Henry Feddern: My name is Henry. I'm president of the Florida Marine Life Association, a member of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council coral advisory panel and a Ph.D. marine biologist. I've been in this area since 1956 and have seen the ecology is going.

Now, I made two presentations, one last week and this one now just recently with new information. Now, in the first presentation, I talked about all three alternatives, all three actions. And the first action of giving it to the state is fine with us, as long as the sanctuary gives written permission that it will still allow the small amount of substrate at the base of the gorgonian that's required so that the animals are not injured. It's self-defeating if they're injured, because they were designed to be kept in aquariums, so that's very important.

Now, if they don't want to do this, then we would have to go with retaining in the South Atlantic Council's coral plan. However, with Action 3 they want to include federal, state waters with the 50,000 colonies.

Now, this presentation is, the last one is about that, and I'd like to read it. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council is considering three – I'm sorry, wrong one. Next one.

Congress, in its instruction to the councils said that, quote, the need of action is to ensure that overfishing does not occur and to allow the stocks to increase in biomass, unquote. The best scientific information indicates that gorgonian populations in the Florida Keys range in number from 8-28.8 billion colonies, and the harvest has been below 50,000 colonies per year. Using an average population estimate of 18 billion colonies, this means that less than one colony out of 360,000 colonies present have been harvested.

How does this compare with the percentage harvest of any other fishery? I can't conceive of any possible way for biological overharvesting to occur, especially due to Florida's controls on the fishery and on the demand character of the fishery.

The scientific and statistical committee ignored this scientific data and just used the current tack in federal waters and their, quote, overfishing level, unquote.

The SSC in a previous even lower determination gave the council the option of setting an overfishing level for the federal waters alone and another one of combing federal and state waters. The fact Action 3 includes Alternative 1, no action, retain the status

quo of 50,000 colony harvest in the EEZ federal waters also means that, in the absence of other fishing, the congressional mandate is satisfied and the council can legally choose this alternative.

Does the council really believe that this gorgonian population can ever be biologically harvested? In the absence of any hint of overfishing, I strongly urge each member of the council to vote for Alternative 1, no action. Do not modify the existing ACL for ____ corrals in the South Atlantic.

This fishery is not in danger. There are many mechanism already in place, at the federal and state level, that control the harvest. Why disturb a fishery that has done everything right? Thank you.

[End of Audio]