

**Webinar Public Hearing Summary
Framework Action: Modifications to Charter Vessel and Headboat
Reporting Requirements
December 17, 2015**

Council/Staff

Greg Stunz
John Froeschke
Emily Muehlstein
Bernie Roy

31 Members of the public attended.

Bob Zales

The Council should not take final action on the use of VMS or electronic reporting until the many questions about the logistics of the program are answered. For example, what types of VMS would be used? What type of device could you report with? If your unit fails can you leave the dock on a scheduled trip? Commercial fishermen who are required to use VMS leave the dock on the way to make money. Charter fishermen already have their customer's payment when they leave the dock. Unit failure is much worse for charter businesses than commercial businesses because it prevents customers from taking a trip and forces captains to refund money and find a different vessel for their customers. The Government Accountability Office just finished a report on NMFS that shows that the service does not properly communicate about their data program so, fishermen don't know what the science center is going to do once the Council gives them carte blanche control of implementing a program.

Tom Adams

The for-hire sector in his area (north Florida) would vote that VMS is the least desirable system possible. If someone has a smartphone that works for reporting you'll be able to fish no matter what. He's heard of a voluntary VMS program where fishermen won't put the machines on their boats even when they're free. If you can't get it done for free on a voluntary basis then there obviously isn't much support for VMS. The SPOT tracker does the same thing as VMS for much cheaper. He doesn't even know why it's useful to collect position information. A hail-in and hail-out system is a better idea. If you put these burdens on federal captains you can't assume state charters will follow suit. This is being pushed through too fast and we don't even know what we're trying to accomplish.

Mike Miglini

People should be allowed to choose from several different devices including cellphones and a webpage so that people aren't stuck on the dock if VMS doesn't work. We should improve data reporting because federal for-hire captains have their own allocation of fish and they would like to show that they can manage their

allocation well despite the fact that there are other anglers that don't report. This would also set a good precedent and non-reporting anglers might follow suit. Requirement for reporting should be developed along with a new management plan like in Amendment 41. If the for-hire industry has better reporting they should benefit from better management as well. Even if the Council decided not to take action on this then NMFS can still move forward with data collection but reporting and management should be developed together. Reporting should be done before a vessel hits the dock. It would be better to have a system that ensures people can't mess with information and miss report.

Daryl Carpenter

The Council needs to table this or take no action on all these items. This is being pushed through way too fast. This action would give the science center the ability to implement this program in any way without input from the public. This is mostly targeted at effort validation and catch reporting. Many of the states are coming up with their own systems so electronic reporting may not be necessary. NMFS does not have the staff or infrastructure to handle the data from a program like this. The Council hasn't discussed logistics of the program and control should not be given to the Science Center. It seems like the Council is moving towards a system like what the commercial fishermen have. He won't be able to give good notice before ending a trip and law enforcement wouldn't be able to meet him when he lands. Also, he doesn't want to name a homeport because fishermen have to move marinas.

Josh Ellender

Take no action on this amendment. This is being rushed through without a real plan and giving the science center complete control is not okay. There is so much diversity in the charter fishing world ranging from a 60 ft headboats to a small center console boats all operating in different areas of the Gulf making it hard to force everyone to use the same system.

Kevin Bellington

The Council should take no action on all three actions. Additionally, there are lots of recreational anglers and it's not possible to collect data from those people. If you compare those people to the 1300 permitted for-hire vessels, the data you're collecting from this increased reporting is such a small part of the fishing pressure. Making this mandatory for just the charter boats is wasting time and effort for little reward. Even though it will be good data it's just such a small part of the fish that are harvested in the Gulf so, there is little benefit to collecting the information.

Shane Cantrell

This document isn't limited to a VMS. Dually permitted vessels should be allowed to use VMS because they already have one but, not everyone feels that way. Smartphone reporting should be an option. We're not ready for this amendment right now. You should report before landing at the dock for both charter vessels and headboats. There needs to be a variety of technology options for Action 3. The Council and NMFS needs to work together to come up with solutions. The Science

Center should not be given free reign over the logistics of the program. The fishermen should contribute to the process so they can develop a program that will work for them. Let's be sure we design a system that works for good and will fit for future management.

Mike Colby

He supports the preferred alternative for both Actions 1 and 2. The Bluefin reporting program had such low compliance because it was web-based and required the angler to go home and log catch on the computer once a trip is over. He knows that reporting after the fact doesn't work because you're not going to go home and report after trip so you may as well get it out of the way as a part of your trip. For vessel location reporting Action 3 he supports the preferred alternative. He would like the Council to discuss all the options for vessel monitoring. He is a part of the VMS electronic monitoring program to see if fishermen will use it and if it makes sense. The information coming out of that program will help to inform the Council to the feasibility of the program. There are way too many assumptions made by the fishermen about the reporting program. The Council doesn't know what the monitoring platform should be. Catch is validated from what you enter and through dockside monitoring. Effort is monitored by location and that information is best collected with a VMS because using GPS on your phone might not be valid. For-hire fishermen are not commercial fisherman and any monitoring program put on the charter industry will look much different than the commercial program because the needs of the program are different.

Modifications to Charter Vessel and Headboat Reporting Requirements

Summary of Written Comments

January 22, 2016

- The cost of electronic reporting equipment will be too much for vessel owners to bear and could put some out of business.
- Opposed to submitting reports prior to returning to the dock. Reporting while underway creates a safety issue as the distraction of the crew away from watch keeping and tending to customers is compromised. Sometimes a charter will go out and have to head back in due to bad weather or customer illness.
- Don't mind reporting data, but the added cost is a burden.
- Support the use of ELB and VMS to report landings inasmuch as it is the best way to streamline data collection for the CFH industry.
- Supports weekly reporting online but does not support requiring vessel or catch location reporting. Frequent reporting via electronic reporting devices is cost prohibitive.
- Opposed to electronic reporting. Has no knowledge on how to use any kind of technology, including email, but would be happy to submit a logbook.
- Professional for-hire fishermen are responsible and the Coast Guard already knows where they fish so they shouldn't have to hail out and hail in.
- Already participate in the phone surveys and anything more would be a burden – it's hard enough to make money as it is, adding the expense of electronic equipment would make it harder.
- Support if there is no cost to for-hire owners/operators.
- Need more information. Is there a cost? How much? Is there a monthly subscription fee? Etc. Many cannot afford these costs, particularly part-time CFH.
- Support Action 1, Alternative 2 as long as reporting requirements are only for days fishing occurred and the format is user-friendly. No to VMS.

- Support Act 1, Alternative 4; Action 2, Alternative 4; and Action 3, Alternative 2. The headboat pilot worked very well.
- VMS would drain the batteries on the smaller boats. The Federal Reef Fish Permit is a double-edged sword since they cannot fish in state waters when Federal waters are closed.
- Support Action 1, Alternative 2; Action 2, Alternative 2; and Action 3, Alternative 1. Consider adding an Action that requires the weighing of fish via fish kiosk weigh system.
- Implement trip limits on the Commercial sector. Also, red snapper should be closed to all anglers in June and July for spawning, and it should be opened weekends only April, May, September, and October.
- Six pack operators usually operate single handedly, making it a burden to submit reports while in transit to the dock, inasmuch as they are undertaking other responsibilities, like safety and tending to customers.
- Support No Action on all three actions. All three are too broad and only establishes a “blanket rule” that will be sent to a committee to be designed with no stakeholder or Council input.
- VMS/Electronic Reporting OR fish tags are the only way to collect real-time data for the for-hire fleet. Fish tags would be the easiest to implement.
- VMS will not work for Venice, LA captains, but electronic logbooks would.
- This is a huge opportunity to provide timely and accurate data while increasing accountability.
- Any modifications to reporting should be paired with Amendments 41 and 42.
- VMS is too much, too fast.
- Support Alternative 4 in actions 1 and 2, but No Action in Alternative 3 – No VMS.
- Support for weekly reporting via smartphone.
- There are enough regulations – leave the regulations alone.
- Support electronic reporting.