

**Modifications to Charter Vessel and Headboat Reporting Requirements  
Summary of Webinar Public Hearing  
September 28, 2016**

**Council/Staff**

Dr. Greg Stunz  
Myron Fischer  
Dr. John Froeschke  
Dr. Carrie Simmons  
Emily Muehlstein  
Bernadine Roy

**23 Members of the public attended**

**Sam Young – Charter Captain**

For Action 1, he supports the no action alternative. There is no template for what he will have to report and he doesn't support moving forward without that information. He would like the opportunity to weigh-in on what needs to be reported. He does not support reporting before he arrives at the dock and equates it to texting and driving. He operates without a deckhand and believes it would be a safety risk to report while operating his vessels with customers onboard. He also wants to ensure that he only has to report the days he fishes; as a part-time charter operator it would be burdensome for him to have to indicated whether or not he is fishing every day.

For Action 2, he supports the no action alternative because captains shouldn't be asked to report prior to arriving at the dock.

For Action 3, he supports the no action alternative. There is no benefit to hail in or hail out. Further, it's difficult to predict when he'll finish a trip. If the bite is on, he'll stay out much longer than anticipated.

For Action 4, he supports the no action alternative. He doesn't see the scientific benefits of location reporting and doesn't believe that NMFS has the bandwidth to handle that information.

Sam cautions the Council against making comparisons between charter and commercial fishermen. The two industries are very different and shouldn't be compared.

**Scott Hickman – Charter Captain**

For years, the charter industry has been begging the Council for better data. This document is an opportunity to collect real landings data in a sector that has overfished 18 of the last 20 seasons. He is glad that the Council is working towards better science. iSnapper, a data reporting phone app that was piloted, worked really well and the spatial data in that program was used in the most recent red snapper stock assessment. Currently, GCFI is running a project with small VMS units. He has one affixed to his 30 foot center console boat. There are 40 charter vessels in Texas that have these units

and are already data reporting. Better science will lead to more access and it's time for the charter industry to give back.

### **Tommy Williams – Dual Permitted Charter and Commercial Captain**

He already has VMS, and it is not a problem. It takes less than a minute to enter complete catch data for his commercial trips. His fees for the unit are only \$50 a month. He supports the use of VMS on charter boats (Action 4, Preferred Alternative 4) because he wants the charter industry to have better data.

## **Summary of Written Comments October 11, 2016**

### Action 1

- Support for no action.
  - The MRIP program is sufficient for charter vessels.
  - It is illegal to text and drive. Asking charter vessels to report before returning to the dock is a safety risk.
  - The industry is already over regulated.
- Support for Alternative 2.
  - Reporting is important but daily reporting or reporting before returning to the dock is too burdensome.
- Support for Preferred Alternative 4.
  - There is no reason why a charter vessel can't report.
- It will be difficult to report prior to arriving at the dock while customers are still on the boat especially if boats don't have a deckhand. Reporting after landing would be much easier.
- Daily reporting is too much to ask especially when charters have back to back fishing days.
- Reporting isn't the problem, the frequency, mechanism, and cost are the main concerns.
- Operators shouldn't be required to report on days they don't operate.

### Action 2

- Support for no action.
  - Headboats are already reporting all the data necessary.
- Support for Preferred Alternative 4.
  - In the headboat pilot program reporting worked out great as an enforcement tool and a data collection tool

### Action 3

- Support for no action.
- Support for Preferred Alternatives 2a and 2b.
- Support for Preferred Alternatives 3a and 3 b

- There is concern that landings locations would be limited and operators would have to land to be checked at an official location rather than their own private dock.

#### Action 4

- If the Council requires VMS on for-hire vessels it should also be required on private vessels because they make up a huge portion of the fishing effort.
- Support for Preferred Alternative 4:
  - For-hire boats will be prevented from fishing commercially while operating as a charter
- Adding an electronic device to a small charter is a financial burden.
- VMS systems will drain or weaken batteries.
- There is no room on a small charter boat for the required equipment.
- Preferred Alternative 4 is the most invasive of all the alternatives.
- There is no scientific reason to collect location data.
- VMS units would need to be as small and unobtrusive as possible.

#### Other Amendment Specific Comments

- There should not be more restrictions placed on for-hire vessels. The cost of permits and other restrictions are too much already.
- Private anglers do more damage and should have more restrictions than for-hire anglers.
- Fisheries managers should take on the burden of collecting data. It is burdensome and costly for small business operators.
- Data reporting programs should be voluntary.
- Charter boats are not the problem, private anglers are.
- This will only work if all vessels are in the program.
- This should have been done a long time ago to ensure better data is collected so better management decisions can be made.
- This amendment needs to be approved quickly and implemented by 2017.
- A near to real time estimate of effort, catch and discards and timely evaluation are critical to our management process.
- These data reporting changes should be implemented along with Amendments 41 and 42.
- Even with these requirements there will still be boats that operate as illegally.
- Resources should be directed toward fisheries independent sampling rather than catch data.
- The phone survey and, more importantly, the at-the-dock survey and fish measuring and counting, are going to be as good as it gets. Fishermen do not feel that they should have to deal with any additional burden to our overburdened business. The only thing that will be accomplished by this monitoring system will be bad feelings and false data.

#### Other Comments

- American families deserve red snapper. The season is too short and it's very expensive.
- Commercial fishermen have too much influence on the Council.
- Federal permit holders are not fishermen and for-hire anglers did not suffer a loss of fishing opportunities because they have access to state water charters.
- Grouper should be closed to everyone during spawning in February and March.
- Over regulation has caused red snapper to be out of natural order with too many large fish.
- Louisiana should have more red snapper days.
- Enforcement on non-federally permitted charter vessels fishing in federal waters needs to improve.