



THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Improvements to For-Hire Reporting in the South Atlantic

Scoping Document

Online Scoping

The South Atlantic Council is conducting public scoping to determine how to improve reporting requirements for the for-hire component of the Snapper Grouper, Dolphin Wahoo, and Coastal Migratory Pelagics (mackerels) fisheries. Clarifying questions about the posted materials can be directed to Myra Brouwer at Myra.Brouwer@safmc.net or John Hadley at John.Hadley@safmc.net. Comments can be posted online, sent by mail, or by fax, using the information at the end of this document.

[For-Hire Reporting Amendment Webpage](#)

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Background

The Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) Program was launched in the South Atlantic in 2021 with the implementation of the Comprehensive For-Hire Electronic Reporting Amendment ([SAFMC 2020](#)). The amendment put in place or modified reporting requirements for federally permitted charter vessels and headboats in the snapper grouper (SG), dolphin wahoo (DW), and coastal migratory pelagics (mackerels; CMP) fisheries. Reporting requirements through SEFHIER were effective for charter/for-hire vessels in January 2021.



In June 2024, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) started developing of an amendment to improve compliance with reporting requirements for federally permitted headboat and charter vessels and make the collected data useable in management.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council) and the National Marine Fisheries Service Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Division are also in the process of revamping reporting requirements for federally permitted for-hire vessels. It is important to maintain consistency in reporting requirements to minimize the reporting burden on permit holders.

What is scoping?

Scoping is an early step in the development of an amendment, in which the Council solicits public input on what actions should (or should not) be considered in an amendment. Amendment actions are typically developed with several alternatives. Comments on why an action or an alternative is or is not necessary are important to inform the Council's discussions and determine what needs to be included in an amendment.

Later in the process, during the public comment period, the Council will again solicit public input on which of the alternatives considered should be selected as the preferred management action.



Why is the Council considering changes?

The Council has received periodic updates on the SEFHIER Program since its implementation. Overall compliance with reporting requirements is low compared to what was observed the Gulf of Mexico when the program was operational in that region. Also, in June 2024 meeting, the Council received [feedback](#) from the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office and Southeast Fisheries Science Center that data being collected through the SEFHIER program and for-hire logbook cannot be used for management due to low compliance and lack of validation. Hence, the Council initiated discussion on ways to improve compliance, strengthen reporting requirements, and explore data validation, with the goal of utilizing the information collected in future management decisions. Because some federally permitted for-hire vessels participate in the Southeast Headboat Survey, this program may also need to be modified to maintain consistency and minimize the reporting burden on permit holders.

What actions could the Council consider?

1. Modify the reporting frequency
2. Require trip notification
3. Establish approved landing locations
4. Require participation in a validation and estimation survey
5. Revise reporting of economic data for charter vessels
6. Modify existing “Did Not Fish” report requirements

When would the changes take effect?

Timing	Council Action
Winter 2025	Obtain feedback from For-Hire Reporting Advisory Panel (AP) and Law Enforcement AP
March 2025	Approve for scoping
Spring 2025	Obtain feedback from advisory panels for the three fisheries
June-September 2025	Develop amendment
December 2025	Approve for public hearings
March 2026	Review public hearing comments and approve all actions
June 2026	Approve for formal review
2027/2028	Regulation changes become effective



1. Reporting frequency and timing of report submission

Increasing the reporting frequency would improve monitoring and enforcement and increase the quality of reported data. This action would apply to all vessels with a valid Southeast federal charter/headboat permit, regardless of where the vessel operates (i.e., state or federal waters).

Current requirement:

Federally permitted charter and headboat vessels fishing for snapper grouper species, dolphin or wahoo, or Atlantic king and Spanish mackerels, must report all fish harvested and discarded for each trip, and submit an electronic fishing report weekly.

Possible changes:

Require electronic reporting for each trip, and:

- Require report submission within 30 minutes of arriving at landing location. If fish are harvested, require reporting prior to landing.
- Require report submission within 1 hour of arriving at landing location. If fish are harvested, require reporting prior to landing.

Require electronic reporting daily, and:

- If fish are harvested, require reporting prior to landing.



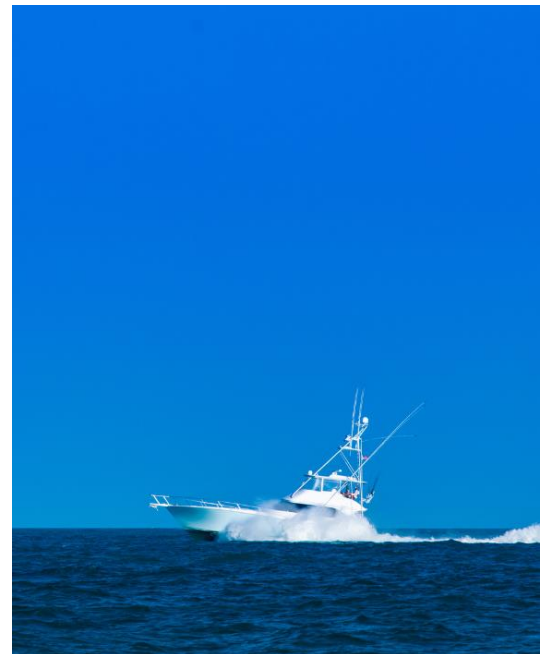


Table 1. Summary of existing and developing for-hire reporting frequency and timing requirements for the South Atlantic (SA), Southeast (SE) Headboat Survey, Gulf of Mexico (GOM), Greater Atlantic Region (GAR) Vessel Trip Report (VTR), and Highly Migratory Species (HMS).

	SA SEFHIER and SE Headboat Survey	GOM SEFHIER	GAR VTR	HMS
Existing	Weekly	N/A	Generally 48 hours after entering port. For recreational tilefish: 24 hours after end of trip.	Electronic report, telephone, or other means like catch cards.
Proposed	?	Prior to offload of catch, within 30 minutes of completion of the trip, or each trip daily.	No proposed changes.	Electronic report 24 hours after end of trip.

2. Trip notification

This action would require federally permitted charter/headboat vessels to provide a notification to NMFS declaring the intent to initiate a for-hire or fishing trip, return from a for-hire or fishing trip, or both. This action would improve estimates of effort by providing a validation process that is not in place with the current MRIP survey (for charter vessels) or Southeast Regional Headboat Survey. This action would also alert law enforcement officers in advance of a trip, thus improving their ability to address non-reporting or late reporting.





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Current requirement:

There are currently no trip notification requirements for federally permitted charter/headboat vessels participating in the snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagics, or dolphin wahoo fisheries

Possible changes:

Require trip notification for federally permitted charter/headboat vessels engaging in activities that involve paying passengers (e.g., for-hire fishing, sunset cruises, eco-tourism)

Require trip notification for federally permitted charter/headboat vessels engaging in any type of for-hire or fishing activity (e.g., bait fishing, commercial fishing, private recreational fishing) or anytime the vessel leaves the dock.

3. Landing locations

Establishing approved landing locations for offload support enforcement and monitoring for compliance with reporting, improve sampling intercepts, and facilitate conducting a validation survey.



What is a landing location and why is this important?

- A landing location is the street address location where fish and passengers are expected to be offloaded.
- Can be public locations, private residences, or dock slip in a large marina.
- Landing locations supply law enforcement with an exact location where a for-hire trip will offload fish and passengers.
- Landing locations provide information to validate the information collected through the program.



Current requirement:

There is no requirement for federally permitted charter or headboat vessels participating in the snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagics, or dolphin wahoo fisheries to offload clients or harvested catch at pre-approved landing locations.

Possible changes:

Require that a federally permitted charter or headboat vessels fishing for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagics, or dolphin wahoo land at already approved locations or submit a landing location in advance for approval.

4. Validation survey

Validation refers to the action of checking or proving the validity or accuracy of something. In this case, a validation survey would be used to check the accuracy of the information reported. Improved accuracy is better for management and strengthens the ability of fishery managers to rely on the data being reported. Without validation, there is no way to measure how accurate the reported data are.

A validation survey, in addition to requiring that catch be reported prior to offloading, as proposed under Action 2, would allow for data obtained through SEFHIER to be used in management decisions.

There is currently no *requirement* to participate in a validation survey; that is, fishermen have the option of answering survey questions from a port agent or not. This action would make it *mandatory* for those holding federal charter/headboat permits to participate in a survey if they are approached by a port sampler.

5. Revise reporting of economic data

Reporting the charter fee, fuel usage, and fuel price for each for-hire fishing trip is already required for South Atlantic permitted charter vessels. This information can be used in several ways, including assessing the economic contribution of the for-hire fishery, economic effects of regulation changes, and the extent of economic relief needed after natural disasters.

This action may implement a sub-sampling design that would require reporting of economic information from some, but not all, South Atlantic



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permitted charter vessels. Charter vessels that would need to report economic information would change annually. Note that this action does not apply to vessels that participate in the NMFS Southeast Regional Headboat Survey as reporting of economic information is already in place for that program.

Current requirement:

Reporting the charter fee, fuel usage, and fuel price for each trip is already required for federally permitted charter vessels participating in the Snapper Grouper, Dolphin Wahoo, and Coastal Migratory Pelagics fisheries.

Possible changes:

Require reporting of economic information only if selected. Annually, a stratified random sampling design of permitted vessels will be used for selecting vessels that are required to report economic data.

6. “Did Not Fish” reports

“Did Not Fish” (DNF) reports are already a requirement for Southeast federally permitted charter and headboat vessels. They are submitted weekly and can be submitted up to 30 days in advance (e.g., when a vessel is out of the water for maintenance, etc).

A summary of existing and developing requirements for no fishing reports under the various programs is in Table 2. Currently, the Council has not specified the potential to remove or change the frequency of DNF report requirements but could do so in this amendment.



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Table 2. Summary of existing and developing did not fish reports requirements for the South Atlantic (SA), Southeast (SE) Headboat Survey, Gulf of Mexico (GOM), Greater Atlantic Region (GAR) Vessel Trip Report (VTR), and Highly Migratory Species (HMS).

	SA SEFHIER and SE Headboat Survey	GOM SEFHIER	GAR VTR	HMS
Existing	Weekly. Limit to no more than 30 days in advance	N/A	Not required	Not required
Proposed	?	Monthly	Not required	Monthly. No limit to how far in advance.

What are your thoughts? The Council wants to hear from you!

The Council wants to hear from you on ways to improve for-hire reporting in the Snapper Grouper, Dolphin Wahoo and Coastal Migratory Pelagics fisheries.

- 1) Reporting Frequency: What do you think is the appropriate timeframe for requiring submittal of a for-hire trip report?
- 2) Trip Notification: What are your thoughts on requiring a trip notification when a for-hire permitted vessel leaves the dock for a fishing trip?
 - a. When engaging in fishing activity?
 - b. When engaging in other for-hire activity (sunset cruise, dolphin watching, etc.)?
- 3) Do you have general feedback for the Council on changing for-hire reporting requirements?
 - a. Reporting frequency?
 - b. Requiring a trip notification?
 - c. Landing at approved landing locations?
 - d. Requiring participation in a validation survey if selected?
 - e. Revising reporting of economic data?
 - f. Changing Did Not Fish reports requirements?

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How Do I Comment?

Comments must be received by 5:00 PM on May 8, 2025. There are several ways that you can submit your comment to the Council including:

Written comments

Written comments may be read and submitted on Amendment 56 using the online public comment form at the following links:

[Submit Comment](#)

[Read Public Comments](#)

Comments by mail

Send comments to: John Carmichael, Executive Director, SAFMC. 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201. N. Charleston, SC 29405

Comments by fax

843-769-4520