



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
GREATER ATLANTIC REGIONAL FISHERIES OFFICE  
55 Great Republic Drive  
Gloucester, MA 01930

April 2, 2020

Dr. John Quinn  
Chairman  
New England Fishery Management Council  
50 Water Street  
Mill 2  
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dear Chairman Quinn,

The New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils recently submitted for review the Joint Omnibus Commercial Electronic Vessel Trip Report Framework Adjustment. This action would require all commercial vessels issued a permit for any species managed by either Council to submit vessel trip reports electronically within 48 hours of the end of each trip. This would bring all commercially permitted vessels in line with for-hire (charter/party) vessels issued a permit for Mid-Atlantic Council-managed species. At this time, vessels issued only for-hire permits for New England Council-managed species (i.e., those vessels who do not hold permits for any commercial or Mid-Atlantic Council-managed for-hire species) would not be subject to this requirement for electronic reporting, should the framework be approved and implemented. There are currently fewer than 15 for-hire vessels with permits for only New England Council-managed species. At the June 2019 meeting, the Council discussed and moved to include its for-hire vessels in the action, but after discussions with the Mid-Atlantic Council, the action moved forward as commercial only.

Based on our review of the available information, and to minimize confusion and increase compliance, I recommend using our authority under section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to extend this requirement to for-hire vessels issued permits for New England Council-managed species through the forthcoming Commercial eVTR rulemaking. Maintaining a paper-based VTR system for just a handful of vessels would be inefficient and an unnecessary administrative burden. As you know, outreach and training on the electronic reporting requirement are paramount to the success of this action. Eliminating exceptions to the requirements will improve those outreach efforts and streamline the outreach materials, rulemaking, and regulatory text. We will reach out specifically to these for-hire vessels with permits for only New England Council-managed species and look forward to further discussing this issue at the upcoming April New England Council meeting.

If you have any concerns or questions, please contact Moira Kelly (Moira.Kelly@noaa.gov, 978.281.9218).

Sincerely,

Michael Pentony  
Regional Administrator

