



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southeast Regional Office
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F/SER29: AS

MAY 9 2014

Bob Mahood, Executive Director
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
4055 Faber Place Drive
Suite 201
North Charleston, SC 29405

Dear Mr. Mahood:

There is a growing need for more timely and accurate data for fisheries management and science. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is currently exploring how electronic technologies can better be used to collect data and meet growing fishery management needs. Regional implementation plans for electronic monitoring and reporting (EM/ER) are currently being developed by each NMFS region. The plans are intended to provide an operational strategy for implementing and expanding the use of EM/ER within each Council's area of jurisdiction. Draft regional plans will be developed by September 2014 with the goal of completing regional plans by the end of the year.

We are asking for Council input on the contents of the plan. Each plan will summarize the objectives of the monitoring regime, technological capabilities available for use, costs and funding options for electronic technologies, regulatory changes needed to advance use of EM/ER, and methods for evaluating implementation progress. Plans will also contain a list of fisheries suitable for EM/ER, identify challenges preventing or limiting the use of EM/ER, and potential solutions for advancing EM/ER implementation. A draft outline of the EM/ER implementation plan is enclosed.

To assist with development of the regional implementation plan I am requesting that each Council respond to the enclosed list of questions regarding EM/ER by June 30, 2014. I also request that a discussion of the EM/ER implementation plan be added to your next Council meeting agenda in order to receive additional input on the Southeast EM/ER plan as it is developed, and for you to designate a Council member and Council staff person to serve on a EM/ER regional implementation plan committee led by NMFS. NMFS is also very interested in receiving public input on the implementation plan as it is developed and would appreciate the Council's help in gathering input from constituents through public meetings, advisory panel meetings, and comment periods.

Please contact Andy Strelcheck of the Sustainable Fisheries Division at (727) 824-5374, or at Andy.Strelcheck@noaa.gov if you have any questions regarding the EM/ER regional implementation plan, and to inform him of your designees for the EM/ER implementation plan committee.

Sincerely,

for Roy E. Crabtree, Ph.D.
Regional Administrator



Draft Regional Implementation Plan Outline

- 1) Background
 - a. Current use of EM/ER in region
 - b. Pilot study results
- 2) Purpose and need for implementation plan
 - a. Why is plan being created?
 - b. How will it be used?
 - c. Limitations of current data collection systems
- 3) Regional objectives of monitoring regime
 - a. Benefits of expanding use of EM/ER
- 4) Technological capabilities
 - a. Hardware/software available
 - b. Factors most important for requiring use of EM/ER
- 5) Challenges impeding implementation of EM/ER and potential solutions
 - a. Technical/scientific
 - b. Budgetary
 - c. Regulations
 - d. Other?
- 6) Prioritized list of fisheries/sectors/vessel gear types suitable for EM/ER by region
- 7) Costs and funding for implementation of EM/ER
 - a. Estimated costs for implementing EM/ER
 - b. Infrastructure costs/needs to support EM/ER
- 8) Evaluation of implementation progress
 - a. Metrics for evaluation

Regional Implementation Plan Questions

1. What are your Council's primary objectives for increasing the use of EM/ER? What benefits do you see from expanded use of EM/ER?
2. Where do you see the greatest deficiencies or limitations with existing commercial and recreational data collection programs in your region and how can EM/ER help resolve those deficiencies?
3. Which fisheries managed by your Council are suitable for electronic reporting? (Please identify all fisheries, as well as any specific sectors [commercial, for-hire, private] and/or gear types suitable for electronic reporting)
4. Based on the list of fisheries identified in question #3, rank each fishery in priority order of most likely to least likely to need electronic reporting. What factors are most important when prioritizing electronic monitoring fishery needs?
5. Which fisheries managed by your Council are suitable for electronic monitoring (i.e., video camera systems)? (Please identify all fisheries, as well as any specific sectors [commercial, for-hire, private] and/or gear types suitable for electronic monitoring)
6. Based on the list of fisheries identified in question #4, rank each fishery in priority order of most likely to least likely to need electronic monitoring. What factors are most important when prioritizing electronic monitoring fishery needs?
7. What are the major challenges (e.g., costs, regulations, constituent opposition, infrastructure, etc.) hindering implementation of electronic monitoring and reporting in your region? How can these challenges be overcome?
8. Are there regulatory changes needed in your region that currently preclude you from implementing EM/ER? If yes, what regulatory changes are needed?
9. What factors (ease of use, costs to the government, costs to industry, accuracy, timeliness, other factors, etc.) are most important for requiring electronic technologies for monitoring or reporting?
10. Does your Council have a policy on the use of vessel monitoring systems (VMS)? Electronic camera systems? In what instances is it appropriate or not appropriate to require VMS or onboard electronic camera systems?
11. What factors should NMFS consider when evaluating EM/ER implementation progress? What does your Council view as successful implementation of EM/ER?
12. What other recommendations and input would you like to provide to NMFS for consideration in the regional implementation plan?

