

# **FINAL SUMMARY REPORT LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE**

**Atlantic Beach, NC**

**December 5, 2016**

The Law Enforcement Committee met on December 5, 2016 in Atlantic Beach, NC. The Committee received two presentations from Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) staff on late reporting and compliance in the commercial and headboat sectors. The Committee also discussed follow-up items from the Joint Law Enforcement Advisory Panel and Law Enforcement Committee Meeting that took place in Charleston, SC in August 2016.

## **Commercial Permit Renewal and Logbook Reporting**

Dave Gloeckner, SEFSC staff, delivered a presentation on the level of late reporting among commercial dealers and commercial vessels in the South Atlantic. Commercial dealers are required to submit their electronic reports weekly. Commercial logbook data are also to be submitted within one week to the SEFSC. No fishing reports are to be submitted within one week of the end of the month when no fishing takes place. Complete reporting is a requirement for the permit to be renewed.

In 2015 & 2016, five to six dealers each year reported landings from earlier periods before their permit could be renewed. The landings reported to meet permit renewal requirements were a small fraction of total landings by those relatively few dealers. Among commercial vessels in 2014-2015, permits with “renewal reports” and “no fish renewal reports” were a small fraction of the total landings for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagics, and dolphin wahoo fisheries in the South Atlantic. However, 2014 and 2015 saw an increase in “renewal reports” in the snapper grouper fishery. There is concern that even though the percent of late reported landings is relatively small, that level of landings is potentially high. Also, more “no fishing reports” are reported at the end of the renewal period than trip reports. While logbook data are still crucial, the SEFSC uses dealer reports to track commercial ACLs. Asked what the most common reason for the SEFSC to request clarification from fishermen, SEFSC staff stated that area fished code was probably the most common but that would need to be corroborated.

## **Headboat Reporting Compliance**

Among headboats in the South Atlantic, compliance with reporting requirements is relatively high. The majority of headboats are not reporting later than 1 week. Port agent interaction with anglers was noted as a factor contributing to better compliance in submitting reports on time. While the percentage of late reports is an important metric, Committee members expressed interest in obtaining the actual level of landings associated with late reports.

## **Operator Permits**

The Committee held a brief follow-up discussion on the topic of whether Operator Permits in South Atlantic fisheries are useful for enforcement and whether any changes are warranted at this time. Operator Permits are currently required in the South Atlantic only in the Rock Shrimp and the Dolphin Wahoo fisheries. The Committee stated their intent to retain the current Operator

Permits for now and will further explore options for future use with the assistance of the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel, NOAA OLE, NOAA GC and USCG.

The Committee made no motions.