVAL: What pilot program are you talking about?

MR. COX: A pilot program for electronic reporting.

DR. DUVAL: But for what; are you talking about a commercial logbook?

MR. COX: For commercial fishermen.

MR. BELL: Yes; we'll get to that a couple of items down. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, Gregg, you talked about running stuff through ACCSP, which I assume is SAFIS, which came from the northeast.

MR. WAUGH: That is the vehicle to get the data in; yes.

MR. PHILLIPS: So what are our other options to get the data in?

DR. DUVAL: I think this speaks to Charlie's earlier comment about his frustration with reporting because he is using the SAFIS Online Reporting Tool, correct? Yes, which can be challenging at times. I know that is why our dealers are using bluefin. That was just the point I was going to make.

MR. BROWN: Phil, I brought this up the other day; and I was wondering we've got the electronic reporting for the headboats and there seems to kind of a backlog of delay of being able to get the data out even though we're reporting it on a weekly basis.

If we move forward and we try to establish another electronic reporting type program for any other sector or anything; is the Center going to be able to handle that? I know that Bonnie has said that she has lost some staff. Are we going to be able to move forward and process this in a timely manner?

DR. PONWITH: On the headboat, I've been able to go back and consult on where we are in the process of moving to the more frequent periodicity for reporting. Starting the beginning of Calendar Year '15, we will be prepared to report on a two-month wave periodicity. We will accumulate the data for two weeks.

We'll convert the numbers that are coming in to pounds using the dockside data, do all that and kind of harmonize those two datasets; and within the same time period that MRIP is using be able to report those. The headboat program is run by a different group than the commercial people are in. Just one or two agenda items down, we're going to be talking about the commercial logbook pilot and where we are in the development of that; and I'll be able to give you a little more information.

MR. BELL: We've mentioned this before, but it may need to be emphasized a little more in the document, is the concept of cost-sharing and all and how we're going to do this. That was in the challenge wheel there under cost infrastructure. Well, cost will be an issue with this, and, of course, it depends on the fishery, how the fishery is constructed, who is participating and that sort of thing.

It works really well in some regions where they have significant cost-sharing from some of the fisheries; but whether or not we can count on that in our region to the degree that it is, say, in the northwest or the northeast remains to be seen. I think we do need to focus on – for this to work at some point in time, depending on the technologies of what you're doing, there is probably going to be some need for cost-sharing to make this work. Do you have any thoughts about that?

MR. COX: What do you mean by cost-sharing; cost-sharing between the fishermen and the agency; is that what you're talking about?

MR. BELL: In terms of the cost necessary to support the system, whatever it is you're using, whatever the particular technology is. There is not enough money necessarily to implement – and it really depends on what it is you're trying to do.

In other fisheries, the industries actually foot the bill for a significant portion of the particular technology or whatever it is they're reporting or monitoring. That is just something to think about. We can come up with these great ideas at some point if we decided to employ certain technologies, but they're not necessarily cheap. Mark.

MR. BROWN: But I think you're referencing some bigger fisheries, too. You start dealing with these smaller fisheries; and I don't think that the response to this will be real positive.

MR. BELL: Right; that's why I said each region is different, each fishery is different, each capacity for that sort of thing is different; but at some point in time if there is a desire to use certain technologies, they may not be cheap.

MR. PHILLIPS: Are we talking about just the hardware cost of whatever platform you're going to enter it in on, iPad or whatever it happens to be; are we talking about that plus a monthly fee of helping pay somebody to handle the day? I'm just figuring out how far this goes down the road.

MR. BELL: Yes; and I'm not trying to scare you or anything; that is just a practical consideration. Bonnie, can you help out with how it is done in other places?

DR. PONWITH: I think really what our chairman has raised is opening that dialogue; because we can't say, well, this is what we're talking about, this is what the cost is, because every fishery is configured differently. The way you set up electronic reporting or electronic monitoring totally depends upon what question are you trying to answer or what problem are you trying to solve.

It is an issue of having the right tool for that job. I can give you an example. In the Gulf of Mexico – so it is not just the big multi-billion dollars fleets in Alaska that we're talking about. In the Gulf of Mexico we had a problem with effort for the shrimp fishery there. We're using effort as a proxy for encounter rates with juvenile red snapper; so having very precise numbers for that effort for fleet was extremely important.

In the Gulf, when an offshore shrimp boat goes out, they can go out on a six-week fishing trip, right; and if you use their measure of effort is six weeks, that is a very coarse estimate of how much effort went into landing that number of pounds and it created some real problems. We instrumented those vessels with a little unit that has a miniaturized computer and a GPS capability and cell phone connectivity.

In this particular case the government was able to buy the units. This is just an example and that may not be the case the next time, but in this case it was, where the government was able to buy the units. The industry kicked in for the monthly telephone bills. Because it is a small amount of data and it is data-only, the telephone bill is twenty dollars a month; but by sharing those costs, it made it a mutually cost-effective to get much, much higher precision data that worked in both the best interest of the government as well as in the best interest of the industry; so that we didn't have giant error bars around those estimates. Again, that is just one example.

I think the point is rather than saying, well, it is going to forty-two dollars, I think the point is to recognize that as we contemplate creating electronic reporting programs or electronic monitoring applications; that very early in that process we start talking about how do we intend to finance that on an operational basis.

I think what our Chair was raising is that you don't want to wait until you're ready to go operational to start those discussions; that when you're in the pilot phase, it is a really important

thing to start having those open, candid, frank conversations of now that we have a proof of concept, how would we finance this at an operational scale.

MR. BELL: Thanks, Bonnie, that makes sense; and, again, nobody is selling anything here and nobody is proposing anything. It is just that is something that has to be factored in early into the planning. Mark.

MR. BROWN: I agree with you, Bonnie, but I was sitting here listening to you talk about that; and I was thinking a lot of that stuff is outdated now; all that technology is way in the past; and now we have apps for everything. It seems like things could be developed into an app.

MR. BELL: Right; and that's something that no matter what you put in place in a particular time; technology is going to continue to change, evolve, improve. I would view this as just an ongoing process of again it is not magic. You have a need, an issue; what is out there that we could use to apply to this, to improve data, to improve timeliness, accuracy. It is simply the use of available tools out there to help solve problems; and it is not magic and it is not free. Phil.

MR. STEELE: Well, all of this is a prime concern, for sure, how do we pay for it, so forth and so on; but I think the prime consideration we need to start with now, as soon as we get this knocked out, is how do we convince our stakeholders what we're doing is the right thing? The outreach of this thing is going to be tremendous.

We can show them the results of some of the earlier programs we've had like the dealer reporting, the headboat reporting, keeping within our ACLs to show them this is in their best interest. Regardless of who pays for it, the data is only still going to be as good as the people who are participating in the program. That outreach is going to be difficult. You see what some of the folks still think about electronic monitoring, VMS, whatever. They're not real hot on it; and to be able to convince the public that this is in their best interest and to the best interest of the resource is the challenge, in my opinion.

MR. BELL: You're definitely right. Gregg.

MR. WAUGH: Some of the cost figures Bonnie was talking about are shown on Page 9 of this document. The one-time cost to the government for this, the equipment was two million dollars, recurring cost about $313,000 annually; one-time cost to shrimp fishermen, $300,000; reoccurring cost for data transmission services, just over a million dollars. That is what that cost.

Mark hit on a good point. We shouldn't be talking about platforms to collect the data. We should be specifying the data elements and from our perspective may what the flow of those data are; but certainly shouldn't get into the specific platforms because those can become obsolete very quickly. The private sector is very good at coming up with neater, faster, less expensive ways of doing things.

As long as we get the data elements we need in the format we need and they go into a common place where then everybody who needs that data can pull that data; then I think you're going to see the lowest possible cost. What you guys have to understand is you are going to pay some

portion of the bill for this; and that is why we're commenting to move some of that up front. Now, it will be decided on an ongoing basis how much it is; but you're going to get part of the tab for the data system, so it becomes very important for you then to help manage the cost of the data system.

MR. BROWN: So we're talking commercial and for-hire, but does any of this include the private recreational, too; and if so, does this ever get back to how to bring them into this as far as their reporting?

MR. WAUGH: That might be a question for Phil. I don't see where this excludes private recreational. I think it could include them. This is an overall plan for how we collect data.

MR. BROWN: Yes; I know, but I was just thinking if we're going to do that and looks towards the future, that is something that we've talked about in visioning many times; and I was just wondering if it had any place where we could start to talk about some development for that.

MR. STEELE: Well, absolutely. I don't think it matters which fishery you're dealing with, the private, charter or commercial, it is going to be up to this council. Like you just referred to, Mark, in the visioning, what do they want to do about the recreationals, how do they want to deal with monitoring their effort.

If in fact this is the way they want to go, it won't matter which fishery you're looking at, this technology will work for them all. It is just a matter of finding out through regulation and through visioning what the council wants to do and then selling it to the public so they will buy into it. This is adaptable; it doesn't matter.

MR. BELL: We've heard from some recreational folks that asked about the use of certain technologies, cell phone, or how can they provide data. It is being done to some degree in other regions. So, sure, like Phil said, it doesn't really what fishery, it is just if you have a need and you have appropriate technologies you can apply out there, look at it. I would think it would the full suite of fisheries.

MR. WAUGH: When this was presented to our Snapper Grouper AP, when that system was demonstrated, they really were very excited about it and wanted to participate. In fact, there is another project to test this with private recreational anglers originally just in the northeast; but we had some people on our Snapper Grouper AP who were very interested from the private recreational sector. They wanted to get in on that pilot; so it will be tested some down in our area as well.

MR. HAYMANS: The alternative that I see to paying for, say, data or whatever it is, is some sort of resource rent beyond a license fee. That is one of those things out there that a lot of other places in the world do, but we just don't do it.

MR. BELL: Yes; we will have to be creative. If we determine we need to apply certain technologies, we'll have to figure that out and then we'll move forward. Okay, what I would suggest is that you've got the document; if there is anything else that kind of comes to mind that

you want to comment on or provide input on – remember, Phil asked us specifically about the process, the input about the priorities in there, the time frame that they're following as well as he outreach to the public.

If you've got ideas for that or whatever; but if you could kind of shoot those to myself or Gregg quickly, what we'd like to do is be able to shoot our feedback from the council to NMFS pretty quick, by the end of next week. So, if you could think about it, if you have an aha moment tonight or something or you're driving home and you think in the car a lot, jot it down and shoot us an e-mail and we'll document that and get it in. Jack.

MR. COX: I just have one more thing. You heard during visioning the state of the commercial fisheries; so I don't think they can bear anymore costs right now with the state of that fishery; more than about twenty dollars a month. You heard what kind of shape we're in; it is pretty bad.

MR. BELL: Yes; and I fully appreciate it. Back when we were considering VMS and things, that was real obvious. Each region will be different in terms of what it comes up with and what works and what it can afford and that sort of thing. We truly appreciate that. Anything else on this right now? All right, then let's go to the next agenda item, which would be the status of implementation plan for the commercial logbook electronic reporting.

MR. WAUGH: I'm going to go through the information in the overview and then the next item will be the update on the commercial pilot. You directed us to work with ACCSP in developing a commercial logbook electronic data entry system form. There is a team that is working on this, myself representing our staff; Mike Cahall, ACCSP; Dave Gloeckner and Steve Turner from the Center; Andy Strelcheck is the person from the regional office; and Monica Smit-Brunello.

We've had some preliminary discussions. We've got some material put together. Mike Cahall and Francine Karp demonstrated the system developed in the northeast during the September council meeting. In addition, Francine made a similar presentation to the Snapper Grouper AP, as we mentioned, at their October meeting. The Snapper Grouper AP is very interested in using this system, and they approved two motions.

One is to recommend that council move forward with implementing voluntary electronic logbook reporting for all federally permitted vessels; and, second, recommend that the council consider a voluntary electronic reporting system for private recreational anglers to improve recreational data collection. There is a lot of interest in moving forward with this.

Where are we right now? I touched base with Mike Cahall on November 4th and followed up with an e-mail yesterday. The software is ready. The permits interface; ACCSP has access to the NMFS Southeast Regional Office permits data. The data elements; Dave Gloeckner has provided a list to ACCSP. The list contains more data elements that are currently being collected on the paper logbook.

Our thought process thus far would be to just collect what was on the paper logbook. We 're going to need to resolve this and I'll discuss this with Monica and see whether we can have them provide additional information voluntarily or does it need to just be what information is on the

paper logbook. Also, Mike Cahall is working with the Center to pare the list of data elements down.

In terms of data integration and dissemination, ACCSP is currently working with NMFS Northeast to get approval for the software to be used by both commercial and recreational fishermen to provide trip-level data to NMFS through ACCSP. It is anticipated this should be completed some time in January; and he said that may be a little fast.

The hope is if they get this to where it is implemented in the northeast where that's an acceptable way to get trip-level information coming in from commercial and recreational; then once we try to do that same thing voluntarily down here, it shouldn't be a problem. Implementation; trying for early 2015 in the southeast.

The possibility exists that one or more fishermen in the southeast could be asked to do this on a trial basis to ensure all the issues are resolved before it is expanded again on a voluntary basis. I think we've made significant progress. It is particularly exciting that this appears to be moving along in the northeast and should resolve a lot of the issues before it is tried to be applied down into the southeast. I'd be glad to answer any questions.

MR. BELL: It is nice to have somebody kind of work out the bugs and things for you ahead of you a little bit. Any questions for Gregg? Doug.

MR. HAYMANS: Gregg, I was just going to say that Fran came down and introduced it to one of our folks; and just in the two hours that we sat around the table together, there are a lot of things that need to be worked out; and hopefully our guy working with it for the next month or two will find a lot more things that can be fixed right away.

MR. BELL: And that's why it is so important for the folks that are doing the software or developing this to work with the guys so it really works in the real world. Michelle.

DR. DUVAL: I would say that we've had some similar issues in some of the for-hire logbook meetings that we've had in North Carolina, trying to work out some of the bugs and making sure that program works on the various platforms. There are a few bugs still to be worked out. It is very impressive, though.

MR. STEELE: Well, there must be some confusion here; because I talked to my permits people about this after the last council meeting; and they didn't know what the hell I was talking about. They said there is no access to our permit data base that they had given nor could they even do that if they wanted to because of PPI. What is going on?

MR. WAUGH: I don't know; I'll follow up with Mike.

MR. STEELE: I'm curious if it is just a misunderstanding on my permits people part. They're the ones in charge of the data; and they were saying, no, they didn't know what I was talking about; so could you help me with that?

MR. WAUGH: Yes; I'll follow up with Mike and get back to you.

MR. BELL: Any other questions for Gregg right now on this? Bonnie.

DR. PONWITH: I thought I heard putting it on private recreational vessels as well for voluntary reporting; is that correct?

MR. WAUGH: No, the Snapper Grouper AP approved a motion that they recommended that be done. Our efforts are just focused on trying to get this in place for the commercial paper logbook. There is a project that is ongoing using this. Originally it was going to be in the northeast on private vessels; they're going to include some southeast vessels in that pilot.

DR. PONWITH: The reason I ask is before we collect any data, we need to make sure that we've got someone with a catcher's mitt who is ready to accept and use the data; because otherwise it sort of is cross-threaded with the notion of paper reduction. If you don't have someone who has a need for those data and a plan for what is going to happen with those data once we acquire them; then we're kind of out of compliance with that. That will be interesting to see how that goes. I know we're watching with great interest in other areas that have focused, carefully planned, voluntarily submitted data and are using those. We're watching that with great interest.

MR. BELL: All right, anything else for Gregg on this topic? All right, moving along, then, Update on Commercial Logbook Pilot Study.

DR. PONWITH: Again, this is an update on the electronic reporting for the commercial logbooks being able to move from paper to electronic reporting. As we had reported before, we have the standards developed; and the standards have been sent to all the participating vendors that we have interested in developing the software.

The notion is we create the standards and then release those standards to commercial or state enterprises and allow them to create the software that meets those standards; so it is not like the government is generating the software and saying you've got to use this and nothing else. It is we create the system and let other people develop that software.

We have recruited our volunteer fishers. The hardware and the software installation and the pilot data collection will be starting early in 2015; so we're looking at kind of a rolling start to that, probably between January and February getting software loaded and getting the data collection underway.

We have got the infrastructure and the software changes based on what we learned from that pilot phase over this winter ready by August of 2015. We have three vendors who have committed to generating software packages based on those standards. One of those three is ACCSP. We've got another vendor who has software that links into vessel-specific VMS software as well; so that would be a fourth.

We've also had more vendors express interest in developing the software, but they likely won't have versions of the software ready in time for our January deployment; so those would come later. Right now in terms of the participants we've got five permit holders from the South Atlantic participating. That is four from North Carolina and one from South Florida.

We have two HMS vessels; one from South Florida and one from Tampa. We have six participants from the Gulf; and that would be three from Florida and three from Texas. We're also working with the Shareholders Alliance in the Gulf of Mexico to try and increase participation in the pilot study.

In the South Atlantic, many of the participants have multiple permit types and use multiple gears; so it gives us an opportunity to really stretch the way we're using that software to make sure we understand how it is going to function under those different scenarios. That is where we are right now. We're excited about this because we will be able to get information down to individual tows.

We're pleased with this because just in the last three council meetings we've had cases where we're looking for specificity in the landings' information that didn't exist, to be able to answer questions we had about what could be done to manage these fisheries better. We think that with this electronic reporting, it is going to give us that specificity to really help make stronger and better decisions going into the future. Any questions?

MR. BELL: Any questions for Bonnie? Jack is 25 percent of the North Carolina participants, I guess.

MR. COX: I have signed up. I'm looking forward to it; I can't wait to get started on it. I will say that it is nice to look at the update on the ACL page of the SERO Website and see the updates come in so more quickly than they used to because of this kind of stuff; so that is nice.

MR. BELL: Any other questions for Bonnie on how things are going or what we're doing?

DR. DUVAL: Not a question; just a comment; excited; so thanks for keeping us in the loop.

MR. BELL: Yes, it is nice to see us moving. Again, going back to the challenge wheel, so one of the challenges is getting stakeholders involved and interested and you have stakeholders involved and interested and willing to participate; so it is a good thing; so there is some degree of acceptance and anticipation of improving things. Anything else on this topic? That takes us to Item 7, Joint South Atlantic and Gulf Council Generic Charterboat Reporting Amendment. Mike is going to provide us a report on that.

DR. ERRIGO: I think Mike Collins sent this out to everyone; but it is basically just a few slides that summarize the report that you should have all received by e-mail transmission. I don't think it was in the briefing book because it came in very, very last minute – after Thanksgiving, actually. I'm just going to run through and quick, hopefully, just the final recommendations from the technical subcommittee on how they feel the best way to proceed forward with a logbook program or reporting program for the for-hire sector.

The objectives that they were looking at for this program were to increase timeliness for landings and for in-season monitoring; to increase the temporal and spatial precision for landings and catch. This especially was a goal for the Gulf for vessel-specific catch histories; reducing bias in the catch estimates and also increase stakeholder trust and buy-in, which is a real big one.

First of all, it was recommended to not to design this program around a single species. I think that was mostly directed for the Gulf Council because they were very interested in trying to track the landings for red snapper, which happened very quickly, although the program hopefully will be designed to be flexible enough to change, if it needs to, to track landings more frequently and more quickly, if need be.

It should be flexible to accommodate different reporting requirements or reporting time periods and to incorporate vessels that have different requirements; such as like if some vessels are required to have VMS, you shouldn't have to require all vessels to have VMS in order to have the system work correctly; and it should be flexible enough to incorporate different types of vessels and different types of fishing requirements.

First off, it should be mandatory participation. Everyone should be required to participate. It should not be voluntary; and that is simply because of the potential for bias is too great if it is allowed to be voluntary. We just don't know how to correct for the uncertainty in the bias if it is voluntary.

It should be a logbook census, so everyone participates, everyone fills out their logbooks. There needs to be a procedure to expand for non-reporting, which means there needs to be a validation of the logbook reports. It should not be a survey, basically. It should be a census; because if it is a survey, it basically puts us back where we are not, which is a survey, and we'll have all the same issues that we have now.

The report should be trip level, so you should have one logbook report for each trip that is taken. They should be submitted weekly is the recommendation. We just recommend to sync up with like the headboat and the dealer reports; and I believe that was the Tuesday following the week for the trips; and I think that is how it is written in the regulations for the other reports.

That is why it was written that way in our report, but it should sync up with the other regulations. This would reduce recall bias. The less lag time there is, the less time you have to think back – let's say you didn't get a chance to fill your logs out. It increases timeliness; but it should have flexibility to accommodate more frequent reporting or even real-time reporting if the need arises or if the technology becomes available to accept real-time reports.

It has to be able to submit – you have to be able to submit no-fishing reports; and we should have the ability to submit those in advance. Let's say you know you're not going to be fishing for the next weeks because you're going on vacation; you should be able to submit those reports in advance. It should be flexible enough to incorporate the use of multiple reporting platforms and applications.

You guys were just talking about all of this for the electronic implementation plan; so tablets, online, you log into something online, laptop computers, phones, apps, things like that. There should be development of minimum standards. NMFS, GulfFin and ACCSP can work collaboratively to develop these minimum data and security requirements.

Once those are out there and published, then anybody can develop a program. As long as it collects the required data in the required format and has the required security protocols and transmits in the appropriate way, then it doesn't really matter who makes the program, where you get it from or any of that. As long as it submits in the right way, you should be fine.

The recommendation for storage and management; the logbook data is collected via some authorized platform or even if you have VMS on your boat, you should be able to use that to be able to do your logbooks. You submit the data; our recommendation would be to use the ACCSP or GulfFin. They are already set up to receive and process information on that scale.

They QA-QC that data when it comes in. They integrate all the data into one composite dataset. Then what they do is they would – for each of the partners, they would send the appropriate dataset to each partner. South Carolina would get the South Carolina data; North Carolina would get the North Carolina data; NMFS would get all the federal data that is required. HMS would get all the HMS data that is required. They would be able to send all that out in the appropriate way.

Validation; validation is going to be really important. It is suggested that we have an MRIP-certified validation methodology, which I know is already being worked on. I know North Carolina is working with MRIP right now on a methodology for validation of their electronic logbook program. It is something that can be used throughout the South Atlantic and Gulf.

We suggested building on the Gulf/MRIP Pilot Study Methodology, which I believe North Carolina is building off of that pilot study. We need to include dockside validation of the catch and vessel activity, which is effort. If someone puts in a no-fishing report, you should not only check to make sure that the submitted logbooks; the catch is similar but also if they're not fishing, are they really not fishing or did they say they're not fishing and then went out. That also has to be validated.

I put tablet app there because I know at the AP meeting there was that tablet app that records GPS positioning and can actually tell you where the vessel is, if it is moving and if it is fishing or not. That might be one way to validate effort, to minimize the use of field samplers perhaps to save money in validating effort and put more people towards validating catch.

It was recommended to maintain a registry of the intercept sites and also of all the charter vessels and then the owners or operators of those vessels. To consider at-sea observer coverage; this is not a hard-and-fast recommendation because we know of the budget constraints, but we really suggest considering at-sea observer coverage for bycatch and also the collection of fine-scale discard data, depth of captures, areas fished, released condition and mortality.

Again, these types of tablet applications that you can use on board the vessels will be very helpful for this. They can record the position you're at when you catch the fish and all that kind of information. Accountability measures; we suggested something similar to what the dealers are using where you're only able to harvest or possess federally managed species if you're up to date on your logbook reports. All delinquent reports would need to be submitted before a for-hire trip could be taken and federally managed species harvested.

However, we also recommend consultation with OLE and NOAA GC happen to construct appropriate and enforceable accountability measures. We did not have any representatives from those areas at our meeting so we don't know what is legal or enforceable. We suggested something with teeth.

If you have nothing to really get people to turn their logbooks in, then you're going to wind up in a similar situation that we're in now with areas that have logbooks or the federal commercial logbooks where they're turning them in at the end of the year and just filling them all out; and we're not really sure how much to trust what goes in them.

Calibration; we recommend running the new logbook program and the old MRIP survey concurrently for at least three years. We also know that budgetary constraints may prohibit full implementation and concurrent running of both programs for three full years but some level of concurrent running of the two programs should be done for more than one year in order to calibrate the two.

According to the pilot study, we're not going to be able to use the logbook data especially in the first year. Compliance is going to start low and then ramp up; and we're not going to know how that will compare to the original survey estimates; so we have to be able to calibrate. We also need that time for compliance to ramp up.

At least the first year, if not the second and third years, we recommend not using the logbooks to track landings. The recommendation about including state vessels or not; we recommend the councils move forward with requiring federally permitted charter vessels – to implement the logbook program for federally permitted vessels now with the ultimate goal of including all charter vessels.

We do know that each of the states has different timelines for their ability to build these types of electronic logbook programs into their state agency programs; and they may not all sync up. We suggest at the council level require federal vessels; and as the states are able to come on board, to be able to have the program be flexibility enough to fold in the state vessels as that becomes possible.

Our suggestion is to have GulfFin or ACCSP committees work jointly with the end users to coordinate the program as a committee. MRIP, states, councils, the regional office, the science center, HMS staff would all help to coordinate the program since they're all involved in it. It is not really something, especially if you're going to include state vessels, that can be done by a single entity.

There is a preliminary budget in the document. It is missing, I think, a few elements; and it doesn't incorporate certain things; but it estimates a start-up cost of around $175,000. The breakdown is in the report. The recurring cost – and this includes dockside sampling and monitoring and validation and the whole nine yards, data collection and processing. This is payment for salaries and the whole nine yards – is $4.7 million as the recurring fee with a total – and this is only for federal vessels – with a total fee of $4.9 million.

This is just how much the program would cost. This does not take into consideration – if we were to implement this program and stop using the MRIP Survey or scale back on the MRIP Survey because federal vessels are now reporting via logbook or use the MRIP intercepts to validate; that doesn't incorporate that into this. This is just what the cost of this logbook program would be if it was run by itself in the South Atlantic and the Gulf.

MR. HAYMANS: What are the recurring costs again?

DR. ERRIGO: The recurring costs?

MR. HAYMANS: Yes.

DR. ERRIGO: Those would be like people's salaries, the cost of collecting and transmitting the data and paying for the field validations and all that kind of stuff.

MR. HAYMANS: Would that be for three years; and then once we are through that, the side-by-side comparison is no more?

DR. ERRIGO: No; this does not take into consideration the side-by-side comparison. This is for the Gulf and the South Atlantic; all federally permitted vessels and all federally permitted for-hire vessels in the Gulf and the South Atlantic.

Like I said, this assumes that there was no MRIP Survey. This is if you were going to create a logbook program from the ground up, how many people you would need, how much they need to be paid, what the infrastructure would cost and the whole nine yards.

MR. HAYMANS: Those are NMFS salaries; that is what that is?

DR. ERRIGO: Yes. That is why said this is a preliminary budget. This is not what the on-the-ground cost would be if we were to switch over to logbooks from the for-hire survey that we're doing now. This is not like how much more it would cost. This is the cost of an electronic logbook. I debated whether to put this in here or not, but it is in the report so I figured I'd mention it.

MR. BELL: Okay, other than the sticker shock – and keep in mind that is if you built the thing literally from the ground up with nothing else existing.

DR. ERRIGO: Most of that cost is already being spent on the for-hire survey now; and a lot of the cost is going – it will be an increase, but it is not going to be $4.9 million more than we're paying now.

MR. BREWER: I know that there are roughly 1,300 federally permitted boats or for-hire boats in the Gulf; how many are there in the South Atlantic?

DR. ERRIGO: I don't know. It is actually in the report and I can't remember the numbers. It is less than that. There are less federally permitted vessels – for-hire vessels in the South Atlantic than there are in the Gulf; but by how much I'm not sure.

MR. BELL: Any other questions or comments on this? There are a lot of good recommendations, a lot of work put into this, and I certainly appreciate that. This will be essential in moving forward on anything. Michelle.

DR. DUVAL: Chester, you should have gotten this e-mail but it is like every other council meeting we get an updated file that Kari usually sends around of all the permits in the Gulf and South Atlantic. It is a big excel spreadsheet. I'm looking at that right now and just looking at the South Atlantic charter permits for snapper grouper; it says 1,024. That obviously goes up and down as people renew things or don't.

MR. BELL: Yes; and that is an important thing to consider when mentioning costs. As Mike mentioned, too, each state's approach to this – and I think the idea of starting with the federal first makes sense and then some states would be able to come on board with everything when they can and how best they can. It is going to be a step-wise process in doing this; but I think it is logical to start at that level. That was an interesting price in itself.

DR. ERRIGO: In fact, North Carolina is ahead of is. They're implementing their electronic logbooks now. One other thing; the budget breakdown by pieces is in the report, which everyone should have. It gives what each of the costs are like people's salaries and this and that and the other thing. That breakdown is in the report.

DR. DUVAL: I was just going to say I don't want everyone to think that we have for-hire logbooks operational and on the ground right now. It is coming online in 2015. We have to go through the required rule-making process, et cetera, so it will probably be more like April or May before it is actually up and doing. We've been doing the outreach. We're working with ACCSP and others to get the software configured and everything.

MR. CONKLIN: Mr. Chairman, I was just curious in relation to what we're spending on MRIP right now; what is the difference between the two programs cost-wise?

DR. ERRIGO: I'm not the one who pulled together the budget stuff. I actually do think that is a necessary piece that needs to be done. It was actually a suggestion from several of the subcommittee members that we look at what is being spent on MRIP and what might we be able to piggyback together so that we don't have to spend quite as much more. There may not have to

be that much more of an increase in terms of field validation because we already have MRIP samplers in the field. It may be similar; but those numbers have not been pulled together.

MR. PATE: There has been a lot of talk about North Carolina's program. Doug Mumford and Chris Wilson, who were here one day this week to give the catch card survey presentation, will be running the project for North Carolina.

I think more importantly than that, Dave Van Voorhees, who works with S&T for the National Marine Fisheries Service, has taken the lead in putting together some consultants to work in a working group with North Carolina staff to ensure that the program that we implement in June of 2015 is statistically sound and can be applied to other states in terms of reliability and efficiency. That is a project that MRIP is funding as a pilot project for this this year. I would suggest that you wait for the outcome of that project to be finished before taking any action on this.

MR. BELL: Thanks, Pres; and if I'm remembering all my dates and things, I think there is a phone call or something on that group on Monday.

MR. PATE: Monday at three o'clock.

MR. BELL: Any other questions for Mike? Yes, Kevin.

MR. ANSON: Pres or Dr. Duval; are those two projects one and the same? Dr. Duval mentioned the early rollout and, Pres, you mentioned June; but those are the same program; is that correct?

MR. PATE: Yes; and the state is getting prepared to do the regulatory requirements to do this at the state level. Michelle, correct me if I'm wrong, but Chris and Doug are going to be starting the new electronic survey in June of 2015.

MR. ANSON: And that includes validation procedures as well to account for non-reporting and such?

MR. PATE: Yes.

DR. DUVAL: I think a lot of the elements that Mike went through in his presentation; we are going to be employing like the side by side for three years' thing in order to ensure that when we come off MRIP and are moving forward completely with a logbook; that we're getting good information. We've heard input from our for-hire captains that they like seeing our creel clerks out there; so we view them as important components in our outreach.

DR. ERRIGO: Just as an FYI, Doug Mumford is one of the technical subcommittee members; so he helped craft these recommendations.

MR. BELL: Yes; there are a lot of different things going on, but there is a lot of overlap in the players and obviously important people from the different states that are involved in different

aspects, but there is a lot of progress being made, I think. Any other questions for Mike right now? Gregg, anything else on this topic that we need to cover?

MR. WAUGH: Just in terms of general guidance to us. When we started down this path, your direction was to basically take what we did on the for-hire side and for the most part apply that to the charterboat side. Then the Gulf requested that this technical committee be put together and we agreed with that. Now we've got their findings; so is it your intent now that we would work with Gulf staff to begin crafting a joint amendment based on that general direction and the guidance that has come out of this report; so to start bringing you options to begin looking at perhaps in March of June?

MR. BELL: Any thoughts on that? The original intent that we stated was to move towards the possibility of a joint amendment with the Gulf on this for implementation. That doesn't mean anything is going to happen really fast; but we'd need to direct staff to go ahead and –

MR. WAUGH: And, certainly, Pres' point about waiting; we wouldn't be at the stage of crafting final actions and alternatives until way past June. We'd have some of that implementation to build on. Sort of the general timeline we were thinking is to work on this amendment, try to get the amendment pretty much finished during 2015, and then look at having something to approve in early 2016 and implement some time in 2016 or 2017.

MR. BELL: I know in Executive Finance we were looking at the overall schedule and this was one of the things. It will take a little time. Would we need that in the form of a motion or would we just need to direct staff to hold –

MR. WAUGH: Just direction to staff at this stage would be fine.

MR. BELL: Okay, for the committee, does that seem logical to go ahead and move forward on that? Michelle.

DR. DUVAL: Yes; and I think as we learned with the Electronic Dealer Reporting Amendment and the Headboat Reporting Amendment; that there are a lot of details of just like sort of the accountability measures, the compliance and the language of just the regulations that takes a long time to work through; so I think probably the sooner we can at least get started on that piece the better. Certainly, the lessons that will be learned from North Carolina's experiences Pres has recommended would be incorporated into the actual on-the-ground implementation.

MR. BELL: Right; and this is all coming together nicely. There are a lot of different things going on; but I think, like you said, the sooner we kind of get the official process rolling, the better in order to move forward. Everybody in agreement with that or anybody in disagreement? Okay, then we will consider that direction to staff to go ahead and start that process. Anything else on this topic that we need to cover? Bonnie, are you ready to give us an update on some MRIP developments?

DR. PONWITH: Yes; I sure am. I would also like to thank Dr. John Boreman for joining us today. Today he is wearing his MRIP hat; he has many hats. This is his MRIP hat. If we get

into a level in the discussion that has technical details of these modifications, he is ready to jump in and help deal with some of the questions.

As you probably have heard through an announcement earlier this fall, after some pretty extensive study over the last couple of years, a decision within MRIP has been made to shift from the coastal household telephone survey as the prime mechanism for obtaining effort data; to get those effort estimates, they're shifting over to a mail survey. This is not an uncommon decision.

Several other government agencies that obtain data through various ways have arrived at that very same conclusion that the mail survey profoundly outperforms telephone surveys, particularly in this day and age where more and more households are foregoing land lines. The plan is to shift to collecting data in a dual-frame mode to collecting data using the mail survey beginning in 2015. We will continue with the coastal household telephone survey, continue that whole survey but alongside and parallel we would be doing the mail survey. This will begin in 2015.

We will collect data for at least two years is the plan right now to look at those data side by side and do the comparisons, make sure we understand patterns we're seeing in those two methodologies, and gather the data we need to do a very, very strong calibration. You all know that the effort data is a critical data element in generating those landings' estimates via the MRIP.

The mail survey we think is going to be a lot more efficient. The reason is because it will capitalize on that saltwater angler registry or the state registries that existed and received waivers from the federal registry because of that. The mail survey will target people who are already known saltwater fishers; and that is going to do a good job of strengthening the efficiency. We have already developed a transition team.

The transition team is comprised of people from within NOAA Fisheries, for the regional fishery management councils, interstate commissions and the state agencies. The purpose of this is to be able to look at these side-by-side approaches and help in the process of making sure that calibration is complete before we get to a point where we're ready to actually tear down the coastal household telephone survey and deem that mail survey as the survey of record for making those estimates.

This is going to be a very, very active group here over the next couple of years. I think what I'll do is stop there. There are certainly more details of how this will play out. One thing that I do want to bring to your attention is that the pilot studies that we did using the mail survey; in those pilot studies the data that we obtained for effort were, without exception, higher than the effort estimates that we got using the coastal household telephone survey.

Now, the thinking is that it wasn't an issue that there were suddenly more anglers out there; but that the mail survey did a better job of accounting for what effort really was taking place all along. Again, that is part of the reason that we want to do this very, very careful side-by-side analysis so we understand those patterns.

But, of course, knowing in advance that there is a likelihood when we implement this operationally across the full geography here; that those numbers are going to be higher, that has implications. We want to start preparing ourselves for those implications. When we get to the point where those effort estimates, based on the mail survey, are determined to be the best available; then we're going to have to jump right in and start looking at what those implications are to the stock assessments.

John Carmichael, when we went through the SEDAR Steering Committee, alluded to the fact that we're going to have some work to do when this comparison is done and those numbers are ready to be used as the effort estimates of record; that we are going to have to go back and take a look at some of those stock assessments and make sure that the calibration we arrive at is threaded through the time series of the landings; because often we use landings not just to represent landings.

We use landings also as an index of abundance. Those are some important changes. We've got teams that are interdisciplinary and cross the governance system to help implement these changes and look forward to having better, stronger numbers going into the future. I'll stop there and see if there are any questions.

MR. BELL: Yes; and this is obviously going to be a significant change. Any questions for Bonnie or Dr. Boreman? Kevin.

MR. ANSON: Dr. Ponwith, can you characterize that level, that increase you mentioned in effort? I think it applied to both shore and private modes; but I think there was a much greater increase in the shore effort compared to private. Is that true?

DR, PONWITH: That's correct; there were I think four smaller pilot scale studies that were done in different regions. The biggest difference was in the shore-based. Again, when we apply this across the whole geography, it remains to be seen whether the magnitude of those changes hold or whether they're different; but in the pilot studies they were different.

DR. DUVAL: I think maybe this question is for Dr. Boreman. I had to step out of the partners' call when they went over the new survey methods. What is the frequency or the proposed frequency of the new mail survey?

DR. BOREMAN: Right now the plan is to keep the two-month waves; but again it depends on what you pay. If you want to put the investment in, you could possibly go down to one-month waves.

We probably will be looking at that in the next couple of years, too, as we do the side by side. That is one factor we will be looking at. The mail survey can be handled the same way. They found that there is very little difference in the recall, whether you call them or send them a questionnaire in the mail. They both worked out to be about the same in terms of recall capabilities.

DR. LANEY: John or Bonnie, I can't recall; I guess the existing MRIP Telephone Survey was just random digit-dialing to coastal households. The upcoming year when you're going to be running them in tandem; will both of them then employ the angler registry or is the telephone survey just going to remain random-digit to coastal households while the mail survey uses the registry. How will that affect the comparison of the two approaches?

DR. PONWITH: The whole purpose of the calibration is to look at the old way against the new way. What we don't want to do is put a wrinkle in that by changing the old way. We will continue the coastal household telephone survey according to those old protocols, which is just a phonebook of coastal counties, and then compare that against the new mail survey that is targeting people who are in the saltwater registry.

DR. BOREMAN: But also the mail survey will be stratified so we can look – because right now we know there are differences, but we don't know exactly why. We're taking some educated guesses in terms of who gets called, who answers the phone in the house, who has a cell phone, who doesn't have a cell phone; but obviously there are a lot of other factors that add to the difference that we're seeing.

By stratifying the mail survey and picking certain audiences like inland versus coastal counties but still be able to compare on one-to-one apples and apples between the mail survey and the household telephone survey; but by stratifying the mail survey, we can look at other factors that may be contributing to the differences that we're seeing.

MR. WAUGH: During 2015 which method is going to be used to track the recreational ACLs?

DR. PONWITH: The current MRIP process is going to be the estimate of record; and that is the estimate that will be used for management purposes until this transition team believes we're at a point where we can tear down the current MRIP estimation process for effort and transition to full use of the mail.

MR. HARTIG: Have the pilots given you any information on the possibility of getting better effort on some of our rare species; ones that you rarely intercept in the MRIP Survey?

DR. PONWITH: This is the portion of the MRIP Program that deals exclusively with effort; and so when we do the coastal household telephone survey, nobody is asked about what they caught. All of the catch information is done via dockside intercepts. A sampler goes and sees those fish, you have effort, how many people went fishing.

You have what they caught. You put that together and you get catch-per-unit effort; and then you can multiply catch-per-unit effort times the effort estimate to get a total landings' estimate. This will have nothing to do with what was caught until it is used to actually generate those landings' estimates.

MR. HARTIG: Okay, it is interesting that this one shows more effort and then the other thing that MRIP did showed more effort in specific areas; so that will be interesting to see how that works together. The other thing I had was you talked about stratification of the mail survey. I'm

assuming that it is going to be done on the same numbers based on what the telephone survey was done, the same number of intercepts with people as far as effort values or not.

DR. BOREMAN: I don't know; it is probably a lot more numbers, though, I would guess since the cost of the mailing – the questionnaire is a lot less than the cost of hiring somebody to make a phone call and paying their salary. The stratification I'm talking about; we can stratify by those who are in the registry, those who are in coastal counties, those who are not in coastal counties, those who have state fishing licenses, those who don't have state fishing licenses.

One thing that the surveys found is people with cell phones tend to catch more fish and go fishing more than people without cell phones, of all things, and that is one of the factors that we're seeing and may be leading to the differences in the estimates of effort that we're seeing.

MR. BROWN: Do you have a draft of the new mail-out survey; is there something out already that we could look at?

DR. BOREMAN: Pres, can you answer that? We probably do. It is probably in the report, right?

MR. PATE: Yes; the report is on the National Marine Fisheries Service Website. I can't think of the name of it now, but we released it to the operations team a couple of weeks ago and put it on the website at the same time. The operations team is still reviewing the project. They're supposed to be finished in one minute; so we'll send to the executive steering committee tomorrow. We assumed it was made public when we released it to the operations team; so you should be able to get it on the NMFS Website.

MR. HAYMANS: John, this is more of a theoretical question and it is really targeting what you just said about cell phone and fishermen. If you were able to add a question to the mail survey that asked about your willingness to report that information via the web versus the survey; do you think you could determine whether there is a difference in the fishing of a person willing to report via web versus one who is not? Because if you could, you see where that is going; down the road you still send a hit out to somebody who has an e-mail saying, hey, we're asking you to report; and so you've still got your stratified sampling, but it is a whole lot cheaper on the receiving end.

DR. BOREMAN: Yes; unfortunately, not every American household has access to the web; but one thing we can do on the mail survey is give them the option of reporting back on the web versus mailing something back. They may be more willing to do something like that. I certainly would; I'd rather report on the web than put something in the mail. This study started in 2006, by the way, even before MRIP became MRIP, before we came up with acronym.

It started right after the NRC Report came out. They not only looked at mail-ins but they also looked at web reporting, et cetera, et cetera, all different alternatives. The mail survey turns out to be the best alternative of all of them. We're also looking at other agencies in the government that are doing the same thing, conducting the same types of surveys, and the conclusion – as

Bonnie said, the conclusion is the same that the mail survey is the most effective way of teasing information out of the American public.

DR. LANEY: Well, Doug sort of touched upon it; but, John, in the future when we I guess at some point transition totally to the mail survey, are states still going to have the option of being able to get questions added to the mail survey? I guess they have to pay for that now if they want questions added to the MRIP Survey, but will that still be available, that flexibility?

DR. BOREMAN: I presume it will. I can't say for sure. There are a lot of other factors. There is the reporting requirements' factors that you have to get clearance for. You've got to be careful about turning a survey into an hour-long exercise for somebody. You want it to be quick; you want it to be easy for them to do.

You don't want to get too many complicating questions in there; but these add-on questions, we're also talking about adding on socio-economic questions to the survey, too, to include household income if people are willing to share that; you know, what bracket they're in, et cetera, et cetera; but the more questions you add on, the response rate is probably going to be inversely related to it.

MR. BELL: And that is the temptation of one of these. When you've got an instrument going out, everybody can think of something that would be really good to ask. But, you're right, if you overdo it, you'll lose participation. Any other questions for Bonnie?

MR. HARTIG: Do we have a copy of the mail survey anywhere that we can access; can we look at that?

DR. BOREMAN: Yes; it is on our website countmyfish.gov.

MR. BELL: Any other questions. We're running a little bit over here, but we'll take advantage of the opportunity. John.

DR. BOREMAN: We've done this with the Mid-Atlantic, I know, because I'm associated with them, too, but if the council wants a one-on-one webinar with our folks in MRIP to talk further about this a little more in depth; you start seeing reports coming in and you get a little nervous or worried or whatever, you have more questions, just contact Gordon Colvin and we'd be happy to set something up.

MR. BELL: I appreciate you going to the trouble to come up; and I appreciate Gordon offering. I think that was a good thing on his part, because it is a very important transition that we're going to be going through here, and it is logical. If there are no other questions on this right now, Doug, did you have one thing you wanted to bring up?

MR. HAYMANS: I was just going to do here so my other states could chime in if need be; but, really, this is for Bonnie. It kind of gets at what Charlie was talking about earlier with dealer reporting through SAFIS. We're a small state who gives pretty good customer service to folks.

Our dependent monitoring person has an issue with new dealers as they come on line and reporting.

Our staff basically trains those folks on how to use SAFIS; but yet we don't know when you folks come online until that person is getting letters from NMFS that says, "Hey, you're in arrears; you haven't reported." The guy says, "Oh, my God, I didn't know I was supposed to report." We realize that you put up frequent lists of new dealers; but rather than having to search through all of that – I didn't know if any of the other states experienced similar issues; but is there a way that you guys can send a key person in the state an alert that says, "Hey, you've got a new dealer," and we can go contact those guys then?

DR. PONWITH: That sure sounds like a reasonable request. Let me consult with the team back there and find out what we can set up; and my hope is we would be able to create some sort of code that looks for new dealers and automatically sends an e-mail. Let me consult with them and find what is possible and get back to you on that.

MR. BELL: That is important to note, I think. I know in our state, too, we spend a lot of time working with dealers and trying to help them; and in the introduction of these different federal requirements, we've been trying to help and explain things. We're not the National Marine Fisheries Service, but we're trying to help folks comply and so bringing the state partners in is essential, I think, or any state. Anything else for the committee right now? Well, seeing no other business, then, Mr. Chairman, we will adjourn the committee.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 5:10 o'clock p.m., December 4, 2014.)

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Roy Crabtree
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Wilson Laney
Staff contact: John Carmichael

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South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
2014 Council Membership

COUNCIL CHAIRMAN:

Ben Hartig
9277 Sharon Street
Hobe Sound, FL 33455
772/546-1541 (ph)
mackattackben@att.net

VICE-CHAIRMAN

Dr. Michelle Duval
NC Division of Marine Fisheries
3441 Arendell St.
(PO Box 769)
Morehead City, NC 28557
252/808-8011 (ph); 252/726-0254 (f)
michelle.duval@ncdenr.gov

Robert E. Beal
Executive Director
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries
Commission
1050 N. Highland St., Suite 200 A-N
Arlington, VA 20001
703/842-0740 (ph); 703/842-0741 (f)
rbeal@asmfc.org

Mel Bell
S.C. Dept. of Natural Resources
Marine Resources Division
P.O. Box 12559
(217 Ft. Johnson Road)
Charleston, SC 29422-2559
843/953-9007 (ph)
843/953-9159 (fax)
bellm@dnr.sc.gov

Anna Beckwith
1907 Paulette Road
Morehead City, NC 28557
252/671-3474 (ph)
AnnaBarriosBeckwith@gmail.com

Zack Bowen
P.O. Box 30825
Savannah, GA 31410
912/398-3733 (ph)
fishzack@comcast.net

W. Chester Brewer
250 Australian Ave. South
Suite 1400
West Palm Beach, FL 33408
561/655-4777 (ph)
WCBLAW@aol.com

Mark Brown
3642 Pandora Drive
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29466
843/881-9735 (ph); 843/881-4446 (f)
capt.markbrown@comcast.net

Chris Conklin
P.O. Box 972
Murrells Inlet, SC 29576
843/543-3833
conklincc@gmail.com

Jack Cox
2010 Bridges Street
Morehead City, NC 28557
252/728-9548
Dayboat1965@gmail.com

Dr. Roy Crabtree
Regional Administrator
NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Region
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
727/824-5301 (ph); 727/824-5320 (f)
roy.crabtree@noaa.gov

LT Morgan Fowler
U.S. Coast Guard
510 SW 11th Court
Fort Lauderdale FL 33315
morgan.m.fowler@uscg.mil

Doug Haymans
Coastal Resources Division
GA Dept. of Natural Resources
One Conservation Way, Suite 300
Brunswick, GA 31520-8687
912/264-7218 (ph); 912/262-2318 (f)
doughaymans@gmail.com

Deirdre Warner-Kramer
Office of Marine Conservation
OES/OMC
2201 C Street, N.W.
Department of State, Room 5806
Washington, DC 20520
202/647-3228 (ph); 202/736-7350 (f)
Warner-KramerDM@state.gov

Dr. Wilson Laney
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
South Atlantic Fisheries Coordinator
P.O. Box 33683
Raleigh, NC 27695-7617
(110 Brooks Ave
237 David Clark Laboratories,
NCSU Campus
Raleigh, NC 27695-7617)
919/515-5019 (ph)
919/515-4415 (f)
Wilson_Laney@fws.gov

Jessica McCawley
Florida Fish and Wildlife
Conservation Commission
2590 Executive Center Circle E.,
Suite 201
Tallahassee, FL 32301
850/487-0554 (ph); 850/487-4847(f)
jessica.mccawley@myfwc.com

Charles Phillips
Phillips Seafood / Sapelo Sea Farms
1418 Sapelo Avenue, N.E.
Townsend, GA 31331
912/832-4423 (ph); 912/832-6228 (f)
Ga_capt@yahoo.com

PRES PATE
BONNIE PONWITH
PHIL STEELE
MONICA SMIT-BRUNELLO
JACK MCGOVERN
KEVIN ANSON
TRACY DUNN
JOHN BOREMAN
CAPT. RAMA SHUSTER

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
Staff

Executive Director
Robert K. Mahood
robert.mahood@safmc.net

Deputy Executive Director
Gregg T. Waugh
gregg.waugh@safmc.net

Public Information Officer
Kim Iverson
kim.iverson@safmc.net

Fishery Outreach Specialist
Amber Von Harten
amber.vonharten@safmc.net

Senior Fishery Biologist
Roger Pugliese
roger.pugliese@safmc.net

Fishery Scientist
Myra Brouwer
myra.brouwer@safmc.net

Fishery Biologist
Dr. Mike Errigo
mike.errigo@safmc.net

Fisheries Social Scientist
Dr. Kari MacLauchlin
kari.maclauchlin@safmc.net

Fishery Scientist
Chip Collier
Chip.Collier@safmc.net

Staff Economist
Dr. Brian Cheuvront
brian.cheuvront@safmc.net

Science and Statistics Program Manager
John Carmichael
john.carmichael@safmc.net

SEDAR Coordinators
Dr. Julie Neer - julie.neer@safmc.net
Julia Byrd – julia.byrd@safmc.net

Administrative Officer
Mike Collins
mike.collins@safmc.net

Financial Secretary
Debra Buscher
deb.buscher@safmc.net

Admin. Secretary /Travel Coordinator
Cindy Chaya
cindy.chaya@safmc.net

Purchasing & Grants
Julie O'Dell
julie.odell@safmc.net

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Thursday, December 4, 2014

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Bill Kelly	FLCFA	
Tony Anspan		
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Lora ?	Pew	

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201
North Charleston, SC 29405
843-571-4366 or Toll Free 866/SAFMC-10