

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PANEL OF THE SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE



Social and Economic Panel (SEP) Meeting Overview

October 7, 2024

Held via webinar

PURPOSE

This meeting is convened to discuss and provide input to the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council) on:

- Recent and developing Council actions and amendments,
- Improvements to the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) Program, and
- Social and Economic considerations when setting MSY for black sea bass.

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DOCUMENTS

Attachment 1. Minutes from the April 2024 meeting

Attachment 2. Recent and Developing South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Amendments

Attachment 3a. Discussion document for the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) Program Improvement Amendment

Attachment 3b. Presentation slides for the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) Program Improvement Amendment

Attachment 4. Presentation slides for Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) Considerations Based on Social and Economic Inputs

1. Introduction

1.1. Documents

- **Attachment 1.** Minutes from the April 2024 meeting

1.2. Actions

- Introductions
- Review and approve the agenda
- Approve April 2024 minutes
- Opportunity for public comment

2. Recent and Developing Council Actions

2.1. Document

- **Attachment 2.** Recent and Developing South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Amendments

2.2. Overview

Council staff will update the SEP on the status of recent and developing Council actions.

2.3. Presentation and Discussion

Christina Wiegand and John Hadley, SAFMC staff

2.4. Action

Discuss and make recommendations as appropriate. In general, this agenda item is meant to brief the SEP on potential Council actions that may be presented to the group for review later in the meeting or at a future SEP meeting.

SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The SEP appreciated the updates but had no questions.

3. Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) Program Improvements Amendment

3.1. Document

- **Attachment 3a.** Discussion document for the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) Program Improvements Amendment
- **Attachment 3b.** Presentation slides for the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) Program Improvements Amendment

3.2. Overview

At the 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. The letter included a list of recommendations to render the data collected through SEFHIER useful for management. The Council directed staff to initiate work on an amendment to address these shortcomings, including discussion of actions that can be taken in the near-term without an amendment, and consideration of actions and alternatives being explored by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. At the September 2024 the Council refined potential actions in the amendment.

3.3. Presentation

John Hadley and Christina Wiegand, SAFMC Staff

3.4. Action

Review background information and provide feedback to discussion questions at the end of the discussion document to provide guidance to the Council on initial considerations for improving for-hire reporting compliance.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND SEP RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Incentivizing reporting:** Figuratively speaking, there are several “sticks” (i.e. requirements) and not many “carrots” (i.e. incentives) being considered in this amendment. Does the SEP have any suggestions on how to better incentivize for-hire reporting compliance?
 - The SEP questioned what outreach was being made to the for-hire industry to explain the program and alleviate concerns they may have. They noted that the industry has concerns about the intent of the data gathering, and what will result from this data collection effort. They suggest engaging with the industry to identify people who are reporting to understand their motivations, and to increase transparency on why data is collected and how it will be used.

- The SEP suggested that rather than simply labelling this as “non-compliance” that instead efforts be invested in identifying the specific barriers in order to identify relevant strategies to increase compliance (Ask “why not?”).
- The SEP urges transparency in the process and outreach efforts to lessen industry concerns about data usage (particularly that the IRS does not have access to Fisheries Science Center data and vice versa).
 - It was noted that there are for-hire economic concerns about government overreach, the potential for this information to be shared with the IRS, and the types of information being sought in these surveys. The SEP discussed the confidentiality of the data being collected, and members explained that the information was used to try to estimate net revenue on trip and complete economic effects analysis, which could be used in relief contexts.
- The SEP noted that outreach efforts should include the information that the industry needs a “baseline” economic measure to go from in the face of disasters, perhaps including that in the context of the BP oil spill, it was helpful to fishers who reported their past business expenses to identify and prove losses. Management can only take for-hire into account if revenue is captured somewhere, and they need to have revenue information for fisheries disasters declarations.
- The SEP suggested that a potential solution to issues around government mistrust could be assuaged by working with a trusted, neutral third party that is trusted by the fishers.
- The SEP questioned why compliance is higher in Gulf, and were informed of multiple potential reasons:
 - Cost of not reporting is losing permit
 - Stakeholders bought in and worked as ambassadors
 - Report prior to offload
 - Strict validation survey

2. **Changes to the economic component of the logbook:** The Gulf Council is considering an action that may implement a random sampling method rather than a census for the economic component of the for-hire reporting requirement. The range being considered by the Gulf Council is up to 10% to 33% of for-hire trips that would be sampled.

- a. What does the SEP recommend that the Council consider in regard to an action that would potentially implement a random sampling method for the economic component of the for-hire logbook?
 - The SEP discussed known sampling methods previously employed in studies on commercial and recreational fisheries.
 - One suggested methodology was to first determine the smallest sub-group of the target population. Once you determine the smallest possible group that needs sub-sampling, it will determine how large the overall representative sample need be.
 - There exists ample literature on sampling methodologies and tools for determining a representative sample of a population. However, the SEP noted that researchers are often surprised by the true sample size needed to achieve a 95% or 90% confidence interval. Determining the sample size is not often the challenge, it is generating enough valid responses to be statistically defensible.

- The SEP also noted that the NMFS has never dictated a particular minimum sample size, or sampling methodology. This is left to the researcher's judgement.
 - It was also noted that sub-sampling does not occur within the For-Hire sector with respect to their permits and those fisheries they operate in.
 - Another point made was that NMFS utilizes sampling of both inactive and active in the Coastal Logbook Program to better determine how vessel owners are utilizing their available capital.
 - Council staff noted that their goal is to produce robust sample sizes, while trying to minimize the level of regulatory burden.

- b. If a random sampling method were considered to gather economic information on the for-hire logbook, does the SEP have recommendation for the range of trips that should be sampled (i.e. up to a certain percentage of total trips that would be sampled)?
 - The SEP did not recommend any set percentage of trips that would need to be sampled. Rather, the SEP recommended following accepted sampling methodologies to determine the percentage needed that would yield the desired confidence intervals.
 - The SEP recommends that standard survey sample approaches be followed. For example, consider the smallest possible subgroup (e.g., states) and shoot for a 5% margin of error for each of these (n=384) and scale up. The SEP/SAFMC might be surprised at how large this sample would be.
 - The SEP recommends attempting to generate an accuracy similar to the logbook program. The SAFMC could use lessons from the NMFS' approach to gathering economic information from the commercial sector. For example: completion of one survey per year (and being exempt the following year), a target of 20% coverage, questions about a typical trip instead of specific trips to capture variable costs and an annual survey to capture fixed costs.
 - The SEP recommends that active and inactive vessels are sampled separately, similar to the logbook program.

- c. Please discuss some of the strengths and weaknesses of a census vs sampling methodology to gather social and economic data.
 - i. What are the potential tradeoffs if the economic component of the for-hire logbook switched from a census to random sampling methodology?
 - 1. Reporting burden?
 - 2. Administrative burden?
 - 3. Application of the results in analyses?
 - ii. Does the SEP feel there are net benefits to one method over the other in the context of the economic component of the for-hire logbook?
 - The SEP noted that randomization will reduce the overall reporting burden, however this can incentivize non-reporting due to infrequent contact.
 - Sampling might pose greater administrative burden overall due to follow-ups and reminders that are frequently employed with sample surveys.

- The Coastal Logbook program's sampling might shed some light on whether sampling affects the census reporting aspect of the program.
 - The SEP concluded that a census is more appropriate, if not necessary, for landings. Census data on landings would provide more useful information for management purposes.
 - The SEP concluded that sampling practices are more appropriate for economic data collections.
 - The SEP noted that while census data will provide far better data, there is a need for additional compliance consequences in order to facilitate responses.
3. **Use of logbook information:** As noted, the NMFS has stated that the existing logbook information cannot be used in any sort of management sense due to low compliance (a 37.4% compliance rate in 2023) and lack of validation.
- a. Does the SEP have any recommendations for a realistic target compliance rate (i.e. less than 100%) that would need to be reached before log-book data can be used in management?
 - i. Describe some of the uses in relation to various compliance rate. Would there need to be a different minimum compliance rate for different uses of the data. For example, would you need a different minimum compliance rate for use of summary economic statistics vs tracking ACLs?
 - The SEP responses to this question noted that any compliance rate can be valid if it can be determined that the sample is representative, which can be determined by doing “non-response checks” and identifying if the responses received are markedly different than these checks. A validation methodology needs to be selected in order to determine what rates could be sufficient.
 - They noted that response rates are perhaps less important than the accuracy of the data being reported, and whether or not truthful information is being submitted (vs. simply submitting anything in a report just to be able to renew a license). It was proposed that perhaps observers on vessels could help with this issue.
 - The SEP noted that logbooks and dealer reports (both census level) are used for regulatory analysis and people seem to trust the commercial landings data far more than the data that is sampled from recreational fleets. If the Council does not make landings mandatory for all, then we should expect more arguments in the future.
4. **Importance of consistency in reporting requirements:** As noted, the Gulf Council and HMS are currently developing their own electronic for-hire reporting programs. Additionally, there are long-standing for-hire reporting requirements in the Mid-Atlantic and New England regions through vessel trip reports (VTRs). Each one of these programs has varying reporting requirements.

Based on 2020 permit information, there were 2,458 vessels with a South Atlantic Snapper

Grouper, Coastal Migratory Pelagic, or Dolphin Wahoo for-hire permit. 343 of the vessels (or 14%) indicated a home port in the Gulf of Mexico region, 294 of the vessels (or 12%) had a home port in the Mid-Atlantic or New England regions. An unknown, but likely notable number of vessels also have for-hire HMS permits.

- a. Does the SEP have any comments or recommendations for the Council to consider about the importance of consistency across for-hire reporting requirements?
 - The SEP suggests starting with similarities in the Gulf and South Atlantic, then looking to the Mid-Atlantic. They noted that there is also a NOAA divide between the Mid and South Atlantic, with Woods Hole responsible for the former but Miami for the latter. The agency is working on better integration across that divide, especially as stocks have started shifting north. Blueline tilefish is an example where the differences in data collection between the two regions made management cooperation difficult, including setting the ABCs and ACLs.
 - The group noted that reporting requirements between the Northeast and the Gulf don't necessarily need to have compatible methodologies, but this is more necessary because of overlap in South Atlantic with the Gulf, and South Atlantic with the Northeast. It will likelier be easier for the South Atlantic to first seek consistency with Gulf because they have the highest overlap in South Atlantic permits.
 - The SEP agrees that having reporting requirements more in sync will be in the best interest of the councils in the future and support the development of a system that will compile all data across regions from Texas to Maine.
5. **Other items:** Are there additional items or topics that the Council may want to consider exploring that could improve compliance with the for-hire logbook or utility of log-book data?
 - The SEP suggests development of phone app log book, but stresses the need for this to be simple and quick to use, with minimal interaction needed. They urge the integration of user experience (UX) professionals to ensure that the reporting is easy to do on a phone.

4. Other Business

4.1. Document

- **Attachment 4.** Presentation slides for Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) Considerations Based on Social and Economic Inputs

4.2. Overview

Under Other Business, the SEP was asked to discuss MSY considerations for black seabass based on social and economic inputs.

4.3. Presentation

Chip Collier, SAFMC Staff

4.4. Action

Review background information and provide feedback to discussion questions to provide guidance on initial considerations for social and economic inputs when setting MSY for black seabass.

Discussion Questions and SEP Recommendations:

1. How might staff combine results from multiple surveys and sources covering similar material? (i.e. provide simplified or summarized information that still acknowledges differences that may result from varied collection methodologies).
 - a. Different survey methods, and
 - b. Different scope of survey and approaches to gathering information.
 - The SEP recommends multiple ways to approach data complication, such as:
 - Conducting a meta-analysis and identifying effect size, or using a meta-analysis technique called multitrait multimethod analysis.
 - Looking for consistent group comparisons, having more than one data source that looks at the same topic, and to make inferences based on quality of data collected in different methodologies.
 - Considering the tradeoff of catch and CPUE of the recreational fleet based on catch levels.
 - In studies on the same topic with dissimilar methods, qualitative analysis of those findings will help align the data on the necessary topics.
2. What is the most compelling way to present information, specifically to the Council and SSC, on fishermen preferences that could impact selectivity?
 - a. What social or economic factors might influence fishing behavior/preferences that could change selectivity?
 - The SEP suggests personalizing the data with case studies in the industry, or allowing the “story” of particular fishers illustrate larger issues.
3. Any additional reports or datasets that could inform preferences for Black Sea Bass, specifically, or Snapper Grouper species, generally?
 - The SEP recommends that target vs catch data be collected, as target could be a synonym for preference. They recommend looking at reported targeted species from when the council was developing an app pre COVID, and consider the difference between stated vs revealed preference, as just because the species was caught does not mean the angler had a preference for that species necessarily.

5. Report and Recommendations Review

6. Next SEP Meeting

7. Adjourn