

Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program

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Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program Recreational Technical Committee

In-person

Materials on ACCSP [Calendar](https://www.accsp.org/calendar/?yr=2024&month=3&dy=&cid=mc-3d5a35dc491e7c24858a2c2a1c6047be)

March 20, 2024 from 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Webinar: <https://v.ringcentral.com/join/794665208> | Phone: (650) 419-1505; Code: 794665208

**Draft Meeting MINUTES**

Day 1 – Wednesday, March 20

**Welcome and Roll Call**

A. DiJohnson welcomed the group.

**Review and Approve Agenda**

Chair A. Giuliano moved to approve the agenda. The agenda was approved.

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**Review and Approve November 1, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

Chair A. Giuliano moved to approved the previous meeting minutes. The previous meeting minutes was approved by consent.

**Recreational Discards Project**

Chair A. Giuliano went over the objectives for the Recreational Discards Project. To use catch cards beginning in 2025 to collect information on recreational discards. Most recreational discards are happening in the private/rental mode, this is the primary focus. The project proposes a modification to the probability-based design of the APAIS to randomly selected anglers. The probability-based design of the APAIS allows for the project to look for potential biases to current APAIS data collection of released catch (discards) while also collecting discard lengths, used in stock assessments. Chair A. Giuliano noted there is an increase in the proportion of released catch for many species along the Atlantic Coast. There is also an increase in discard mortality varying on depth, and size. Currently, the only validated discard data available are from headboats.

Chair A. Giuliano went through the project’s steps toward identifying the number of assignments per pilot state, starting with a minimal number of lengths by species. The subcommittee determined this list by reviewing species with PSE’s < 50%, following up with ASMFC and state partner stock assessment scientists for assurance. The subcommittee determined to reduce the list to those that are not repeated and covered by SAFMC’s Release application, species that are caught across multiple regions, and added species of regional importance. The subcommittee determined a least 60 lengths per a sub region including North from Maine to Connecticut, Mid Region from New York to Virginia, and South region from North Carolina to Georgia.

Questions

A question was asked about Red Drum in the mid-Atlantic, and if there was enough for it warrant sampling to lower PSEs. Chair Giuliano replied there was not likely enough sample possible (>300 assignments added per year) to affect the PSE for Red Drum in the mid-Atlantic sub region.

D. Franco went over the target results and benefits of the discards project. First, the hope is that handing out catch cards before a fishing trip (as opposed to being asked after the trip) will help reduce recall and digit biases from anglers (e.g., rounding, misidentification of species, etc.). This could therefore be compared to existing data streams like the APAIS. The next result to come from this project could be mode specific length composition of released fish. Currently, headboat length data is the only standardized data used. There is not currently a method to collect mode specific length data along the coast. Other relevant information for discard mortality could be found such as depth fished. There is also an opportunity to educate anglers.

Data Delivery Plan

T. Scheffel went over the data delivery flow plan summarizing the data flow for the catch discards project.

T. Scheffel asked for feedback on the data delivery plan. It was asked if this will be a part of the regular APAIS assignment to give out the catch cards. T. Scheffel replied yes. A. DiJohnson confirmed it will not be multiple surveys it will appear as a regular but overdrawn (i.e., will not affect current data collection and/or estimates) APAIS assignment.

Approach

Morning APAIS assignments will also allow for the inclusion of a buffer period (1-2 hours) to allow for catch cards to be handed out. Currently, seven states are participating including Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and New York. In the North Atlantic, Massachusetts through Connecticut agreed to do 175 assignments. In the Mid-Atlantic, New York through Maryland agree to compete 130 assignments. In the South Atlantic, North Carolina through Georgia agreed to complete 150 assignments. The catch card data elements include site interview number, unique ID, date, targeted species, state residency, hours fished, depth fished, are fished, fishing mode, number of fished released, disposition, and fork length. The discards lengths can be used in stock assessments and can be compared to existing surveys.

Questions/ Comments

It was asked if there will be standardization for the catch card for the APAIS survey. D. Franco will follow up. M. Bucko noted in Rhode Island there is a lot of shore fishing. Shore sites being monitored can give a better distribution of what is happening. It was asked if mock interviews have been used with real anglers in order to gauge the intuitiveness of the catch cards. They have not yet been field tested. It was noted a positive of the discards project is the number of states able to participate. There was a question about recording released lengths of discard species. How to record a representative sample, and what order fish are recorded in on the catch card. Chair A. Giuliano noted they are blank spots to fill in the information. The fisheries can create multiple columns of the same species. Sub sampling has not been discussed.

Outreach and Education

D. Franco went over the outreach and education portion. A pamphlet including discard best practices, instructions for catch card and other relevant information will be included. The information and materials provided to the angler includes, measuring tape and card with QR code.

Milestone Schedule

A. DiJohnson went over the recreational technical committee important dates.

M. Bucko asked if some data comes with total lengths and some use fork lengths. Does it make more sense to use total lengths so there is no bias? Rather than use education. D. Franco noted information graphic will be on the front side to help with measuring. D. Franco replied when considering fork length and full-length measurements, they do have conversions. It was asked if all state regulations are in full length. D. Franco noted it would be helpful to print out the data elements.

Regional Updates – Gulf

G. Bray went over the issues with the recreational discards in the Gulf. There are concerns with digit bias and magnitude. The goal this year is to assess opportunities to improve accuracy in reporting methodology. A total of 3 workshops will be held in 2024, coming from available IRA funding. One workshop is to improve the recreational data for discard data. Three states in the Gulf have a for hire observer program in Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi. Currently, building a proposal and seeking more IRA funding. The 2017 workshop aimed to determine possible methods for improving quality of data. A steering committee is developing a draft term of reference and agenda.

Questions

It was asked if the workshops would cover both parts of the coast or just the Gulf. G. Bray invited partners to attend the July or August workshop. G. Bray followed up and replied the workshop is open to anyone.

**For-hire Methodology Technical Review**

G. White went over the timeline of the for-hire methodology project and the terms of reference. Survey design components must follow a formal probability sampling protocol with known inclusion probabilities at all stages and/or phases of sampling. Estimation methods appropriately weight the sample data to account for the sampling design and produce design-unbiased point estimates and variance estimates. Appropriate methods are in place to measure and/or correct for potential biases due to under-coverage, nonresponse, or response errors. Sensitivity of the accuracy of the survey to assumptions made about segments of the target population that are not covered by the survey frame is fully understood, and measures to reduce or limit that sensitivity are described. Sensitivity of the accuracy of the survey to other potential sources of non-sampling error is fully understood, and measures to reduce or limit that sensitivity are described. The sensitivity of the survey design to potential errors in implementation is documented and measures to evaluate, reduce or limit that sensitivity are described.

Did Not Fish (DNF) Reports

G. White went over the action items of Did Not Fish (DNF) reports. The benefits of DNF reports are to separate the no reporting and no fishing reporting trips. This a reporting compliance tool. Tends to encourage both positive and negative reporting behavior. The (DNF) reports must allow for active and infrequent fishers. Electronic reporting reduces time burden.

Discussion

G. White asked the group if (DNF) reports should continue as a required component, and discussed submission timing.

It was mentioned that (DNF) reports became confusing during COVID, as fishers were confused why they did receive CARES Act money when fishing. J. Lake noted negative reports were affected when NOAA removed them. For the for-hire fishery a lot of fisheries do fill out the VTRs. Knowing information such as geofences and Hailout would be useful for (DNF) reports. J. DeFilippi Simpson noted the accountability workshop showed support for (DNF) reports. It was asked how does compliance and enforcement work. G. White replied when the logbook certified there are certain rules. States that do not have certified logbooks would not be a part of the vessel frame logbook reporting. They would be part of the for-hire telephone survey for effort, and APAIS for catch reports.

Declarations (Hail-Outs)

G. White went over the action items of declarations. Having Hail-outs seem to encourage observational independence via submissions of logbooks. Electronic reporting reduces the time frame on reporting. ACCSP allows for multiple Hailouts prior to completed logbook submission.

Discussion

G. White asked for group feedback on Hailout clarified that a Hailout establishes leaving on a fishing trip. G. White noted that there are complications with the SEFSC with Hailouts and permits. There were questions if you fill out a Hailout for one trip with one permit do you have to do it again using another permit. The group would need to discuss if a declaration would need to be filled out every time. Other feedback noted they do not think declarations should be used as certification. This is a staff burden to track Hailouts. For data purposes having a data edit point to say a trip was made or not made not would be more beneficial. Other feedback suggested this field be optional. It was noted Hailouts would burdensome to track.

G. White requested reporting feedback from South Carolina. It was noted at the end of every month if a fisher did not submit a report or (DNF) report, a vessel representative is placed on a list. They then receive a letter at the end of the month stating the legal process will begin. Report is done monthly. It takes staff and law enforcement significant time to review this list. Another group member noted their state also does compliance reporting monthly similar to South Carolina. However, the people on the non-compliance list are given an amount of time to come back into compliance. Following that a fine will implemented to those still out of compliance. No court involvement, unless removing of license.

Vessel Frame

G. White went over the vessel frame action items. There were recommendations to have the Wave set at 2-month Wave periods. ACCSP determined changing the Wave once a year is enough. Potentially managed by within the MRIP Vessel Directory. G. White asked the group feedback on the changing the Wave once a year, and review of GARFO for-hire permits for 2019-2023.

D.Franco noted they like the idea of reviewing data they already have. To review the GARFO permits to review the permits they already have. One time a year sounds reasonable, looking at historical data. L. Dolinger Few followed up with D. Franco and noted it is important to look at what is needed. Suggested to add a view for supervisors, or a step that requires approvals. C. Hutt noted HMS permits are calendar year based. Open access permits. However, you can buy them anytime.

Use of APAIS as Required Estimation Component

G. White noted consultants realized logbooks happen 12 months a year, while APAIS does not except North Carolina. ACCSP discussed with MRIP within the 5-year implementation plan for Atlantic Coast. There is less sampling in March. Implementation plan samples effort. G. White went over options. The status quo is to make no changes to APAIS based on unsampled Wave effort. Option 1 is to consider APAIS when Wave 1 effort is same as Wave 2 or Wave 6. Option 2 when Wave 1 effort matches similar percent effort in North Carolina to consider APAIS. Option 3 is to consider APAIS in all sampling months.

R. Sysak noted PSE data can be used with zeros. To increase PSE events. C. Uraneck asked if they are using VTR information to review catch. G. White noted today the for-hire federal logbooks are used for effort. In combination with the for-hire telephone survey, and in combination with the dockside intercept. D. Franco noted part the for-hire methodology is the logbook data is its own data stream. Used for catch and effort. The for-hire telephone survey is APAIS data. G. White clarified for logbook vessel APAIS will still be used for estimation.

It was asked what portion of effort are you looking for in Wave 1. It was clarified less than Wave 2. It was suggested once the logbook program is implemented. To review the data that comes in and the Waves not covered by APAIS, that information would be the most valuable. G. White noted this would be helpful for the data analysis point. R. Sysak noted their state had mandatory reporting on VTRs for priority charter since 2008. They have the data, however do not use it.

Clarification of Tasks for Data Analysis

G. White went over factors to clarify data analysis. An important task is to review logbook and dockside match methods. G. White noted the match methods from 2016 are necessary for electronic data fields. MRIP consultants determined ACCSP was not clear about vessel trips will be matched with two different data streams. It was noted two key components. You can match trips with both. The other is the two streams are different, what is reporting in one does not affect the other.

A. DiJohnson asked the group if the next Recreational Technical Committee call should address the Hailout issue. It was asked if GARFO eVTR would require Hailout. G. White replied no. It was asked if the TRIP ID would be available for the sampler’s tablet. This could help with Hailout issues. G. White noted the DIA tablets do not have Wi-Fi and will not be able to receive data. It is not in the data passing connectivity flow. K. Drew asked when did we get the tablets. G. White noted tablets were released in 2019. D. Franco noted if they are using electronic logbook couldn’t creating a logbook report be used as an identifier to provide to the field interviewer. G. White replied yes, this is possible. This depends if the number needs to be transposed by the captain when interviewing anglers. Or if it is automatically available.

**ACCSP Data Warehouse & Website Updates**

A. DiJohnson went over the ACCSP website updates including the Recreational and MRIP Pages. These updates included collaboration with NOAA, MRIP, and ACCSP. A. DiJohnson went over Data Warehouse updates.

**Other Business**

APAIS: Alternates to Chatillon Scales

The group discussed revisiting weighted scales alternatives. Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries gave a presentation. This issue was lasted visited in 2020. It was discussed why a replacement scale should be explored. It was suggested to reform the 2020 Committee and discuss replacement scale options. It must be .1 pounds, and digit. Preferably Bluetooth capable.

A. DiJohnson asked the group if anyone opposed to this. No one opposed.

D. Franco noted M. Bucko’s speech to text application. A. Griffin noted they already use an electronic digital scale, the Brecknell samson scale. With the spring scale as backup. A. DiJohnson asked for any feedback on how the scales work. A. Griffin stated occasionally the scales go out. They do bring extra batteries, and spring scale as backup.

G. White noted Bluetooth does not work as well on large scale for example 200 field interviewers along the Atlantic Coast. Noted to prioritize items on implementation plan. D. Halder noted prices are going up on scales. K. Drew noted the Recreational Technical Committee should research alternatives. The group agreed to think about the Bluetooth element later.

Sampling in Shoulder Months in 2025

A. DiJohnson went over the possibility of revisiting the sampling in shoulder months in 2025. The group was concerned about negative FHTS feedback. By contacting people during off season. D. Franco noted if considering sampling in Wave 1, is to first review effort of sites. Someone noted most of their state’s vessels do not sampling till April. Someone asked if it is possible to review the vessel directory for Wave 6 or Wave 2. G. White stated the whole idea of the 2017-2022 Implementation Plan was to assess effort level data first. To see when Dockside effort would be appropriate. G. White noted there is climate change fishing in Wave 1. An adjustment of state staff time and funding for collection of data may need to occur.

Next Meeting

The next full meeting will be around November or December, 2024.

Day 2 – Thursday, March 21

March 21, 2024 from 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Webinar: <https://v.ringcentral.com/join/370814812> | Phone: (650) 419-1505; Code: 370814812

 **DRAFT MEETING MINUTES**

**Welcome and Roll Call**

The group proceeded with introductions.

**APAIS Design and Implementation**

NOAA Fisheries staff will provide an overview of APAIS design and sample sizes and allocations and discuss MFA increases to sample sizes and how to best use the increased sample, potential revisions to APAIS field procedures, discuss issues from the field to brainstorm potential solutions.

R. Kitts-Jensen presented a presentation on the APAIS design and draw considerations.

Questions/ Discussion

D. Hadler asked if there is a way of altering the cluster constrains by state. R. Kitts-Jensen replied and noted there is not a way. However, there is potential in the future to adjust car distant. It was noted cluster sites have longer drive times due to traffic during the season. D. Hadler asked if there is a way to list the number of times a site gets drawn in a month. R. Kitts-Jensen replied it depends on the flexibility of on the state. NOAA can create a list of sites. They can target an overall percentage portion. G. White noted there is not enough charter sites to distribute, and asked is there an opportunity to list ‘no heavy draw at site’ when needed. How does that information get back to the states? R. Kitts-Jensen replied it depends on how many sites are available, and the surrounding sites. Someone suggested changing site allocations. It was asked to clarify a ‘site cluster’. It was confirmed it is site pressure 3 and above. It was asked to clarify the 50,000 draw to create the schedule, was it per a state or the whole coast. It was confirmed sub state region was used.

**APAIS Modern Fish Act Sample Size and PSE Evaluations**

J. Foster from NOAA presented a presentation on the APAIS Modern Fish Act Sample Size and PSE Evaluations.

Questions/ Discussion

Discussion began on the South Atlantic sampling rare species like Title Fish and Grouper. It was asked to provide an opinion on sampling rarely selected species. It was noted it should increase precision. It was asked if this type of analysis can be used to review what point does adding more assignments not decrease PSEs. It was note from the Massachusetts perspective that they addon assignments the base is 750. They addon about 1,200 or 2,000 additional assignments. The new base is 900 assignments. It was not angler burden and site registry are important considerations. Reviewing site consistency is important to not keep returning to the same sites. It was asked if there could be a sample size increase goal of more than 30%. The key items are to review the regional implementation plan, and identifying PSE improvement as a priority.

**For-Hire Survey Discussion**

NOAA discussed the summary of certification for FHTS. Will implement new design after plan is approved. Transition will begin. NOAA presented transition plan considerations.

Discussion

Someone asked what is the start process for integrating this dataset. G. White noted the way ACCSP designed the program model any state can get adapted to the program. If approved the eligible data would be certified for all mandatory recreational for-hire logbook programs. Concern was noted for option one: to develop and implement transition plan for revised FHTS only. Members noted mangers, states, and programs need to be on aboard with the implementation time line.

NOAA went over the fishing effort survey and the tentative timeline.

Discussion

It was stated for 2026 it notes the earliest revised design can be implemented. This should probably be reworded to say “may”. It was noted the council is getting feedback from advocate groups on this potential change already. It was noted to continue to emphasize 2026. Conversations about this have been brought up with the regional manager of NOAA. Someone asked about the APAIS site register update. The sites retired in the pass will be retired in the new update. NOAA replied and noted hopefully this is in the system. It will not change the site draw. C. Uraneck asked if how often does the not sampled category need to be checked off. Concerns of sites being unretired in sample season. NOAA replied and noted with this process retired sites are placed in the queue. Once a year site should be assessed. S. Cvach asked about seasonally fresh and seasonal brackish water sites. Would this be good to use on a monthly basis or more. NOAA replied and noted the pressures are by month and various intervals. It was asked if this would be beneficial for a site that is difficult to collect interviews. It was asked for the OST administered surveys if there is a change to the questions can this be done regionally. It was noted in North Carolina there is a state-based survey. The response levels can be tailored to the different states.

Lunch

**MRIP Survey and Data Standards Review**

NOAA went over the recommendations by MRIP and partners. The timeline and outcomes from the Committee on National Statistics were reviewed.

**Data Quality Assessment and Action Plan**

Confidentiality was the only not useful metric. NOAA went over the goals of the data quality assessment. The goals were determined to be accuracy and creditability. NOAA went over the data quality action plan. NOAA went over a review of the standard estimated review process.

**Estimate Review Framework Discussion**

NOAA presented the estimate review process. It was noted this framework is a positive development to determine outliers.

Questions/ Discussion

It was asked if there are any changes about who gets to submit a problem. NOAA replied there will not be a lot of restrictions. The general public may not be able to submit changes. Currently looking for any useful information. A member of the group suggested to setup a decision tree. A member of the group suggested outreach be done. To increase real time reporting. G. White asked what data would be collected prior to the estimation being reviewing. NOAA noted the comments from the QC process. ACCSP can reach out to get more information. NOAA stated they have internal systems to track data reviews.

The group discussed the possible MRIP estimation schedule. Any possible closure of a species, or an estimate exceeding in regulation. It was asked if a preliminary Wave was completed and the next one begins. Would the first Wave data remain the same. NOAA confirmed after the second release of the Wave. It was noted if other species were caught on a trip and the sample weight was adjusted this would have an impact. NOAA is thinking about potential in person reviews. NOAA is trying to figure out state input. G. White noted this process provides more time for feedback. G. White noted ACCSP can be cc’ed on emails from MRIP staff for awareness.

G. White noted the idea of submitting pictures with interviews request has come up many times. Field interviewers save pictures and come back to them if needed. It would then have to be integrated within the assignment and submitted. After submission AI checks can be done. This full process is somewhat challenging.

A. DiJohnson noted ACCSP has been working with Harbor Light to update the tablets. Suggested starting meetings so best practices are learned. G. White noted different states have different approaches on how to review. A member suggested to review pass Wave outliers during these meetings. The group agreed to start Wave 1, and aim for a pre-2025 Wave review session.

**Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned by consent.