

FINAL
SUMMARY REPORT
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Full Council I

The Council approved the agenda for the meeting and the minutes from September 2023.

Reports

Miles Dover, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, provided a brief to the Council.

Lt Cameron Box, USCG, briefed the Council on efforts to combat Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. Council members observed that combating illegal entrance of seafood into the market may be more efficient if interception occurs at the point of entry rather than in the high seas. Council members requested an update on the FOIA request that was submitted regarding the frequency of area closures due to space activities. Staff clarified the request was submitted and they will continue to monitor its progress.

The Mid-Atlantic Council and Gulf Council representatives provided reports.

Among the state's reports, the following was noted regarding requests for fishery disaster declaration for the shrimp fishery: Florida is working on a letter that is expected to be signed by all Gulf states. North Carolina is still determining whether a request will be made. In South Carolina, the South Carolina Shrimpers association is active and discussing issues with the fishery. Georgia is not requesting disaster declaration for the shrimp fishery but instead wrote a letter focusing on shrimp imports.

Reports from the Scientific and Statistical Committee and the Outreach and Communications Advisory Panel were also provided.

Dave Whaley, legislative liaison for the regional management councils, provided a presentation detailing topics relevant to the legislative process that affect the work of the Councils.

Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting

Michelle Masi, Southeast For-hire Integrated Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) program manager, presented an overview of the program. The presentation included:

- Efforts to communicate and clarify the reporting requirements for dual South Atlantic/Atlantic and Gulf permitted vessels.
- Clarification that adding or modifying the required fields (e.g., adding a field to report shark depredation) would require complying with Paperwork Reduction Act and justification for why the data are needed and how they would be used.
- A quantification of program compliance, including total logbook reports by month for 2022 and comparison of submitted logbook reports vs. Did Not Fish (DNF) reports. It was clarified that the Gulf's program did not require DNF reports since it required VMS.
- Percentage of late reports, including a comparison with the Gulf program (during the time it was active).

- Preliminary information was presented on distribution of logbook reports, spatial analysis of effort, economic data, and targeted species by season.
- Suggested next steps for improving the South Atlantic's SEFHIER program compliance.

Overall, there is poor compliance with the reporting requirements implemented through the SEFHIER program and the agency is unable to determine the accuracy of submitted data.

Council members requested a breakdown of compliance by state and requested information on the penalty for non-compliance.

MOTION: INITIATE AN ACTION TO MODIFY SEFHIER TO IMPROVE COMPLIANCE, STRENGTHEN REPORTING REQUIREMENTS, AND EXPLORE VALIDATION APPROVED BY COUNCIL

Update on the reliability of commercial discards

Following the June 2023 meeting, the Council requested that the SEFSC provide an evaluation of the commercial discard logbook with an emphasis on the reliability of annual discard estimates. This request was prompted by concerns that an increasing percentage of trips reporting no discards would affect the reliability of the logbook data over time. The SEFSC provided a general update on the status of that request and plans to continue the work in 2024.

- The percent of trips reporting no discards increased from the beginning of the logbook program and has leveled off and potentially decreased in most recent years
- The percent of trips with discards with observers ranged from 80% to 100% while logbook reports ranged from 30% to 60%.
- NOAA has a workgroup to address this issue and will present to the SSC in April 2024.