



Commercial Electronic Vessel Trip Report (eVTR) Omnibus Framework

Fishery Management Action Team (FMAT)

Webinar Meeting Summary

March 19, 2019

FMAT Members Present: Karson Coutre (Council Staff), Moira Kelly (GARFO), Jay Hermsen (GARFO), Jen Anderson (GARFO), Josh Moser (NEFSC), Sam Ascii (NEFMC)

The FMAT received a draft Action Plan in advance of the meeting and MAFMC staff gave a brief presentation of the Framework initiation, timeline, and draft alternatives. The FMAT provided feedback on the presented information and discussed framework development.

The following comments and recommendations were made by the eVTR FMAT:

Analyses

- The ocean quahog and surf clam fleet will not be captured by summaries of submitted VTRs and need to be included in the analysis of affected users.
- The commercial eVTRs currently being submitted and what platform they are using should be summarized. Commercial VTRs submitted electronically by fishery, permit type, state, reporting application used, etc., should be explored to understand where eVTR is already occurring.
- Include a summary of reporting after one year of implementation of eVTR with for-hire sector including favored means of submission.

Alternatives

- There was concern by an FMAT member that the alternatives are currently all or nothing. An alternative considering phasing eVTR requirements in by fishery could help software providers and managers support the influx. There will likely be a bottleneck right before the deadline and it will be challenging to get everyone transitioned.
- In response, there was further discussion regarding the large degree of overlap between fisheries because fishermen often have multiple permits so affected users by fishery is hard to define. There may be other creative ways to phase in users during implementation such as during permit renewal that would not need to be addressed as an alternative.

Outreach and communication

- When discussing reporting requirements, it is helpful to remind everyone that multiple permit holders are held to the most stringent reporting requirements.
- Multiple FMAT members agreed that it would be beneficial to present to the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) after the April Council meeting to provide an update on action details and timeline. Due to the large number of affected

users in New England, there should be communication with NEFMC at each stage of the process. If there aren't many New England participants in the upcoming AP meeting, more opportunities for comment should occur before final action is taken. The NEFMC June meeting is the week after the MAFMC June meeting so the only opportunity for providing updates at a NEFMC meeting is in April.

- There is concern that the NEFSC does not have the resources to support broad deployment of FLDRS.
- It will be crucial to engage with affected users to emphasize that there doesn't need to be a timeline for an individual fisherman, they can start using eVTR now, which can help decrease a bottleneck.
- It is important to give people time to come into compliance, plan for trainings and workshops at ports throughout the affected range while also engaging with port agents and communications teams throughout framework action timeline.

Other comments

- There is concern that the commercial fleet generally uses windows-based computers and may not want to use phone applications when choosing from available reporting applications.
- Clarity needs to be provided on whether fishermen can fill out paper VTRs at sea and enter the information into an approved electronic application upon returning to port. What are the considerations for the required records when at sea? During the for-hire action, managers were not able to fully describe the downstream implications of eVTR and record keeping requirements. For example, if you don't leave your tablets or phones containing VTR records on the boat, are you out of compliance?
- The FMAT should meet in May 2019 to discuss the April Council meeting outcomes and implications with the Office of Law Enforcement (OLE). The OLE should be invited to the May FMAT meeting in order to discuss compliance issues before the Council takes final action.

After the FMAT meeting, one member provided further comments via email. Another member asked a clarification question. These comments were not discussed by the full FMAT but are summarized below:

- There is concern over the collective ability of partner organizations managing eVTR data to provide required support to industry and it would be helpful to determine if these systems have the resources needed to support full commercial eVTR or if a phased approach should be considered to ensure supportability.
- There should be examination of ways to encourage voluntary participation as the mandate will lead to foreseeable bottlenecks for industry, software providers and NMFS.
- One FMAT member asked for clarification on whether this action would apply to permits under the FMPs that are jointly managed by MAFMC and NEFMC (i.e. monkfish, and dogfish). GARFO staff responded that the general rule has been that the lead-Council's plans are covered, but not the others, so dogfish would be included, and monkfish would not.



Commercial Electronic Vessel Trip Report (eVTR) Omnibus Framework Combined Advisory Panel Meeting Summary

March 25, 2019

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) Advisory Panels (AP) for species requiring commercial permits met via webinar March 25, 2019 to review and comment on the upcoming Commercial eVTR Omnibus Framework. These APs include Spiny Dogfish (DF), Tilefish (TF), Mackerel, Squid, Butterfish (MSB), Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass (SFSBSB), Bluefish (BF), and Surfclam and Ocean Quahog (SCOQ). The Council is considering requiring commercial vessels with federal permits for species managed by the Council to submit their VTRs electronically. The Council will consider feedback provided by the APs at its April 2019 meeting.

Advisory Panel members present: Gerry O'Neill (MSB), Bonnie Brady (DF, SFSBSB), Greg DiDomenico (MSB), Jeff Kaelin (MSB), Emerson Hasbrouck, Jr. (MSB), Michael Plaia (SFSBSB), Katie Almeida (SFSBSB), Dr. Michael Ferrigno (SCOQ), Meghan Lapp (MSB), Howard King (SFSBSB), Skip Feller (SFSBSB, TF), Peter Himchak (SCOQ), Scott Curatolo-Wagemann (DF), Fred Akers (TF), Chris Spies (SFSBSB), Carl Benson (SFSBSB)

Others present: Karson Coutre (Council Staff), Kiley Dancy (Council Staff), Matt Seeley (Council Staff), Eric Reid (Council Member), Peter Hughes (Council Member), Barry Clifford (GARFO), Jay Hermsen (GARFO), John Hoey (NEFSC), Greg Power (GARFO), Torey Adler (GARFO), Steven Ellis (GARFO), Libby Etrie (NEFMC Member), Carrie Kennedy (MD DNR), Tara McClintock (Cornell), Zack Greenberg (Pew), Heidi Henninger (Atlantic Offshore Lobstermen's Association), "Drew", "GJW"

Note: Advisor comments described below are not necessarily consensus or majority statements.

Enforcement

- Multiple advisors and one Council member voiced concern over how technical failures would be handled. If software crashes will there be some sort of waiver or will a backup paper VTR be allowed until an eVTR can be submitted?
- A NEFMC member wanted more clarity on reporting timing and what exactly is changing including whether VTRs still need to be filled out before hitting the dock.

Affected users and initial alternatives

- Nearly all advisors who provided input as well as several other attendees present felt that the timeline discussed is too ambitious and that the commercial fleet will not be able to

meet it without significant issues. One advisor stated that the implications of this action have not been considered thoroughly enough to move forward. Another advisor stated it was too early in the development to support either alternative.

- One advisor recommended that this action consider small boat fisheries exemptions because it may be too hard to fill out VTRs electronically on a device before hitting the dock.
- Another advisor did not support exemptions and supports status quo until there are more programmatic improvements with FLDRS since it has been full of fits and starts. He would also support phasing in eVTR fishery by fishery. One advisor stated he can't support mandated eVTR now; he uses FLDRs through the study fleet but is worried about falling out of compliance so also submits paper VTRs. An NEFSC staff member stated that this is an ambitious timeline, but they will work together to respond to the Council action.
- One advisor asked if this action included Highly Migratory Species (HMS) permits and wondered why not. MAFMC staff noted that permit holders are still held to their strictest reporting requirements so if someone had an HMS permit and a commercial MAFMC managed species permit they would have to report electronically, for all species caught, should this action move forward. If they only held an HMS permit, they are not included in this action. MAFMC staff confirmed that if you have an incidental tilefish permit and an HMS permit that allows you to sell, eVTR would be required with this action.
- A Council member asked about planned outreach to the South Atlantic stakeholders and how many in that region will be affected.
- An NEFMC member stated she was participating as someone who works with the groundfish sector in New England and recommended being clear on the goals of this action and which redundancies were being reduced. She expressed concern over the large amount of New England stakeholders being affected.
- One advisor asked whether this action would allow for management benefits such as more timely closures and earlier paybacks and can those benefits be listed in the goals and objectives for the action.

eVTR Applications, data, and technical support

- Several advisors and a Council member voiced concern over whether there would be enough technical support for the various software applications, highlighting the need for in-person support at the dock. One advisor asked if port agents would be trained and brought in for ground support. GARFO staff responded that port agents currently provide some eVTR support and would be trained for future support.
- One advisor would like to see the breakdown of who is currently using the different eVTR applications in the commercial sector.
- Several advisors voiced concern over NGOs providing approved eVTR applications.
- A NEFMC member stated that NGOs are still held to the same standard as government applications and it would be helpful to include an explanation of how the data is handled by those organizations. People are using third party providers and may want to continue to use those applications. GARFO staff clarified that agencies and organizations that have

approved eVTR applications are only in possession of the data collected by their own applications.

- Three advisors recommended transitioning to eVTR by working with the NEFSC Cooperative Research group since they have worked with issues that arise using eVTR. An advisor also recommended more Wi-Fi hubs in ports as a means of decreasing the burden of electronic submission.
- One advisor asked whether there were any vessels with LaMonica Seafoods that are not currently using eCLAMS.
- One advisor noted that in the past there has been funding for the initial devices and asked if that would be a considered incentive with this action.
- A Council member wanted to know how eVTRs would feed into state data and state reporting requirements.
- An attendee who works with data management for the state of Maryland was concerned about data integration, how the information would be shared with the states and whether this would solve issues with duplicative reporting or create more issues. She also noted that the FACTs program is accessible by phone or tablet.

Note: Staff will continue to work with the FMAT to answer the questions raised by the AP and provide further clarification on potential implementation details, after receiving guidance from the Council.



Commercial eVTR Framework

FMAT Webinar Meeting Summary

May 10, 2019

FMAT Members Present: Sam Asci (NEFMC), Josh Moser (NEFSC), Jay Hermsen (GARFO), Moira Kelly (GARFO), Karson Coutre (Council Staff)

Others Present: Special Agent Todd Smith (OLE), Andy Loftus (eVTR Outreach Contractor)

The FMAT met via webinar and received an update on the discussion during the MAFMC and NEFMC April Council Meetings and subsequent framework development. Law enforcement was invited to participate in discussion of the enforcement considerations of potential regulatory changes. The FMAT provided feedback on the presented information and discussed framework development.

The following comments and recommendations were made by the eVTR FMAT

Enforcement Considerations

In day to day dockside patrol, enforcement doesn't often use the 1-year and 3-year record keeping regulations, however it is useful to see VTRs from the last few trips. There is a lot of value in the requirement that fishermen maintain records for some period of time, but we need to better understand what that looks like in an electronic age. Ultimately, enforcement would like to be cooperative with changing technology but would rather see nothing changed with the record keeping requirements. Enforcement cares more about making sure vessel operators can bring up their VTR information when asked.

The FMAT agreed that it makes sense to have a standardized form to present to enforcement so that individual officers don't have to understand each application interface. Currently, the NMFS Northeast Region eVTR technical requirements¹ for software to be approved addresses this with the following language: "When requested by authorized personnel, a vessel must present for inspection vessel trip reports from the previous twelve months. Thus, the product must have the capability to display a facsimile of the paper VTR form with a separate 'page' for each sub-trip." However, the way users download their own information and how it is stored varies by application.

¹National Marine Fisheries Service Northeast Region Electronic Vessel Trip Reporting (eVTR) Technical Requirements [chrome-extension://oemmndcbldboiebfnladdacbfdmadadm/https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/aps/evtr/doc/evtr_tech_requirements.pdf](https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/aps/evtr/doc/evtr_tech_requirements.pdf)

Enforcement is also concerned that in some instances there are discrepancies between the VTR and dealer reports, as well as other cases of potential misreporting. To remedy this, all versions of a submitted VTR should be tracked by managers. This may already be done but that will need to be investigated. One FMAT member said that tracking all submitted versions of an eVTR should be written into the framework document.

The FMAT also discussed the issue that attempts to submit an eVTR aren't documented, and an eVTR is only timestamped when a record is successfully submitted and accepted. Users in the for-hire sector have brought this up and have asked that their attempts to submit be timestamped in order to prove they tried to be compliant. Based on discussions during the for-hire action, eVTR records are retained on the device, so users wanting to login to a different device with their eVTR app would not have their past VTR records available. However, if a device goes overboard, app providers can restore their past VTRs onto a new device.

One FMAT member recommended consulting NOAA's general counsel (GC) on how GARFO is going to handle documentation and record retention in the electronic age. Their guidance would be helpful especially if electronic record keeping has already been taken up by GC in different regions or contexts.

Framework Alternatives

The FMAT discussed the difference between an alternative that has a 7-day reporting deadline versus a weekly deadline and felt this was worth clarifying. Weekly reporting can be anywhere from 3-9 days and is the current requirement for many of the Mid-Atlantic FMPs, so a weekly alternative would mean *status quo* reporting deadlines for many permit holders. This may have been the intent behind the motion that added alternatives during the MAFMC meeting in April although the wording was "7 days". Weekly electronic reporting is also the current requirement for dealers. One FMAT member noted that monthly reporting is antiquated and creates quite a data lag.

The FMAT also felt it was worth considering that the for-hire fleet wants to move to a 72-hour deadline from 48 hours because in practice, there were times that they failed to comply. One FMAT member said that 72 hours was appealing on the commercial side and that it felt attainable. In their experience, successful electronic reporting works best when an operator incorporates their reporting into an established routine.

One FMAT member wondered if we should use this action to align the for-hire reporting deadline. Another member thought that we should not muddy the waters by adding the for-hire sector to this action due to the number of affected commercial users and the potential for joint action with the New England Council. However, it makes sense to consider a reporting deadline right now that can work towards future alignment of all sectors if possible.

One FMAT member preferred weekly across dealers and commercial vessels and would argue for as much consistency as possible. Another FMAT member commented that a weekly reporting requirement is closer to the idea of switching from paper to electronic with everything else *status quo*, while still achieving some alignment in reporting.

Analyses

It would be helpful to know how many permit holders currently only have permits that require monthly reporting and the FMAT thought that this is likely a small number. This would help show the impacts of different reporting deadline changes.

For the upcoming June NEFMC Council meeting some FMAT members felt it would be worthwhile to have a breakdown of the different scenarios (joint action, no joint action, action only on dogfish plan, etc) and the number of users affected under each scenario.

Applications/Outreach

Due to public comments received at both April Council meetings, the FMAT discussed the importance of communicating that FLDRS is not available for full scale eVTR deployment during this action. Staff in charge of FLDRS have been actively referring vessels interested in eVTR to eTrips Mobile or Fish Online, as they are more user friendly. One exception to this is the Surfclam and Ocean Quahog fleet because eClams/FLDRS is the only eVTR app that accommodates their reporting requirements. During outreach it will also be important to be clear that people currently using FLDRS to submit eVTRs that are already compliant.



Combined Advisory Panel Meeting Summary

Commercial Electronic Vessel Trip Report (eVTR) Omnibus Framework

July 23, 2019

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) Advisory Panels (AP) for species requiring commercial permits met via webinar July 23, 2019 to review and comment on the upcoming Commercial eVTR Omnibus Framework. These APs include Spiny Dogfish, Tilefish, Mackerel, Squid, Butterfish, Summer Flounder, Scup, Black Sea Bass, Bluefish, and Surfclam and Ocean Quahog. The Council will consider feedback provided by the APs at its December 2019 meeting.

Attendees: Alan Bianchi (NC DMF), Barry Clifford (GARFO), Bill Duffy (GARFO), Bob Gatewood, Bonnie Brady (LIFA), Caitlin Starks (ASMFC), Carrie Kennedy (MDNR), Chris Batsavage (MAFMC), Claire Fitz-Gerald (GARFO), Dom St. Amand (NEFSC), Eric Reid (NEFMC, MAFMC), Ed Martino (ACCSP), Emerson Hasbrouck (Cornell), Geoff White (ACCSP), Hank Soule (Saving Seafood), Heidi Henninger (AOLA), Jay Hermsen (GARFO), Jeff Kaelin (Lund's Fisheries), Jennifer Couture (NEFMC), Joanne Pellegrino (GARFO), John Hoey (NEFSC), John Maniscalco (NY DEC), Josh O'Connor (GARFO), Julie Defilippi Simpson (ACCSP), June Lewis (AP member), Karen Holmes (ACCSP), Katherine Wilson (NMFS), Katie Almeida (Towne Dock), Kevin Staples (CSSF), Kiley Dancy (MAFMC Staff), Libby Etrie (NEFMC), Maggie Raymond, Matthew Heyl (NJ DFW), Meghan Lapp (Seafreeze Ltd.), Melanie Griffin (MA DMF), Michael Luisi (MAFMC), Michelle Duval, Mike Carroll, Mike Plaia, Mimi Spain (Harbor Light Software), Moira Kelly (GARFO), Anna Mercer (NEFSC), Nichola Meserve (MA DMF), Peter Hughes (MAFMC), Rich Malinowski (SERO), Robert Cericola, Scott Curatolo-Wagemann (Cornell), Sam Ascii (NEFMC), Simon Dick, Steve Lockhart (NEFSC), Wes Townsend (MAFMC), "Alexa K"

Presenters: Andrew Loftus (MAFMC Outreach Contractor), Karson Coutre (MAFMC Staff)

General eVTR questions and comments

A Council member and an advisor both stated that any approved application should accommodate different state reporting to reduce redundancies. Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) staff noted that while it is not a requirement, many states defer to the federal VTR. Additionally, GARFO is working with ACCSP to accommodate fulfilling both requirements.

One participant also asked about fees associated with the different eVTR applications. Staff referenced that eTrips mobile, Fish Online, and FLDRS are all free, while other systems have associated fees. An AP member asked whether the different applications would be able to integrate with the GARFO database. Staff and GARFO responded that all applications are required to meet

technical standards that include sending the data in a compatible format, so on the front end they use different operating systems, but on the back end they are standardized.

One participant questioned how data handling has gone since the implementation of eVTR for the MAFMC for-hire sector in March 2018. GARFO stated data handling has gone well with no noticeable drop in compliance and that the VTR data has been available in real time through the database. Additionally, the necessary tools are in place so industry can verify receipt of a submitted VTR.

One advisor asked what types of vessels are already doing eVTRs and which applications are preferred. Staff provided a summary table of eVTR use by application and by sector. Top eVTR apps are FLDRS, eTrips mobile, and Fish Online. Multiple advisors felt that more fine scale, tow-by-tow information should be collected, and this action is an opportunity to do that. They also questioned why FLDRS was not being expanded and felt it should be given more resources. The Chief of the Northeast Fishery Science Center (NEFSC) Cooperative Research Branch clarified that they will support all current FLDRS users and expand to fleets that are interested in using FLDRS as a data collection tool. She added that eVTR using FLDRS is a side benefit to those participating in cooperative research. Staff noted that this would be clarified in outreach documents moving forward.

One AP member asked if the GARFO licensed operator or the permit holder is responsible for VTR submission. GARFO clarified that the regulations state either the owners or operators can submit VTRs but ultimately the permit holder is responsible.

A Council Member noted that under eVTR, there still must be a transfer of the VTR number from the vessel to the dealer. GARFO staff added that a primary objective of the Fishery Dependent Data Initiative (FDDI) is to have these numbers more integrated in the future so that information will be transferred systematically, and the operator will no longer have to do it.

An advisor asked what the timeline is for FDDI and questioned if that is relevant to the timing of this action. GARFO staff noted that there are multiple steps to FDDI and the FDDI partners are working on a roadmap with timelines to be sent out in the next few months.

Multiple participants felt that the eVTR editing process needs to be streamlined and made more user friendly.

One advisor wanted a better understanding of what the eVTR benefits are for the government.

One advisor said that GARFO needs to do their due diligence with training because this is a big undertaking. Another added that all the major ports need to be covered for workshops.

One participant noted that their company was developing software to combine a hail out system that is already developed with an eVTR component in the same program and hope to have it completed in 2020.

Alternatives Discussion

Advisors discussed the current reporting deadlines for quota managed species and sector reporting. They then questioned what an effective eVTR reporting timeline looks like for managers. Another

advisor questioned whether a specific submission deadline may be too frequent for GARFO to handle. GARFO clarified that eVTRs are available in a matter of minutes after submission and are not limited by volume, so the Council does not need to consider this when choosing a reporting deadline. One Council Member asked which report (dealer or VTR) drives the quota monitoring reports. GARFO clarified that dealer data is used for the landings in pounds while VTR data is used for area and effort information.

One advisor and one person experienced with vessels participating in cooperative research felt that the deadline for submission could be 48 hours, and one person added that this would create consistency with the for-hire sector's eVTR deadline.

One participant noted that his vessels are paid after they turn in a VTR, so the office will need some way of verifying they have been submitted electronically. Thus, the operators will likely submit within 24 hours of ending a trip.

One New England Fishery Management Council member noted that in the groundfish fishery, sectors may need a reporting deadline of 24 hours for quota monitoring.

One advisor felt that a reporting deadline of 72 hours after a trip is complete is plenty of time.



Commercial eVTR Framework Joint Action

FMAT Webinar Meeting Summary

October 25, 2019

FMAT Members Present: Sam Asci (NEFMC), Josh Moser (NEFSC), Jay Hermsen (GARFO), Moira Kelly (GARFO), Karson Coutre (Council Staff)

Others Present: Barry Clifford (GARFO), Andy Loftus (eVTR Outreach Contractor)

The FMAT met via webinar to discuss and provide feedback on analyses to inform the Councils' final action decisions and to be included in the framework document. The FMAT also discussed the considerations of the different alternatives and which were preferred. Lastly, the FMAT received an update on the next steps before final action.

The following comments and recommendations were made by the eVTR FMAT

Analyses

NEFMC staff provided feedback from presenting an eVTR action update to the NEFMC Advisory Panels and Committees ahead of their September council meeting. One AP member was interested in seeing a table documenting which eVTR applications are currently being used by gear type within the commercial sector. This led to discussion of how breaking down eVTR application use by gear type can be useful but can also be misleading if used to inform which applications would be used in the future. For example, some of the first eVTR adopters in the commercial fleet were participants in study fleet through the NEFSC and those participants were using the program FLDRS to report finer scale scientific information as well as fulfill their VTR requirements. The NEFSC cooperative research branch has indicated that FLDRS will remain a tool for participants in cooperative research through study fleet but will not be expanded for large scale use as stand-alone eVTR application. Another consideration when presenting application use by sector is that NOAA's Fish Online mobile application was developed the most recently, while eTrips mobile has been around for several years, so there will be different app use patterns that require context. Historical numbers may not be a helpful guide to dictate what operators use moving forward.

The FMAT also discussed the best way to describe the different commercial permit holders throughout the region in the 'affected users' section of the framework document. The description of overlap between the NEFMC and MAFMC permit holders can be briefly discussed however FMAT members felt that because it is a joint action document, the numbers can be discussed as a regional summary.

The FMAT discussed the economic section of the document and a request from an advisor for a more robust description of the economic benefits to GARFO. The FMAT discussed that the potential benefits of moving to eVTR are about data quality, efficiency, and a key step towards future modernization rather than cost savings. Some of the cost savings to GARFO would be in contract staff time, data entry, postage, printing and FTE time. However, there are costs up front during application development and other IT resources. It was also noted that economic reasons can't be the only reason to take management action according to National Standard 5. Multiple members of the FMAT felt the benefits and costs to the agency could be described qualitatively in the document and one member did not want to include numbers that may not be accurate depending on the temporal scale pre and post-implementation. In the for-hire eVTR action document, the focus was more on the economic benefit/cost to the user.

Alternatives

The FMAT discussed the 5 sub-alternatives under the eVTR alternative that propose different reporting deadlines. The FMAT members generally felt that it makes sense to change the reporting deadlines in order to unify them across commercial permits in the region. Currently, some permits require monthly and some require weekly VTR submission, however permit-holders are held to their strictest reporting requirement.

One FMAT member suggested that weekly reporting was the most justifiable deadline because it aligns with dealer reporting and is the current deadline for many permit holders. This alternative has the benefit of aligning reporting across commercial permit holders while still being the closest to status quo. They also felt it was important to think about accessibility to the internet and noted that there are ports where there is no internet and no cell service. Another FMAT member added that in terms of quota monitoring, weekly reporting has been successful. The reasoning to select a shorter reporting deadline would be reducing recall bias or reducing error.

The FMAT discussed the definition of weekly reporting. Weekly reporting for dealers is Sunday through Saturday and they must report within 3 days of the end of the reporting week. Weekly reporting for commercial VTRs also has a reporting week from Sunday through Saturday. If a trip starts in one week and offloads in the next, then that trip must be reported during the week that the catch was offloaded. Paper vessel trip reports must be postmarked or received by the Tuesday following the reporting week. Alternatively, operators may instead submit vessel trip reports electronically using approved electronic vessel trip report software.

One FMAT member pointed out that having the same deadline for those that participate in both the commercial and for hire sector allows for simplicity in reporting, compliance, and enforcement. Another member noted that having equity in the reporting deadline for both sectors should also be considered, and the for-hire sector deadline is 48 hours. They also wondered whether it was worth considering what deadline might be needed to have in place to coincide with future reporting improvements. One member added that there is a future where more frequent reporting could eliminate the need for other requirements (consolidating reporting) but that is theoretical at this point. Another FMAT member felt that if there was need for more frequent reporting under one commercial permit, it should not necessarily dictate the deadline requirement throughout the region.

While discussing reporting deadlines, the FMAT looked at frequency distributions for submission time in 2018 for vessels submitting electronically in both the for-hire sector and commercial sector. The FMAT discussed that for both sectors the majority of the eVTR submissions occurred the same day that the trip ended. In 2018 (April-December), 82% of the eVTRs from the for-hire sector were submitted within the 48-hour deadline after the trip ended, showing high compliance. The FMAT felt that these distributions could help inform alternative selection and should be included in the information distributed and presented to the Councils.

One FMAT member asked whether changing the MAFMC for-hire eVTR deadline in this action/document was a possibility if the Councils were to choose a reporting deadline other than 48 hours. Other FMAT members responded that it would have to be added to the action by the Councils and there has been desire from leadership to keep this action specific to the MAFMC and NEFMC commercial sector.

The FMAT discussed the different considerations between reporting in the commercial and for hire sectors. There is no dealer reporting to validate or serve as an additional data stream in the for-hire sector so reducing recall bias may be more of a concern. One additional step for a commercial trip compared with a for-hire trip is filling out the dealer name and number before submission. An FMAT member noted that the vast majority of the time the boat already knows which dealer they will be going to, so this information is not a large concern when considering submission deadlines. They also clarified that if a vessel is selling to a trucking company that is going to sell to multiple dealers, it is that trucking company's responsibility to submit who they sell to, while the vessel would list that trucking company as the dealer.



Public Meeting Summary

Commercial eVTR Omnibus Framework Action: Review of Common Reporting Applications for Electronic Vessel Trip Reports and How to Get Started

November 20, 2019

5:30 pm -7:30 pm

Webinar Participants

Presenters: Karson Coutre (MAFMC Staff), Andy Loftus (MAFMC Outreach Contractor), Fran Karp (Harbor Light Software), Jay Hermsen (GARFO)

Attendees: Barry Clifford (GARFO), Bonnie Brady (LIFA), Christopher McGuire, CJ Schlick, David Leveille, Doug Potts, Gerry O'Neill, Greg DiDomenico (GSSA), Greg Power (GARFO), Gretchen Hanshew (NMFS), Hank Soule, Joanne Pellegrino (GARFO), Julie Simpson (ACCSP), K. Gross, Karen Holmes (ACCSP), Kaycee Coleman (US FWS), Lange Solberg, Laura Versaggi (ACCSP), Laurie Nolan (MAFMC), Matt Heyl (NJ DFW), O'Connor, Pam Thames (GARFO), Sonny Gwin (MAFMC), Stephanie Iverson (VMRC), Walter Anoushian (GARFO), James Fletcher (AP Member), Sam Asci (NEFMC Staff), "Peter", "Bryan", "Mary", "PT", "J"

Summary

The purpose of this webinar was to summarize the proposed action, provide information on how commercial fishing operators can get started using eVTRs, and provide demonstrations for two commonly used eVTR applications. MAFMC staff provided a brief overview of the proposed action and the MAFMC eVTR outreach coordinator provided information on frequently asked questions and how to get started with eVTR. Harbor Light Software staff demonstrated ACCSP's eTrips mobile, and GARFO staff demonstrated NOAA's Fish Online. All presenters and demonstrators answered questions regarding the software and the eVTR action in general.

Questions from the Public and Corresponding Answers

1. Will people be allowed to complete a paper form at sea and fill out the electronic form to submit on their computer at home?
No. A VTR number is needed to provide to a dealer when you sell your catch and this number is generated when the permit holder begins an eVTR trip. Therefore, an electronic device is necessary to begin the trip and have the VTR number when they return to port to sell their catch. Over time, the paper forms will be completely phased out.

2. What if a captain changes the dealer who they were originally intending to sell their catch to after they return to port? How do you change that in the system?

Federal regulations require that only the parts of the VTR that can be completed before returning to port be filled out and completed at the time that the vessel enters port. The dealer information is not available until a sale is made and therefore is not required to be filled out until that sale happens. Since eVTRs will not be required to be *submitted* until sometime after entering port (deadline to be determined during final action) this should provide captains time to enter the correct dealer information before submitting their report. Should changes or corrections need to be made to an already submitted, eVTR, the user may simply retrieve the eVTR on their mobile device, make the necessary changes, and resubmit. Alternatively, any previously submitted eVTR, regardless of the software or application used to originally submit, can be retrieved, amended, and resubmitted using GARFO's Fish Online web portal.

3. If people don't have a device already, does this mean that they will need to buy a smartphone or tablet?

Yes. An economic analysis of cost will be included in the final action. At the low-cost end, wi-fi capable tablets can be purchased for \$150 or less and can connect to any public or private wi-fi system to submit the reports within the reporting timeframe that is chosen and there would be no recurring monthly cost. On the high end, captains who choose to purchase a new smartphone and a monthly cellular data plan would incur higher costs for this option.

4. Will NOAA be providing vouchers or compensation to captains to purchase equipment? At present, there are no plans for any compensation or a cost reimbursement plan.

5. What about captains who can't read or write? How do they learn the system?

Captains who cannot read or write will likely need similar assistance to what they are currently obtaining to fill out paper VTR reports. The Council and NOAA will be hosting a series of workshops to provide hands-on training, and each of the software vendors has videos and documents to teach captains how to use their specific system. Additionally, GARFO's regionally based Port Agents are available to offer support.

6. Can you change an eVTR after it has been submitted?

Yes. Each system provides a means to edit an electronic VTR after it has been submitted and to submit/certify a new version.

7. Can owners manage eVTR reports for multiple captains in their fleet?

Yes, there is an option when using GARFO Fish Online web portal for an owner/permit holder to manage the all the submitted VTRs/eVTRs through a web-based portal.

Enhancements to the Fish Online web portal are planned in order to streamline the functionality and convenience of the web portal for fleet owners and sector managers.

8. Will participants in FLDRS need to change to a new system?

No. FLDRS is, first and foremost, a system for participating captains to contribute detailed scientific data for fisheries management and research purposes. Secondly, it provides the capability to submit VTRs electronically directly to GARFO. So, participants in the Northeast Study Fleet who are already using FLDRS to submit their VTRs will continue to do so. FLDRS will not be offered to new users who are not participating in Study Fleet or research programs.

9. Why don't recreational anglers need to report electronically?

Since March of 2018, for-hire operators holding federal permits to fish for species managed by the Mid-Atlantic Council have been required to use these same electronic systems to submit their VTRs. Additionally, there is a small-scale effort to collect data electronically from some recreational anglers using these systems beginning in mid-2020.

10. What are the protocols for systems to get recertified? (note: this question only pertains to software developers, not captains)

Technical requirements can be found at

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/webdam/download/99074552>

11. Can eVTRs be printed or emailed?

If a user logs in to Fish Online or eTrips on the web, the eVTR can be printed. The eVTR can be also saved as a pdf (portable document format) and emailed.

12. Does this action apply to Highly Migratory Species (HMS) permits?

This eVTR action only applies to commercial permits for NEFMC and MAFMC managed species. If someone who has an HMS permit also holds a MAFMC or NEFMC managed species permit, this action applies to them and are therefore required to submit an eVTR for all trips regardless of waters fished or targeted species. If they only have an HMS permit, this action does not apply to them.

13. How will this action translate into more fish?

This action is focused on changing from paper to electronic reporting with the goal of improving data quality, reducing errors, and increasing efficiency for fishermen and managers. More accurate data allows for better science and management, however it may not translate directly to more fish. Transitioning to eVTR is essential in working towards the longer-term goal of one-stop shop reporting and data modernization.

14. In both eTrips/Mobile2 and FishOnline, there is a reference to 'effort'. What is meant by 'effort' in the reporting applications?

Effort in the eVTR reporting applications refers the section of a report that describes what, where, how much, and for how long fishing activity took place. On the paper form, these are questions 7 through 16, which include fishing gear, mesh/ring size, gear quantity, gear size, fishing depth (fathoms), number of hauls, chart area, latitude, longitude, and tow/soak time. If the vessel changes gear, mesh or ring size, and/or chart area during a trip, a new 'effort' must be recorded in the app, similar to the way a vessel operator would need to complete an additional VTR page when submitting a VTR on paper.

Other Comments

One participant commented that people will not have time to attend workshops and this is asking too much for those still using flip phones. Two participants commented that the Council or NMFS should pay for the electronic devices or there should be a voucher system for those who cannot afford an electronic device. One participant added that the recreational sector should be required to fill out VTRs and that is where better data is needed.