

1609 Rondo Drive,
Greenville, NC 27858

Mr. Duane Harris, Chairman
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council,
4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201
North Charleston, SC 29405

Dear Mr. Harris:

I recently submitted a grant proposal that requires extensive cooperation with a snapper grouper fisherman who has a federal snapper/grouper permit. The proposal calls for the fisherman to tag groupers during 30 one-day fishing trips. While he is more than willing to assist in this study, he is very concerned that because he is participating in a tag and release study, he will not record any landings for these 30 trips. As the potential for the implementation of a LAP program increases, he feels that the potential loss of a significant portion of his landings may negatively affect his level of participation in the LAP program.

This problem has the potential to affect many other commercial fishermen who otherwise may be willing to participate in research projects that could enhance the management of fisheries in the southeast Atlantic. Would the Council be willing to consider alternate data sets in recording the catch history for vessels participating in Cooperative Research Program projects, or the state equivalent? For example, could logbook data, supported by the scientific data collected for each trip, suffice to replace trip ticket data to develop a 'theoretical catch' for any trips on which the fishermen did not record any landings?

The success of our project, and I'm sure others in the future, may depend on the development of an approach for commercial fishers participating in a research project to show a catch history for trips during which they don't record physical landings. I hope the Council can provide a solution that will allow this and other fishermen to participate in these studies without the fear that they may be negatively impacting their future stake in the fishery.

Thank you for considering this issue,

Yours truly,

Patrick Harris, Ph.D.