

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

COUNCIL SESSION II

**Villas by the Sea
Jekyll Island, Georgia**

March 7, 2025

Council Members

Trish Murphey, Chair
Jessica McCawley, Vice Chair
Dr. Carolyn Belcher
Amy W. Dukes
Gary Borland
Tim Griner
Judy Helmey

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Rachael Silvas
Nicholas Smillie
Suzanna Thomas
Christina Wiegand
Meg Withers

Attendees and Invited Participants

Monica Smit-Brunello
Shepherd Grimes
Sonny Gwin
Dr. John Walter

Rick DeVactor
Kathy Knowlton
Nikhil Mehta
Greyson Webb

Observers and Participants

Other observers and participants attached.

The Council Session II of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Villas by the Sea, Jekyll Island, Georgia, on Friday, March 7, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Trish Murphey.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. It's 8:30, and so I'll go ahead and call Council II to order. We're doing -- The order of reports is slightly different, and so we'll do the closed report first, then Council I, Habitat and Shrimp, Habitat, and then Mackerel Cobia, SEDAR, and Snapper Grouper, and so just a few little changes there.

I guess I will go ahead and start with the Closed Session Committee report, and so the council met in closed session on Monday, March 3, 2025, and discussed the following items: advisory panel policy and law enforcement background checks.

The council considered options for expanding law enforcement background checks for advisory panel applicants. The council currently requests law enforcement background checks for advisory panel applicants through the NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement, and that only considers federal fishery violations.

The council reviewed information available through the state marine fisheries agency law enforcement background checks and criteria used by individual states within the council's jurisdiction to establish eligibility to serve on a state advisory group. The council also reviewed the background check approach used by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. Captain Scott Pearce, our Law Enforcement AP chair, provided comments for that AP on background checks.

The council recommends requesting state law enforcement background checks for the council advisory panel applicants to identify state violations for federally-managed species. The council requested guidance from NOAA General Counsel on additional background information that may be requested of advisory panel applicants for consideration at the June 2025 meeting.

In Other Business, the council discussed representation of members from adjacent councils on committees. Representatives of the Mid-Atlantic and the New England Fishery Management Councils serve as members on some committees, but seats have not been allotted to the Gulf of Mexico Council.

The South Atlantic Council does not have representation on any committees of other councils, and so both the Mid-Atlantic and the Gulf Council are represented by liaisons to each South Atlantic Council meeting, and having additional representation on committees can be a source of confusion. Additional and valuable input on fisheries issues from adjacent councils, particularly those along the Atlantic coast, will continue to be provided through designated representation on advisory panels.

So, after discussing these issues within the context of the role of its committees, the council agreed to discontinue committee membership for representatives of the Mid-Atlantic and the New England Council on the South Atlantic Council committees. Because the New England Council does not have a liaison to the South Atlantic, the New England position on the Dolphin Wahoo Committee will be converted to a liaison position, which is non-voting, and then the council made the following recommendations for consideration during open session.

For the Shrimp Advisory Panel liaisons, we appoint Sonny Gwin from Maryland and Pat Geer from Virginia as liaisons to the Shrimp Advisory Panel. On the Snapper Grouper Recreational Permitting and Reporting Technical Advisory Panel, we'll appoint Sean Wilms from the Florida commission, Florida Wildlife Research Institute, to the advisory panel.

Then, for SEDAR 90, which is the South Atlantic red snapper appointments, we'll appoint the following persons to SEDAR 90 data workshop. This is Anna-Mai Christmas-Svajdlenka, Julie Simpson, Julie Dingle, and Paul McLaughlin, and sorry, Anna, if I messed up your name.

For committee representatives, we'll remove representatives from other fishery management councils from the South Atlantic committees and create a liaison position for the Dolphin Wahoo Committee for the New England Fishery Management Council, effective from the June 2025 meeting.

We have direction to staff to continue to coordinate with NOAA Counsel, General Counsel, regarding questions addressing further law enforcement disclosures that may be added to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council advisory panel application form.

MS. BROUWER: For the appointments, that needs to be a motion.

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have -- Do I have motions for the appointments? I guess we can start with the Shrimp Advisory Panel liaisons. Would somebody like to make a motion? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Myra, can I do them all in one?

MS. MURPHEY: Can we do them all in one? Yes. Go for it.

MS. MARHEFKA: **I move that we appoint Sonny Gwin and Pat Geer as liaisons to the Shrimp Advisory Panel; that we appoint Sean Wilms with the FWC's Florida Wildlife Research Institute to the Snapper Grouper Recreational Permitting and Reporting Technical Advisory Panel; that we appoint the following persons to the SEDAR 90 data workshop: Anna-Mai Christmas-Svajdlenka, Julie Simpson, Julie Dingle, and Paul McLaughlin.**

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have a second? Jimmy. Any discussion? **Any objections? The motion carries.** I think that's it for our closed session. Would you like to make that motion? It's about the committee representatives from the other councils.

MR. GRINER: Yes. **I move to remove representatives from other fishery management councils from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council committees and create a liaison position for the Dolphin Wahoo Committee for the New England Fishery Management Council, non-voting, effective with the June 2025 council meeting.**

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have a second? Jessica. Any discussion? **Any objections? The motion carries.** Forgive me, and it is 8 30 on a Friday. Now we'll move over to the Full Council open, and so the council also met Monday and Tuesday, in Jekyll Island, and adopted the agenda for the week and approved the minutes from the December 2024 meeting.

We had several reports from Monica Smit-Brunello. She provided a brief update on litigation related to South-Atlantic-managed fisheries. We had an update from Captain Scott Pearce with the Law Enforcement AP, who provided a summary of the AP's feedback to the council regarding background checks for advisory panel applicants and how to -- Also how to improve the nomination process for the Law Enforcement of the Year Award. General Joe Spraggins provided a report from the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and Sonny Gwin summarized activities from the Mid-Atlantic Council.

State agency representatives also updated the council on activities related to fisheries management by each of the states, and Jessica McCawley gave an update on the exempted fishing permit project the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission is conducting. Jennifer Lee provided a brief regarding protected resources.

Then Andy Strelcheck gave an update regarding operations at the Southeast Regional center. The center, the Southeast Regional Office has lost several employees in the past few weeks. Due to the current hiring freeze, four positions have not been filled. The office is required to submit a reduction in force plan in mid-March. Regarding the ongoing issues with the SERO permits office, progress has been made to prepare snapshot information to the council to resume work on developing amendments.

There has been a suite of executive orders issued in recent weeks, and guidance is emerging on how they will impact the activities of the Regional Office. The ten-for-one deregulation will be challenging to address. SERO is proposing a process for how to implement it. The council was encouraged to focus on deregulatory actions. Workforce optimization requires that, for each new hire, four others need to be let go. This will affect travel restrictions and other activities.

Then John Walter provided an update on activities at the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. The Science Center lost 14 percent of its staff in two days. Ten recruitments have been put on hold. Stock assessment capacity is down by 20 percent, and it is anticipated that there will be a significant reduction in the center's ability to conduct regional surveys.

The Science Center is looking to borrow staff from others from around the country to conduct these surveys, and the center has to deliver a plan for a RIF by March 14, and so a further reduction in staff is expected. There are congressional funds for rebuilding the facility in Beaufort, North Carolina, and direction to staff is to prepare a letter to support preserving that Beaufort facility.

We also had discussion on the recreational reform initiative, which is an effort by the Mid-Atlantic Council and the ASMFC to improve management of recreational fisheries for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass and bluefish. Julia Beaty, Mid-Atlantic Council staff, delivered a presentation on the recreational reform initiative the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council has been conducting in collaboration with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

Some of the points for discussion had been how would the described approach be applicable to managed fisheries in the South Atlantic and could the framework be adapted to the South Atlantic region. There would need to be a demand model built for the region and the approach vetted by the Scientific and Statistical Committee.

Developing a model to estimate recreational harvests in the South Atlantic region could be added to the research and monitoring plan. It is interesting that the approach brings in different factors besides MRIP estimates for estimating catch. The Mid-Atlantic Council receives more frequent science and assessment products, and updates harvest levels more frequently than the South Atlantic Council, and the fisheries for black sea bass, scup, summer flounder, and bluefish are significantly larger than fisheries in the South Atlantic region.

Bob Zales, the For Hire Reporting AP Chair, he delivered comments from the AP relative to the proposed modification of the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting, which is the SEFHIER program, and Captain Scott Pearce delivered the Law Enforcement AP's feedback. Michelle Masi and Dominique Lazarre, with SERO, presented information the council had requested following the December 2024 meeting.

Council staff presented an overview of the draft actions and alternatives that could be considered in an amendment as well as the IPT comments and recommendations. The council reviewed the draft purpose and need statement. Staff indicated there may be a need to revise the current language to include the Southeast Region Headboat Survey, as some of the actions being considered would apply to that program. Alternatively, the draft actions and alternatives could be revised to exclude the headboat survey.

The council did not approve the revised language at this time, as the amendment is very early in its development, and there will be an opportunity in the future to consider revisions, and so, relative to the draft Action 2, which is trip notification, the council directed staff to focus the language for draft Alternative 2 on whether they pertain to activities including passengers. Staff were asked to consolidate the subalternatives like those in the Gulf draft amendment.

Then, relative to draft Action 4, which is landing locations, the council directed staff to make sure it is well explained why informational landing locations is important for validation and enforcement. Consider language that is not too restrictive, given the scarcity of working waterfront, and also explain that this action would help improve sampling intercepts.

The council directed staff to include potentially modifying the frequency of do-not fish reports in scoping this amendment, and the council approved the following motion. This was a motion to approve the For-Hire Reporting Improvement Amendment for scoping, and then it was approved by the council, and then guidance to conduct passive scoping. In other words, no webinar hearing.

We also discussed topics for the Dolphin-Wahoo AP spring meeting. They're scheduled to meet in Charleston from April 22 and 23. Council staff reviewed a draft list of agenda topics with the council, which the council approved. It was clarified that an update on results of the ongoing management strategy evaluation for dolphin would not be available for the AP to discuss, but staff would provide an update on its development.

Concerning the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, the planned presentation for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Restoration Blueprint and Memorandum of Agreement was not received, due to an action by the Florida Governor DeSantis declaring the proposed National Marine Sanctuary designation documents and final rule unacceptable for implementation in Florida's state waters. It is likely that the timeline for approving the MOA will be delayed as a result.

The council provided the following suggestions on the MOA. Number one was to revise Section 4 to include definition of “habitat support structure or artificial reef” and also to insert a new Section V.C., Habitat Support Structures to Enhance Marine Resources in Monroe County. The parties acknowledge and agree that permitting for habitat support structures can be handled through the same process used in state waters outside of the sanctuary. The parties agree that permits for habitat support structures will be obtained from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Army Corps of Engineers without any further requirements from the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary or the Office of the National Marine Sanctuaries. Parties further agree that any installations that do not require excavation shall not require an archaeological survey.

We also had climate readiness projects. NOAA has provided funding to support council efforts to develop and advance climate-ready fisheries management. Lara Klubansky, Climate Readiness Projects Coordinator, gave a presentation, including background information and updates on the council's climate readiness projects. The council discussed how staff would keep the council informed of progress on the various projects, and updates to the council will be provided at quarterly meetings, in the staff report, and a more detailed update on each project will be provided once a year. I have a draft motion here for timing and tasks. Would someone like to make that motion? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Chair. **I move that we direct staff to do the following: prepare a letter to support restoring the Beaufort, North Carolina facility; conduct scoping for the For-Hire Reporting Improvement Amendment prior to the June 2025 meeting; and provide comments on the draft MOA with the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary to sanctuary staff.**

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have a second? I’ve got Amy. Any discussion? **Any objections? The motion carries.** Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: If we could go back up to the summary of the Southeast Regional Office and Science Center comments. I just want to make a couple of clarifications, and so I guess the first clarification would be that I haven't been able to fill four Sustainable Fisheries positions. It's actually much larger than four, in terms of positions unfilled, and then my office is not required to submit a reduction in force plan.

It is actually the Department of Commerce that is preparing that reduction in force plan, and so you also mentioned that in the Science Center's update as well, below, and then I guess the last clarifying comment is that with the ten-for-one deregulation, SERO is not proposing a process for how to implement it. NOAA Fisheries is working with NOAA, and the Department of Commerce, on that process.

MS. MURPHEY: Did that capture everything correctly?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I would just say NOAA Fisheries is working with NOAA, big NOAA, and the Department of Commerce on that process, yes.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. I’ve got Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: On the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary item, when you scroll down to that, and so, yes, the governor did deem it unacceptable, but, specifically, it was a veto for all items in state waters, and so I just want to be clear, because that's part of the Governor's authority, and so it's a little bit more than just unacceptable for implementation. I can help you with some wording, if needed.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jessica. Does that work, Jessica? Okay. Thank you, Jessica. Any other clarifications? John.

DR. WALTER: I think, in the edits to the SERO section, and removing it from the Science Center, on the DOC is required to submit a reduction force plan, and it similarly applies to the Southeast Center, and so it could either be broadened and made general to both or repeated in both. I appreciate that. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John. Any other comments, or edits? Okay, and so now we're moving on to the Habitat and Shrimp. The committee -- We had a meeting of the Habitat -- A joint committee meeting of Habitat and the Shrimp Committees, and so the committee approved the Shrimp Committee's minutes from the June 2024 meeting and also approved the agenda for this meeting.

During the September 2024 council meeting, staff were directed to initiate a joint amendment to modify both the Coral and Shrimp FMPs and to explore additional alternatives that would achieve the council's objective of allowing the rock shrimp fishery to operate in an area that was previously open to harvest while meeting the goals and objectives of the FMPs.

Staff reviewed a decision document including the proposed alternatives. The council determined that the proposed Alternative 4 did not meet the purpose and need of the amendment to open the historical shrimp fish shrimping area, since it would not geographically match historical use of the area by the rock shrimp fishery.

The committees directed staff to move forward with analyzing Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 and bring an updated document for review at the June 2025 meeting. The committees reviewed the purpose and need and felt that it would be important to highlight the commercial importance of the historical area.

The purpose was modified accordingly, and so direction to staff was to edit that purpose and need, and the purpose of this amendment -- The edited piece is to reinstate commercial access to this historically-important fishing ground for the rock shrimp fishery by creating a shrimp fishery access area along the eastern edge of the Northern Oculina Habitat Area of Particular Concern boundary in an area where the rock shrimp fishery operated historically, while minimizing impacts to deepwater coral. The need for this action is the need for this amendment is to allow the rock shrimp fishery to attain OI while minimizing negative impacts to deepwater coral in the council's jurisdictions.

We had Motion 1, which was to move forward with Alternative 1, 2, and 3, Alternative 1 being no action, Alternative 2 establish the SFAA within the area of twenty-two square miles along the eastern edge of the Northern Habitat of Particular Concern boundary, and then Alternative 3 was

to also establish an SFAA with an area of thirty-two square miles along the eastern edge of the Northern Oculina Habitat of Particular Concern boundaries, and this was approved by the committee. So, on behalf of the committee, I so move. Is there any discussion? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and maybe this question for staff, and so the area that was historically accessible is the larger thirty-two-square-mile area, and is that correct?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes.

MR. STRELCHECK: So we just rejected Alternative 4 because we're not restoring access to the entire area, but you're maintaining Alternative 2, and so I think we need to have some discussion about that.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Andy, if you would like to discuss.

MR. STRELCHECK: So we're saying that the Alternative 4 is inconsistent with the purpose and need of restoring access to the entire historical area for the shrimp fishery access, right, and so that same rationale would apply to Alternative 2 then, because it's a subset of the original area. I also don't feel like you've addressed the purpose, with regard to how you're going to minimize impacts to deepwater coral, and I think Alternative 4 continues to be at least a reasonable alternative to consider in this amendment, until we have further analysis and can decide, obviously, based on that analysis, whether it's appropriate to select which preferred alternative.

MS. MURPHEY: Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Without the maps in front of me, I think, generally, Alternative 2 restored as much of the historic area as we could without creating impacts, based on the information that we had in front of us, and then Alternative 4 was like less than half of the historical area, and, you know, we can refer back to the discussion we had then, but I think Jessica gave us some pretty good comments about historical data and why there were those -- You know, corals had been identified there at some point, and some subsequent surveys didn't identify anything, and so I thought, based on the information we had in front of us, the science, that we made the best decision there, but I think, you know, the comment, Andy, I get it. It doesn't restore 100 percent of, but I think Alternative 2 gets at most of the area, where Alternative 4 was just I think about a third of the historic fishing area.

MS. MURPHEY: I have -- Kathleen did you want to --

MS. HOWINGTON: So I would need to relook at the old historical VMS, but I believe keeping Alternative 2 addresses the purpose and need, or the purpose, for the shrimp and the coral, back to this is the reason why we're doing joint, is it gives access to the historical important commercial fishing area, while simultaneously minimizing impacts to deepwater coral, and so we're not going to be able to open up that entire section that shrimpers used to have before the Oculina HAPC existed, but we're trying to open up as much as we can, while still maintaining the distance between known coral pinnacles and where the shrimpers usually trawl.

MS. MURPHEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I agree with that rationale, and I recognize, obviously, that Alternative 4 was a smaller area, but we had, obviously, members from my team, the Science Center, and the coral community come up with an alternative that also, in my view, meets the same goals and objectives that Kathleen just spoke about, and I'm not hearing at least a distinction between why we're rejecting Alternative 4 and not rejecting then Alternative 2, other than Alternative 4 is a much smaller area to open.

I just want to point that out, because I feel like there's an inconsistency with regard to the justification for throwing out Alternative 4, and then, as I've mentioned, I feel like there's sufficient -- There isn't sufficient information, at this point, to further analyze and inform our decision to reject it at this point, and so I will leave it at that.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. I've got Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, and I can appreciate that, Andy, but, at the same time, I don't think there's further information to warrant including that in the first place. Alternative 2 does the exact same thing as you said. It limits the coral, and it gets us back to the to the historical area, as best we can, and it maximizes that effort to get back to the historical, based on the information we all had at hand, and we have no new information at hand to say any different. There's no information that says that a smaller area is needed. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you Tim. Any other discussion? Kathleen.

MS. HOWINGTON: Additionally, I feel like -- I need to say this, because Jessica is not here, and this is the area that we promised, that was accidentally closed in Coral 8. this seventy to 100-meter contour line is -- That's the area that they discussed, way back in the day, and so just adding that for the record, of that is also one of the logics for why Alternative 2 is reasonable to maintain.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you Kathleen. Any other discussion? So, moving forward, the vote on this, do we want a show of hands for a vote of this, this particular motion? Okay. **Let's have a show of hands of who is in favor for this motion, ten; and against this motion, seeing none; abstentions. Andy. Okay, and so the motion passes ten to zero with one abstention.** Moving on to timing and tasks, we have a draft motion here, and would someone like to make that motion? Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. **I make a motion to adopt the following timing and tasks: continue to develop the Coral Amendment 11/Shrimp Amendment 12 and prepare a draft to consider approval for public hearing at the June 2025 council meeting.**

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have a second? Kerry. Any discussion? **Any objections? The motion carries.** That concludes that committee report, and so, moving on to the Habitat and Ecosystem Committee meeting, that committee approved its minutes from the September 2024 meeting and the agenda for this meeting, after adding two topics for Other Business.

We went through the Habitat and Ecosystem Advisory Panel report. Stacie Crowe, with South Carolina DNR, who is the chair, delivered the April 2024 AP report. Staff reviewed the letter summarizing the AP's five-year essential fish habitat review. The committee asked questions about beneficial use projects and what their purpose could be. Stacie described the various projects

that could be considered beneficial use, and then staff explained that there is a lot to be learned, and the knowledge for consultations in the Southeast is limited, which is why it's important for the AP to help compile this knowledge.

The committee was interested in why the AP requested an integrated ecosystem assessment and wanted to know what the goals for using the IEA would be. The committee gave direction to staff to return to the AP and request further guidance.

Marine spatial planning, or updating -- Marine spatial planning, or updating the ecosystem status report, may be more helpful, with increased development in the South Atlantic, and the committee reviewed and approved the EFH letter with no modifications.

The committee made approved the following motion to approve the EFH five-year review letter as written for submission. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Is there any discussion? Any objections? The motion is approved.

We have a second motion, and this was to move that the AP-recommended definition of “living shorelines” be adopted for use by the South Atlantic Council, and this definition is a living shoreline is a coastal management approach that stabilizes and protects the shoreline using a suite of options that promote the use of natural materials, such as native plants, sand, rocks, and oyster shells. The details of material usage and percentage of material type are determined by state management bodies. Unlike traditional hard structures, such as seawalls, living shorelines should maintain the natural connections between upland, intertidal, and aquatic environments. This approach not only minimizes erosion and aims to reduce wave energy, but also provides valuable wildlife habitat, maintains or improves water quality, and supports ecological resilience. Living shorelines should be designed to spontaneously grow and adapt over time, making them a dynamic nature-based solution for coastal protection and management. This was approved by the committee, and so, on behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? Any objections? Motion approved.

We also went through the annual habitat report. The council staff reviewed the report, including habitat activities during 2024, as outlined in the habitat blueprint, and the committee gave comments that this report was interesting and helpful.

Then we just went on to discuss the workplan. The council staff reviewed the AP's workplan and approved the following draft agenda items for the July 2025 meeting, and this is to review the progress on the habitat website; review progress on the habitat program communication strategy; essential fish habitat consultations; a review of beneficial use projects and discussion on future impacts; the revision of alterations to riverine and estuarine nearshore flows policy; to address impacts from freshwater discharges and impediments to river flow; talk about space program impacts on habitat, if that information is available; and then projects with potential habitat impacts, which includes the Central Virginia Offshore Wind update from Dominion Energy on habitat created by windfarms and the fish mortality during construction, and also sea optic fiber cables; climate readiness projects overview and EFH project update; and then climate and ecosystem fisheries initiative overview; identify higher abundance locations and additional life stage information for EHF clarification in each fishery management plan; then integrate food web information from the food web policy and EFH definitions. and then a workplan update.

For other business, the AP will provide input on the research and monitoring plan via email for the June 2025 meeting, and then staff displayed the habitat website and highlighted the inclusion of the new EFH mapper and discussed the plans for improving this mapper long-term.

There was a third motion, which was to approve the AP agenda items listed for the July meeting. This was approved by the committee, and so, on behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? Any objections? Motion approved.

Then direction to staff was to request the goals and objectives for the IEA from the AP during the July 2025 AP meeting, and so I have a draft motion here for timing and tasks. Would somebody care to make that motion? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I would like to make the motion to direct staff to do the following: request that the Habitat and Ecosystem AP discuss the goals and objectives for an integrated ecosystem assessment for the South Atlantic region and bring those back to the council for consideration at the September meeting; and also submit the EFH letter to the National Marine Fisheries Service.

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have a second? Amy. Any discussion? **Any objections? The motion carries.** That's the end of that report, and so now I get to hand it over to Tom for the Mackerel Cobia.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. On Thursday, March 6, the Mackerel Cobia Committee met. Our first order of business was the committee approved the minutes from the March 2024 meeting and the agenda. Our first agenda item was the giant manta ray ESA Section 4(d) rule development. Jenny Lee, from SERO Protected Resources Division, presented information on two recent studies related to giant manta ray reproductive habitat and giant manta ray interactions with cobia fishing practices in northern and central Florida.

National Marine Fisheries Service will continue to collect information on activities that may take giant manta rays to help conserve and recover the species, and the Sustainable Fisheries Division and Protected Resources Division will work together to evaluate if reinitiation of formal Section 7 consultation on the CMP biological opinion is needed. Committee members described their experiences with the practice and recommended that the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel discussed best practices for cobia fishing near manta rays.

Our second agenda item was the mackerel port meetings draft report. In 2024, at the urging of their Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel, the council hosted a series of sixteen in-person and six virtual port meetings along the Atlantic coast. Port meeting attendees discussed their perspectives with other fisheries participants and local council members.

Council staff reviewed the draft report from this effort and provided options for moving forward with the development of management actions. Before determining how to move forward with management actions, the committee requested more information on results from the Gulf Council on their coastal migratory pelagic stakeholder engagement effort. Additionally, the council directed staff to bring detailed information from port meetings back on the following management topics: sector allocations for Atlantic Spanish mackerel, commercial zones for Atlantic Spanish mackerel, regional commercial allocations for Atlantic Spanish mackerel, accountability measures

for Atlantic Spanish mackerel, recreational bag limits and size limit for Atlantic Spanish mackerel, commercial trip limits for Atlantic Spanish mackerel and king mackerel, sale of tournament-caught Atlantic king and Spanish mackerel, limited entry for the commercial Spanish mackerel permit, recreational permitting for Atlantic king and Spanish mackerel, and, finally, commercial and recreational regulations in state waters for Atlantic king and Spanish mackerel.

We then discussed the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel spring 2025 meeting. The Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel is scheduled to meet in Charleston, South Carolina on March 31 and April 1, 2025. The committee approved the following for inclusion on the agenda: giant manta ray interactions with the cobia fishery, mackerel port meetings report, and include an update on recent council discussions, for-hire reporting improvement amendment, for-hire limited entry amendment, lines of communication practice run, Citizen Science Program update, and research and monitoring plan review. We had no other business, and so, with that being said, I have a timing and tasks motion, if anybody would like to make that motion. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I suggest the following motion to adopt the following timing and tasks: request Gulf Council staff provide a presentation to the council on their coastal migratory pelagic stakeholder engagement efforts at the June, 2025 meeting; provide a summary of information provided during port meetings on each identified management topic listed above at the June, 2025 meeting; provide a refresher on Atlantic Spanish mackerel catch level recommendations from the SSC based on SEDAR 78 at the June, 2025 meeting; convene a meeting of the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel in spring 2025 to discuss the topics listed above.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. Do we have a second for that motion? Amy. Is there any discussion on this motion? **Is there any objection to this motion? Seeing no objection, the motion passes.** With that, I conclude my report, and I'll hand it to Madam Chair.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tom. So next is the SEDAR Committee report. The committee approved minutes from the December 2024 meeting, as well as the agenda. We had a committee, a steering committee, update. Council staff provided an update on the SEDAR Steering Committee meeting, which was held in February of 2025. The committee was briefed on the changes to the SEDAR schedule for species managed by the council.

Due to an analyst leaving the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and a hiring freeze, there is a reduced number of staff available for future stock assessments, and, as a result, the red grouper assessment originally requested for 2026 was moved to 2027. New stock assessments added to the schedule included an update assessment for black sea bass update in 2025 and a king mackerel assessment in 2026. Changes to the SEDAR process were provided under the key stocks presentations.

The committee also discussed statements of work for the 2027 stocks. They recommended moving forward with a stock assessment for red grouper that had a data workshop with a stock identification. They also recommended a stock assessment for snowy grouper with a workgroup to help incorporate the South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey.

In both cases, the committee recommended including a request for a range of the spawning potential ratio and separating catch by sector before removing discards. They requested additional time to consider a third species for consideration.

Dr. Shannon Cass-Calay, of the Science Center, gave a presentation on modifications to the SEDAR process. She explained the timeline for stock assessments had expanded under the research track process, and the South Atlantic and Gulf Councils wanted more timely assessments. More timely assessments would be accomplished by having the Science Center control scheduling during the assessment phase of the process.

During this phase, the analysts could ask questions to a council-approved technical committee, if needed. Additionally, analysts could provide updates on assessment progress to the SSC and request input on certain issues identified during the assessment development. The committee supported the revised process, but wanted to get feedback from the SSC before approving the new process. So, due to these changes in the process, the committee was told the key stocks do not need to be selected.

Then the committee revised the charge of the SEDAR Committee to encompass the review of schedules and terms of reference for various methods to develop catch advice or assess stocks. The committee added data collection into the charge, which will be beneficial for discussions related to data collection, such as standard bycatch reporting methodology review.

The committee changed the name to Data Assessment and Catch Advice Committee, or DACA, and that concludes the SEDAR report, and so we'll move on to -- Do you want to take a break? Does everybody want to take a break before we jump into --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sure.

MS. MURPHEY: I think we've got time. My voice needs a break. Fifteen-minute break.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to get going. All right. The Snapper Grouper Committee met earlier this week and approved the minutes from the December 2024 meeting and the agenda for this week's meeting. The committee received updates about amendments that have been approved by the council and were recently submitted or are under development to be submitted for secretarial review.

We talked a little bit about Amendment 55, which is scamp and yellow mouth grouper, which is under a statutory deadline, and NMFS is working on proposed rules for this amendment, as well as the commercial electronic logbook, which covers both the Snapper Grouper FMP, Coastal Migratory Pelagics, and Dolphin Wahoo.

Then the committee went into the snapper grouper fishery management unit revision and directed staff to compile information to evaluate species included in the fishery management unit, and then staff presented how many -- How many revisions to the fishery management unit could affect other council projects, and so this would include things like Amendment 46, identification of key stocks, and the for-hire reporting amendment.

The committee reviewed assessment and annual catch limit information for all species in the fishery management unit and selected species that were clearly in need of conservation and management under a federal FMP and do not need to be evaluated at this time and then directed staff to compile information to evaluate the need for conservation and management of the following species at future meetings.

That list included Atlantic spadefish, bar jack, sand tilefish, misty grouper, blackfin grouper, queen snapper, cubera snapper, banded rudderfish, jolt head porgy, knobbed porgy, saucereye porgy, scup, whitebone porgy, white grunt, sailor's choice, tomtate, and margate.

All right. Then we moved into the golden tilefish assessment response. This was from the SEDAR 89 stock assessment that was completed in 2024, which indicated that the stock is not overfished and not experiencing overfishing. Then the committee reviewed potential actions and decided to develop actions to address, one, updating catch levels to be consistent with the SSC's most recent recommendations and, two, consider changing the recreational season start date.

Council staff also reviewed potential timelines and amendment formats for developing the actions, and the committee requested staff to develop a timing and format recommendation and provide that at Full Council, and so that's what's highlighted in yellow there. Myra, can I pass it to you to kind of explain this a little bit more?

MS. BROUWER: Sure, and so, basically, we're saying, if you guys want to just adjust catch levels, we would recommend that you do that in an abbreviated framework type of an amendment, which we could bring back to you in June or September for approval. The reason we are not sure on either of those dates is because we don't know how much assistance we'll have from the Regional Office, and so we can try to have it ready for you by June, and that also depends on availability of information.

Then any other changes that you would like to make would be -- Could be included as an action in other developing amendments, such as the one for black sea bass or the one that you have coming up that will address the assessment for blueline tilefish, and so we would like to know, you know, what your preference would be at this point.

MS. MCCAWLEY: A question, Myra. So you're saying, if you just do the catch levels, that could go on a faster track, but, if you're going to bring in the catch levels, and the season start date change, and you're going to tack it on to another thing that's already underway, that's going to take more time, and that's the part that's confusing me.

MS. BROUWER: Well, the reason that we would recommend that you consider including it as an action in a developing amendment is to minimize the number of amendments that are going to be funneled through NMFS for rulemaking. We could do a separate golden tilefish amendment, just to change the seasonal start date and whatever other actions, but then we would have an extra amendment there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So, if you tacked it on -- I guess my question is, if you tacked it onto something else that's already underway, that doesn't slow it down?

MS. BROUWER: I don't believe so. It depends on the action. I heard something, during public comment yesterday, about considering the allocations, but you just revised those in Amendment 52, and the main thing that -- My recollection is it's that the beginning of the season, right, the aligning of the recreational season.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so let's have some discussion on this. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, I think I like this plan. I think that it's a great idea to just go ahead and get the catch level recommendations done. I don't have a strong feeling, and, I mean, Amendment 56 isn't that far behind, and so, if we put the -- You think it's too far behind? Okay. Well, in my opinion, but, obviously, it doesn't affect me, and so I guess I'll leave that to others, but the plan seems reasonable. Maybe it's not to other people.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let me make sure I understand which plan you're talking about. The plan to add it into something else, move it with something else, and that's the one that you like?

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and to divorce the two, to do an expedited, or expeditious, abbreviated framework for the catch level recommendations, and then to take the recreational start date and put it in, whether it's blue -- Blue line tile makes more sense to me, but that's a slower path, and so that might not be happy for other people, but we put it in another amendment that's still pretty far along, and so we're not kicking it to the bottom of the line. It seems like a really nice like compromise for me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I understand now. That was throwing me off. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Yes, and that was throwing me off, too. Thank you for that, Kerry. So I agree that, you know, if we're talking about just the catch levels, going ahead and getting the increased catch levels expedited through a framework, I'm all for that, and then the recreational portion of that dumped into something else, yes. I just don't want to see those recreational -- I mean, those catch level increases get tied into something else and get bogged down again. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just noting, Tim, that the catch levels are not increases. They're slight decreases.

MR. GRINER: Okay. For some reason, I was thinking they were slight increases.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, whether they're increases or decreases, I would really be interested in making it efficient, and getting feedback from the staff, and, however it flows best in the work plan, and considering these -- I'll just call them uncertain times, and I'm being nice, but, yes, I would, you know, just try to fit it in and go ahead and get the catch levels in, and be done with it, and then we try to figure out how everything else fits that works, without doing a lot of extra work, because we may not have the time and energy and money to do it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thank you. So then I think that's captured there with direction to staff, if you guys can look at that and make sure it captures it. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm sorry, and I do have a question though. Amendment 56, we scoped, did we not, in that new scoping format, and is that okay?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, and the reason that one is kind of creeping along is because we're still waiting on some projections that are going to be discussed by the SSC in April.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so we're good with that game plan? All right. I'm going to continue moving through the committee report. Then we went into the commercial subcommittee report, and so the Commercial Snapper Grouper Subcommittee met on March, which was earlier this week, and we looked at the summary from that meeting, and the subcommittee made a recommendation that their next meeting also occur in-person, ahead of the June council meeting. Based on the subcommittee's recommendations, the committee passed the following motion and provided the following direction to staff.

Motion Number 1 is initiate an amendment that will address commercial permit and trip efficiency issues. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Any further discussion? Any objection? All right. **That motion carries.**

So then there's a number of items there, one of which is highlighted that we probably want to talk about again, because we had a later motion that I think affects this, but so these were some of the notes from the subcommittee: Listing out some of the commercial permit issues, including the revision of the two-for-one commercial SG unlimited permit policy; consideration of limiting the number of permits that can be owned per entity; consideration of establishing income requirements or use-it-or-lose-it provisions.

There was some direction to staff to gather information on the use of income requirements for fisheries in other regions, and then we went into the trip efficiency component and talked about trip limit increases. If landings are below a threshold by a specified date in the season, essentially a step up, establishment of a non-target or out-of-season allowance for species that are not overfished, and then there was a short discussion on aggregate commercial trip limits, but, later, we had a motion, under Other Business, and we removed the aggregate commercial trip limits from that, and so can you all have a little bit of discussion about are we wanting the aggregate commercial trip limit component removed from this list? Who wants to talk about that? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: At this time, I don't think - It's not a discussion that -- Let me think about saying this a different way. There have been -- We have years of record of having discussions about the two-for-one and different variations of how to do the trip limits between the advisory panel, between visioning, and like our record is long, and strong, and it's been fairly fleshed out.

I think that puts us in a good position to have the two-for-one amendment to be fairly -- As efficient as a plan amendment can be. I think that, at this time, there are lots of reasons. You know, we would have to have so many discussions. I was laying in bed last night, just thinking about like someone getting on top of a pile of snow, and having an aggregate trip limit, and what that would look like.

There's just a lot, but, if that comes into play later, I think that that's appropriate. I don't think it's appropriate for this amendment, and so I really would like to focus on everything that's not highlighted for this amendment, based on the record we've already built, based on feedback we've heard from the AP, and have that not be in consideration at this time, for this version of this amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and just one more question. So you're not saying don't look at ways to increase trip efficiency. You're just saying don't look at this one way, and so you're not saying don't do an amendment that looks at both of these, because that's what the motion was. That's why I'm asking, because the motion that we just passed, if you could scroll up, was to look at both of them, and so just making sure that you still intend to look at trip efficiency and just not an aggregate commercial trip limit as part of trip efficiency.

MS. MARHEFKA: That is my intention.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right. I see yes. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and some kind of aggregate commercial limit may be in the works, but it's going to take a lot of talk, and a lot of discussion, and a lot of thought, but, you know, we've talked about, you know, step-ups and, you know, things like vermilion that are - - You know, we're averaging -- I don't remember what the number was, 75 or 80 percent, of our ACL, and what are ways that we can get closer, and there are -- Those are things that are probably a much lower bar, that we could implement easier, once we talk about the various ways to get there.

Whether we just, you know, go up on the ACLs of not overfished species by 15 percent or something, and then see what the final ACL for the year looks like, or final catch for the year looks like, but an aggregate commercial -- It probably fits much better with recreational than commercial, and, if we can keep them separated, I think that helps everybody focus, too. Thank you.

MR. PHILLIPS: Okay, and so Myra is typing up some direction there, and we put a line through it, just to show that we had that discussion, but then we have different direction, based on what happened later in the committee. Are we all good with that? I'm just looking around the table, and heads nodding are yes. All right, and I'm going to keep moving through the document.

Then we had a presentation on status determination criteria proxies. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center staff presented information on MSY proxies and their use in management, and the council had the following discussions and gave the following direction to staff. The committee agreed with the Science Center's recommended approach of species-specific evaluations of MSY and FMSY proxies. The committee discussed the possibility of requesting a range of SPR proxies, which the council could use to consider different management goals through different associated selectivities.

The committee also discussed the possibility of incrementally shifting target SPR levels over time. This could allow a smoother transition from current targets to long-term targets and requests the following items for review and discussion at a future meeting: a non-technical presentation from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute stock assessment group discussing their perspectives on developing spawning-potential-ratio-based MSY proxies for state and federally-

managed species; a compilation and comparison of SPR proxies for southeastern stocks that have MSY estimates based on stock-recruitment relationships; and a discussion of management situations that would require a higher or lower SPR. All right, and then we -- I'm sorry. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I'm fully supportive of FWC providing that presentation. I think -- I just want to make it clear that I think it's important that they work with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and, to the extent that the SSC chair, or others, could be engaged in that as well, I think that would be helpful.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sounds good, and some of that information was going to be prepared by council staff, and so just a heads-up on that. All right, and then we moved into the update on the secretarial amendment to end overfishing of red snapper in the South Atlantic, and so NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office presented information on Amendment 59 to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan, which is a secretarial amendment that ends overfishing of South Atlantic red snapper and reduces discards.

The committee asked clarifying questions and discussed recommendations, which will be submitted to NOAA Fisheries on behalf of the council via a letter by March 17, 2025. Staff will present a list of drafted bullet points in Full Council, which will be used to develop the council's comment letter.

Then we moved into black sea bass, Amendment 56. SEDAR 76 included data through 2021 and indicated that the black sea bass stock in the South Atlantic is at very low levels in recent years. In January through February, council staff conducted scoping on the amendment, and the committee reviewed scoping comments and discussed the ranges of actions and alternatives that could be drafted in the amendment.

The committee directed staff to develop the amendment with the following actions, and so just make sure these are the ones that everybody wants. Reduce the catch levels, consider revising status determination criteria, and there were some -- Developed selected alternatives, including the current proxy, a flexible proxy, and additional alternatives may be developed following council's MSY proxy discussions in June. Change the fishing year start date, which would include an alternative to revise the fishing year for both sectors to begin on January 1. Reopen nearshore areas to on-demand black sea bass pots. Prohibit multi-hook rigs for the snapper grouper fishery. Revise the recreational bag limit. There were some explore alternatives for a larger bag limit. Analysts will provide a range of alternatives for review in June. Reduce recreational size limit, and the range that was discussed was eleven to thirteen. Recreational season retention closure and include alternatives to close from January to April, and include information on whether discards were reduced during historical closures. Then a regional management action, and staff will draft actions to potentially vary management of black sea bass for different areas in the region. Is that the right list? Do we need anything else, or to have any more discussion on these items? Just making sure.

All right, and it doesn't look like we want to modify that list, and so the committee additionally directed staff to continue communicating with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and state agencies to discuss consistent or additional management in state waters, allowing for more effective management in federal waters, and the committee directed staff not to include an action considering changes to sector allocations. This is consistent with the Snapper Grouper AP's

recommendation, which also noted that the poor stock condition limits any advantage to reallocating at this time. All right, and then we moved into the private recreational permit and education requirement. Sorry. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just for a clarification, the recreational season retention closure analysis, is that something that this committee did want to move forward with? I just needed clarification, because, if so, I would like to make some potential changes to that, if possible.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I thought, and so just my recollection was it was just basically a closed season. I don't know how that differs from a retention closure, and so, when I looked at it, and I looked at my notes, this was two separate items, and it looks like it's been combined here, and so, if you want to edit this, then go ahead.

MS. DUKES: I'm thinking. Hold on.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: It's worded as a retention closure because -- To distinguish that from other closures that you all have talked about in other circumstances, such as like bottom fishing closures or something like that, and so this would just be a seasonal closure to the retention of black sea bass, and so you would not be able to keep and land black sea bass, but it would not be a snapper-grouper-wide or bottom fishing closure that's being talked about here.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Maybe we can add "seasonal closure for black sea bass". Yes, and that's being added. Amy, and then somebody else had their hand up. Amy, then Tim.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, and I think it would be really helpful too, from understanding where these species interact with perhaps the shallow-water grouper closure, and it would be interesting to see that analysis, not only for those four months, but perhaps in one-month chunks, or two-month chunks, and just trying to see if just maybe like a January closure or a January/February closure, would be helpful. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and we're trying to get that listed there. Tim, and then Kerry.

MR. GRINER: Can we go back up, scroll back up, to the bullet point on the single-hook rig? That needs to read "prohibit multi-hook rigs for the recreational snapper grouper fishery", I believe.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and thank you for that. That was one of the items coming out of the AP. Yes. Okay. Anything else on this list?

MS. BROUWER: So a question, and do you want to add to this list the action to line up the recreational season for golden tilefish that we just talked about, just to make sure it's crystal clear for us when we get back to the office.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm good with that. Are you guys good with -- Okay. Heads are nodding yes, to add that in here. Okay. That's added. Anything else? All right. Continuing through the committee report here.

The private recreational permit and education requirements, which is Amendment 46, we made modifications to the purpose and need statement. I'm not going to reread it there. It's highlighted in yellow, and some new words added, a word deleted, and so the committee made no changes to Action 3 or 4. It looks like maybe we made changes to Action 1 and 2, that are listed there.

Then Action 5, and this was where we had some discussion about the way that the action and the alternatives are written, and that there's not enough flexibility for states, and so there was discussion that the action should not be prescriptive and dictate what a state can and cannot do. It was clarified that the structure of the action and alternatives is based on recommendations from the technical AP.

The committee would like to continue to consider a way to grandfather in or exempt a state that already has an existing program, such as Florida. The Florida state representative indicated changing the structure of the Florida State Reef Fish Survey and the species it covers to match the requirements of the federal permit would be difficult, and take time, because it's tied to statutory language.

Then the committee had the following comments and questions. Could a state be exempt from the permit requirement based on how prevalent a species, or group of species, is for that state? The Florida program is certified by MRIP. Could flexibility be built in for states if certified by MRIP? Could the number of species be based initially on those covered by the Florida State Reef Fish Survey and work up the coast to see what species would be most relevant and narrow down the list of core species from there? Could a time component be built in? For example, a state could be exempt for a certain amount of time while species are being changed. Could another broader subalternative be considered along the lines of species proposed by the state contingent upon review and approval by the council?

NMFS proposed having a conversation with state directors on what would be acceptable for the species covered under a federal permit, and the committee briefly discussed modeling this action on how the National Saltwater Angler Registry was implemented. Then there's some additional direction there to develop a subalternative that it would exempt a state based on accepting a proposal from that state. This is similar to how the National Saltwater Angler Registry works or the ASMFC conservation equivalency.

State directors to discuss with NMFS the specifics of how states could be exempt and submit additional requests to SERO and the Office of Science and Technology to include in the presentation for June, and an update on how the National Saltwater Angler Registry has been working in this presentation, and I'm still confused on this, and so, Amy, I hope you can help.

Could OST speak to whether it is possible to add a state-issued federal fisheries endorsement to an existing angler in the National Saltwater Angler Registry data dissemination process? I still don't know what this means, because the state gets exempt as a whole, and I'll just try to talk a little bit about Florida.

These folks that are over sixty-five, you know, don't have to have a fishing license. It's voluntary if they want to have a fishing license. We submit data, various sources of data that I won't get into, on our anglers. It's not just license data. We also -- I think it's like boat registrations, et cetera, but I'm just -- I don't know how this would work, because, for example, the State Reef Fish Survey,

you are not exempt, as a person over sixty-five, or if you have a five-year license or a lifetime license. We require State Reef Fish Survey to be renewed annually, and so it doesn't match up with our Saltwater Angler Registry, or it's not any part -- You know, it's not tied together. It's not any part of that.

The requirements are more stringent than this licensing and how we qualify under this exemption, and so I just wanted to help give some more information, because I don't know how to help bring this information back, or how this could be added on top of it. It would not work for Florida, and so I'm just trying to explain. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Yes, and I get all of that, and how it's going to work, and the minute details, I'm not there, but -- I will preface that oftentimes I'm a forward thinker, and so putting the cart before the horse. I think the idea here is, no matter which way we go, this information is going to have to make it to the Office of Science and Technology, and so, if there is a federal permit, that's a whole lot easier lift to get that information to the Office of Science and Technology.

If we go through this idea of a state could find an exemption, that information, in my opinion, should still also go to the Office of Science and Technology, in some capacity, and so thinking about how could we get this information in a more easy way to them, and then how could they in turn use it? Did that help at all? No? Okay. Well, we can remove it, if that would be -- I'm just trying to think how this information -- To enhance that ability.

The purpose and the need says enhance the ability to collect recreational effort and catch data through potential modifications of survey frame and precision of effort estimates, and so, as we continue down this process, we need to be thinking about that, and, if this council initiates a federal permit, or if a state has an endorsement and finds an exemption, that information still needs to make its way. I'm just trying to think how we could do that, other than just have the states individually send it, and NSAR was just a thought process.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I think, given there's some confused faces around the table, including mine, one of the suggestions I was going to make, Amy, if the council is okay with it, is maybe you and I can coordinate and have a discussion with Office of Science and Technology, and then, based on that, that could help bring back, or not bring back, information for the June meeting. Would that work?

MS. DUKES: Yes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and Myra is going to capture some information there. All right. I think that captured it. All right, and then also direction to bring the amendment back to the committee to consider for approval for public hearing at the June 2025 meeting.

All right, and then we moved into the topics for the Snapper Grouper AP. They are scheduled to meet April 2 and 3 in Charleston, and we approved a long list of items there. I'm not going to read all of them. They're on the screen for the AP.

Then the committee went into Other Business and approved the following motion, Motion Number 2, to initiate an amendment to consider options for snapper grouper aggregate recreational bag limits and other management actions to reduce recreational dead discards. This could be included in another amendment already on the workplan, and, on behalf of the committee, I so move. Any additional discussion on this motion? Any objection to this motion? All right. The motion carries.

Then we have a timing and tasks motion there that, if someone would like to make the timing and tasks motion, and I think, before they make it, maybe we need to fix up golden tilefish there. All right, and would someone like to make the amended timing and task motion? Do you have discussion on that? Okay. Go ahead, Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: If you go back up to the discussion we had about the commercial two-for-one, I believe that motion was to begin development of that amendment, but it's not in the timing and tasks that way.

MS. BROUWER: Right, and so this is a conversation that we had anticipated having during the workplan, but what we would suggest is that we have to focus on one thing at a time. I mean, not really, but we can't have all of these amendments being initiated, and so we're thinking, if we get golden tilefish out of the way as soon as possible, that's when we would initiate, you know, and kind of dig into the commercial amendment, and so potentially starting in June or September for that one.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Other questions?

MR. GRINER: So it doesn't go on the timing and tasks?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Can you make -- Would you like to make the -- Would someone over here like to make the motion, or is that what you --

MR. GRINER: I mean, I guess, in my mind, I mean, putting it on the timing and tasks just puts it out there on that to talk about, you know, to put it in the loop on the workplan, but, I mean, if it's not on the timing and tasks, and, when you get to the workplan, it seems like it could be forgotten, or pushed to the side, and I don't know. Maybe that's just me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and she's putting it on there. All right. Will that work? Did you see what she just typed? All right, and would someone like to make the timing and tasks motion? All right. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks. Direct staff to do the following: update the Shiny tool to evaluate the need for conservation and management of snapper grouper species; prepare golden tilefish Amendment as an abbreviated framework to adjust golden tile catch levels only, and that would be approved at the June or September meeting; request additional information on MSY proxies from Florida Fish and Wildlife Resource Institute and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center; draft and submit the council's comment letter on the Amendment 59 secretarial amendment and submit by the March 17 deadline; develop draft actions and alternatives for Amendment 56, including the action to consider aligning the start date of the golden tile recreational season; conduct the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel meeting; plan

and conduct Snapper Grouper Commercial Subcommittee June 2025 meeting; continue to work on Amendment 46 and prepare the amendment for approval for public hearings in June 2025; staff to initiate the commercial amendment as soon as the abbreviated golden tilefish amendment is complete, and, on behalf of the committee, I so move.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Is there a second? Seconded by Charlie. Any further discussion? **Any objection?** All right. **That motion is approved.**

MS. BROUWER: I just would like clarification. I have seen, on some of the lists that we've talked about for various APs, discussion on for-hire limited entry. It wasn't included in this list up here. That amendment is still kind of on pause, and I just want to make sure that you still want your advisory panels to continue to discuss that, even though we haven't really gotten started on that amendment, and it's just sort of sitting there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I know what Tom is going to say. Go ahead.

MR. ROLLER: Well, what I was actually going to say, and this may surprise you, is we can take it off, and they're still going to talk about it. I feel like -- I feel like it comes up at every meeting, regardless. I do think we're in a point though where we are stalled. We have had these discussions, and I understand if it's not applicable towards the next meeting, right, until we get some of that data and so I'm good with no matter what we decide, because, in the end, they're still probably going to talk about it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I would take it off, and not give it a slide, and then they could talk about it as part of other discussions that they always talk about. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: But, at the same time, I think, when it comes to Mackerel Cobia, that's a slightly different discussion, because we're having that discussion as part of the port meetings, and so like I think it's okay to keep it there, but, as far as this timing-wise, I agree with you, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I actually agree with you, Tom. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: But, I mean, I'm sure staff is still going to say exactly what you said, Myra, in the update, that we're paused, and we're doing that, and so --

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any other business to come before the Snapper Grouper Committee? All right. Madam Chair, that concludes my report. I'll pass it back to you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jessica. I think we will go ahead and move into our workplan, and, just to give you guys a heads-up, we did get an email from Mike on the comments for the Snapper Grouper 59 that we will cover at the end, under Other Business, and so just make sure you're aware that that email was sent to you. I'll go ahead and hand it over to John to talk about the workplan. I think it's going to be interesting discussion.

MR. CARMICHAEL: John Hadley, it looks like you're self-muted, and I think you're okay, if you want to go ahead and direct me toward where the revised document is.

MR. HADLEY: It is under the additional materials, and, for those that want to follow along on your own device, it should be uploaded to the meeting webpage as well, and so what's coming up in front of you is a revised workplan from the discussions this week, and I was going to run down a few of the items just of note coming up, and also of note that changed or were added this week, and then John and I are going to kind of tag-team this discussion, and John's going to drive as well, and so thank you for doing that and helping with the logistics in the room.

Without further ado, I'll go down the workplan, as usual, from the top, and we'll start with the FMP amendments underway. Coming back to you in June, you'll have the black sea bass assessment response amendment. You'll have the Amendment 46, private recreational permitting and education, and that will be coming back to you for approval for public hearings in June.

You'll be seeing the yellowtail snapper and mutton snapper assessment response in June, and so that will be an amendment that we'll be starting, and potentially up for approval for scoping. Moving down, of note, we have the golden tilefish assessment response that, you know, right now, there's an approval for that in September, but that could be moved up, depending on how quickly that can move along.

Then, also, we have the Dolphin Wahoo Regulatory Amendment 3 coming back to you in June. That will be accompanied by the Dolphin Wahoo AP report, and that's something that was added, or revised, in the workplan from the December meeting, and so that's on there for now, and that's planned.

Moving down, we have the Coral 11/Shrimp 12. We have a tentative approval of that in December of this year, and I should mention both that and Amendment 46. We do have a tentative approval in December. It would be good if we can do the best we can to keep that timeline, because that -- You know, having those approvals slide do affect the workload of next year, and so trying to adhere to those the best we can.

Moving down, we have the two for-hire-related amendments, limited entry coming back to you in September and then for-hire electronic reporting that will be coming back to you in June. Looking at the planned workload, we have the Spanish mackerel assessment response, probably more of a general mackerel amendment, if you include king mackerel and Spanish mackerel, perhaps, but will be -- That's planned to come back to you for further discussion in June.

Then, of note, the snapper grouper commercial fishery amendment is tentatively on the schedule for approval for scoping, perhaps in September, and so we did add that to the workplan I know, just to follow-up on the last discussion, kind of tying up the Snapper Grouper Committee.

Moving down into the other activities, we did add a SEDAR Committee to follow-up on some of the discussion from this week. The Snapper -- There's the meeting of the Snapper Grouper Commercial Subcommittee, and so that's planned for June as well. The headboat vessel limit discussion, as you -- I believe we reviewed in December, and that will be coming back to you in June, as requested, and then, moving down a little bit, the MSY proxy SPR presentation is on the agenda. That's a sort of a half-day block, since that's anticipated to be a longer discussion, and so that was added per the discussion this week.

We captured the OST presentation regarding Amendment 46. That's not really accounted for time-wise, since it's kind of rolled into the greater Amendment 46 discussion further up, but just noted that it's on the workplan, and then the council research and monitoring plan.

So, kind of going down to the bottom line there, sort of the take-home, we kind of have a pretty full lineup for June, and through the rest of the year, and so you -- I may want to pose to you a few -- Or just pose to the council, you know, and is that something you're comfortable with? It's going to be a pretty full meeting for June. Is there anything that you want to delay, or perhaps move back a few meetings? That's sort of the upcoming -- Kind of teeing-up the upcoming discussion.

Also, looking at the September meeting, perhaps, you know, looking at whether or not we can move around a few items there. You know, if you push back either the commercial amendment or the for-hire limited entry amendment, that could free up September and December a little bit, and so you can see, at the December meeting, there's some oranges there, and so particularly for the snapper grouper commercial fishery amendment. You know, pushing that back could possibly free up your very large workload in December as well, and so kind of looking at the year as a block, and those are the highlights so far, and so, with that, I'll turn it over to the council and John. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and so thank you, John. I appreciate that nice summary of where things stand, and so, as far as alleviating the work overload that we have, a couple of thoughts. You know, in general, my thinking is it's better to complete things before you start new things, if you don't have the capability to do what you have planned, and I also want to point out that we've heard many times, this meeting, about the uncertainty in the federal workforce going forward, their capabilities.

That's likely to affect things in our year, and so we need to be very careful, I believe, in terms of not biting off more than we can chew. They say it's always better to under-promise and over-deliver, but I think this schedule is very much an example of over-promising, and I'm concerned we will under-deliver, in terms of getting this done.

I would also say, if you look at the bottom line here, which is important to us, the overall load, we shoot for eight. We were seven-and-a-half this week, and, if you look back at your week, we didn't have to run late. We got early, I think, on, you know, one afternoon, a little bit, and so it seems, to me, our experience has been this works out pretty close to the time that we can expect in the meetings.

When we've been pushing eight-and-a-half and nine, those are the times when we've been here until six or seven o'clock at night, and, you know, we've had to come in early, and so this is a pretty good representation. You know, it's not necessarily real detailed, but it does tend to sort of capture the time that we end up spending on things.

A couple of thoughts in my mind, to just ease up what's coming ahead in June and December, is that to start the commercial fishery amendment after we complete the golden tilefish assessment response, to say, look, we need to get that covered there in September, and then we can start that amendment.

I think we really -- You know, Spanish is a new start, but not really, because it's been delayed for quite a while and we planned, and so I think Spanish needs to stay, talking about that in June of 2025, and so, to me, that one is kind of locked in. Then the other one to potentially delay some would be dolphin, and the reason I bring this up is because, under the latest SEDAR schedule, the MSE is not scheduled to be completed through review until like early in 2026, or maybe mid-2026, and so I think it would be -- It would be very difficult to even start thinking about what do you scope on dolphin without getting at least the directionality of what you may need to do with the harvest levels coming out of that MSE.

Sort of my thought is we push back the dolphin start, and we push back on the commercial amendment, and that freezes up some space in June, and potentially in September, and then, as far as December goes, I think it's just too much uncertainty, between our capabilities and the Science Center and Regional Office's capabilities to try and do too much there, and so I think we kind of try to get June and September to a manageable level by delaying, like I said, the commercial amendment and dolphin, and I think that gets us into a manageable place for at least the next few meetings.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John. I have Robert's -- Robert, I have your hand up.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Just kind of generally, John, at what point do we start thinking about layering in some of the restraints we're under and how we're managing some of this workload? I mean, even if we get stuff done, are we permitted to move some of this stuff forward, in terms of amendments or otherwise? I don't know if we can kind of -- We can't probably do that on the fly, but at some point you need to kind of layer that in and start to do calculations and figure out what we can and can't move and start this game of Tetris.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I think absolutely, and it's something Andy and I have talked some about, in, you know, taking a deregulatory mindset, where we can, and I think, in particular, if you think about some things that are on there to come up, like for-hire limited entry, and is that something that --

You know, we'll know more about this situation by September, but we may be saying, if that's a new action, is that something that we're really going to feel like has a chance of being approved, and I think there's also questions about, you know, SEFHIER, because is there going to be funding, and are we going to be able to do this, but I think, a lot of those, were -- We're thinking about it now, to the extent we can, Robert, and I think we just have to see where it goes, and some of these are early on, and I think it's still good to get, you know, scoping and hearing-type comments, and that helps us have an idea of the scope of what the amendment would actually be, which then factors into, is it regulatory, or deregulatory, or where does it play.

MS. MURPHEY: I've got Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so I agree with the move the dolphin back. I guess my question is the commercial subcommittee amendment, and I'm good with pushing it to after golden tilefish, but I guess my confusion is it looks like we're over for June, and there was a slot for the subcommittee to meet. Does that also mean that the subcommittee would not meet in June? What does -- Can you explain that a little bit more?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and, to that, I think the subcommittee would continue to meet. I think that is the plan, and it's just the -- When you start that amendment, you make a commitment to a lot of stuff, versus the subcommittee can meet, and it's not making as much of a commitment on the time, and then delaying the other things we talked about really helped with that.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jessica. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. John, I appreciate this, and I also understand an amendment is not necessarily an amendment, as far as workload. That abbreviated framework should be a much smaller workload than some of this other stuff, and so, you know, we can probably do nine abbreviated frameworks, even though we know we're not, and your staff has been really good at helping us streamline stuff, not putting extra actions in there that bring in extra workload, combining, you know, possible amendments, and so I think we're just going to have to double-down on doing those kinds of things, and, as a council member, I'm going to listen really hard when they say, if you do this, it can help us, and so I appreciate it. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Charlie. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: A couple of thoughts, and so, John, thanks for your comments, and I'm generally in agreement, in terms of the workload for June. You know, I typically give a short verbal regional office report. I might have a little more structured report in June, just thinking about the executive orders and what guidance that we're receiving, and so to be determined there, but I think that will be important.

Then John and I have, obviously, spoken about kind of looking ahead, given the regulatory and deregulatory requirements, and I think we'll probably know a lot more in June, with regard to the recreational permitting action and how that may or may not proceed, as well as a SEFHIER, based on the budget.

As John and I were talking, we're assuming we have a budget for the for-hire logbook reporting program. I think there's aspects of that program that can be considered deregulatory, balanced out with maybe some other refinements for the regulatory actions, but what I want to work toward is, with John, and the other council executive directors, is kind of doing an inventory of all of our actions and how we can start packaging some of this with regard to regulatory requirements, as well as the need to meet those deregulatory requirements.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Thank you, Andy. Any other thoughts on the schedule? Are folks good with holding off on the commercial one until after golden tile? Is everybody good with that, and is everybody good with delaying dolphin? Is everybody good with that? I see heads shaking, and so okay. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So then, with those two things, does that get the June meeting back down to eight, because I can't tell from looking, and are we still over?

MR. CARMICHAEL: No, and that will take care of the June meeting, we think, because dolphin would bring us down to eight overall topics and probably help the time allotted overall.

MS. MURPHEY: So we're good with that, and that works for you, John, and do we need to talk more about the SEFHIER or for-hire limited, or do we just leave that for a while?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I don't think right now. I think this takes care of June, and we're good. Tim is over there.

MS. MURPHEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Okay, and well -- Then maybe I'm counting wrong, and so is blueline tile not on June? Are we not going through the assessment report on June for blueline? We are? Okay. So then I guess blueline was completed in, what, June or July of 2024, something like that, I think, the assessment?

MR. CARMICHAEL: The SSC is going to review it at their coming meeting. That's the gray box there.

MR. GRINER: Right, and so the data -- I guess what I'm saying is the data, the actual assessment, was completed in mid-2024, and the SSC -- No?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think it was late, because, if it was completed in mid, the SSC would have seen it in October.

MR. GRINER: Well, that's what I thought. That's why I was kind of --

DR. COLLIER: So golden tile was finished last year. Blueline tilefish is going to be going to the SSCs in May, and so part of it is being reviewed by the Mid-Atlantic, and then part of it is going to be reviewed by our SSC in April, and then part is going to be reviewed in May by our SSC.

MR. GRINER: Okay. Okay. That's okay, but it's still on the June for the assessment review to come to us. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Anything else for the workplan? Are you good, John, or you need anything else?

MR. CARMICHAEL: No, and I think that's good. That gets us to our next step, and we'll reevaluate things after the June meeting.

MS. MURPHEY: Sounds like a plan, and I guess the next thing is we're just going to look at our meetings for the rest of the year. John is going to go over those, real quick.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and so you have a summary of the meetings that are planned, and also I would point out, down at the bottom, we have the dates for the 2026 meetings, and so be sure that you note those. We're locked into our various AP and SSC meetings coming up here in April.

I will take a moment here and talk about this highlighted edition, the Executive Committee webinar, and so we're planning an Executive Committee webinar in April. You know, we normally meet in the fall, to talk about the budget, but this is to potentially discuss whatever consequences there may be from this year's budget, and so we're hoping that, by April 11, the federal budget

issues are resolved, and we either have a status quo continuing resolution, or we have some kind of budget that we know what it's going to be for this year.

Right now, it's a great uncertainty, and so just trying to be proactive, in terms of -- Because of Federal Register noticing requirements and such, and the trouble with people's schedules, just getting a meeting out there, and so that's what that is about, and I want to talk a little bit about that in general, just the financial situation that we are facing.

It's been mentioned a lot. It's been hinted at a few times during the meeting, and so we went into a budget expecting just status quo, which is kind of how it's been for as long as anybody can remember, just very, very minor increases, and, so far, we've received about 40 percent of our expected funds, and so that's all that NMFS has conveyed to the councils, is about 40 percent of what we received last year so far. I'm very doubtful anything is going to be conveyed in the next week, with everything that's going on, and the lack of a budget, and the end of the continuing resolution, and so we really just don't know what all this is going to mean.

There does seem to be a pretty good chance, just from reading tea leaves and having commonsense of the potential for across-the-board cuts. If there's an across-the-board cut to NMFS, in all likelihood, as has always been the case in the past, all the councils too will also receive a similar across-the-board cut, and so we are trying to prepare for that likelihood now, doing things to be very precautionary in our funding, so that we can -- You know, hopefully this blows over, and it's not an issue, but, if we do get a cut, we want to be able to have the option of deciding which meetings can we do over webinars, and which do we need to do in-person, and not be forced to just say, well, sorry, I've got to do all this by webinar, or, heaven forbid, I have to have a reduction in force at the council staff.

We're trying to be very proactive at this time, and a few things we've done is focusing any staff travel just on the council business type things and criticals, and so there's been some other meetings, and other attendance, that we've said we're not going to do. I mentioned earlier in the week about not doing a couple of outreach events that are coming up.

You know, there are some things that we can do, because they're funded through our other sources, Coral, IRA, and the carryover, but, you know, things that are coming out of our basic admin grant, and that's the one we've only received 40 percent of.

We're withholding any purchasing that's not critical at the staff level. We haven't requested proposals from the states for the liaison grants yet, because we may have to adjust the amount, and that's pretty common that we don't request those until we actually see what our budget is. Most years, we have a better sense of what our budget is going to be before, you know, the March council meeting, and so, right now, we're dealing with a lot of uncertainty.

Then, when it comes to you guys, what I'm really asking for is your assistance when it comes to upcoming meetings. You know, we've been very generous with the funding that we've had, and coming out of COVID the last couple of years, and council members attending AP and SSC meetings. If you ask, we let you go.

I really want to ask for some assistance from you guys in the coming meetings. They're all available over webinar. Unless you really think you need to be there in-person, just consider

attending over webinar, just for this next round. If this blows over, and we're all good, then, you know, I think we can very much be back to normal in the fall, but, if we do have a 30 percent cut, we might wish that we had some of this money that we spent on travel to be able to spend on other things.

If you really want to attend, I would say just send a request to me and Jessica and Trish, and we'll kind of decide, and debate, but, you know, really just consider attending over the webinar, and, also, they're open public meetings. You as a person can show up like any other fishermen would and, you know, on your own nickel, and so it's really just about getting council reimbursement for that time to attend the meeting, because recall that, just because you're not being paid on council travel or to attend a meeting, it's an open public meeting, and you can show up to any meetings that you would like.

Then, also, when you do attend meetings, just take note of the hotel cutoffs, and the group rates, because I expect we may have to be quite a bit more hard-nosed about, well, you didn't make your reservation in time, and the hotel charged you more, and we're only going to reimburse the group rate, and so I'm just sort of letting you guys know, you know, this is the kind of reality. We're going to have to ratchet down on a number of these things. It's been wonderful, the last four years, to be super generous and all of this stuff, but I think we're looking at an entirely different situation for going into this year.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Just a question, and a clarification. When you were talking about AP attendance from council members, are you talking about chairs and vice chairs as well, or is that just an additional, in addition?

MR. CARMICHAEL: No, and I'm just talking about additional, and so, normally, chairs and vice chairs, and then the council chair can go, which they really are kind of busy and don't go that much, but, yes, and then we've also -- I think the handbook calls for like up to two other members to attend, just at, you know, the chair's discretion, and those who are interested, and we're really talking about those additional participants.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other questions for John on budget? All right. I think that's all. I guess now -- Do you got anything else, John?

MR. CARMICHAEL: No, and I was making sure I had nothing else to highlight on that, but no, and so you see the meetings that are coming up, and I highlighted the one change, and I think, yes, that concludes this, and so Other Business next, I suppose.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. I guess we will move into Other business, and Other Business being the comment letter to NMFS for the secretarial amendment. Is Mike covering that?

MR. CARMICHAEL: He probably knows where that is. I'll let him find it.

MS. MURPHEY: Can we -- I'll tell you what. Can I give everybody five minutes to read and to review it? Okay. Okay, and so everybody take a little bit of time and read it before we start back, but I would like to start back fairly quick.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MURPHEY: All right, everybody. Let's go ahead and get started. Hopefully everybody got a chance to review the notes that Mike sent, and, Mike, how do you want to go through? Do you want to just put your document up and go through? How would you like to do it, Mike, or what was your plan?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess, as you all have had a chance to review, ask questions if there are parts of this that seem unclear, or if you want any of this removed, or changed, and this is a point where we can get kind of large, overarching things, if you see any glaring issues. This will, of course, go through review by Trish and Jessica before it's sent off, but, if there's anything that's not in the direction, or representative, of what the council would like to convey in the letter, then this would be the time to bring that up.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Mike, and so do I have any -- Jessica, we'll let's start with you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and I'll try to start. I also have my notes from the other day, and so, if there's questions about some of the discussion, I have some of those notes as well. I'm wondering if we should start off, or, in certain parts of the letter, talk about how there wasn't consensus, you know, that we didn't all share the same view, et cetera.

I'm wondering, in those overall notes, if we kind of talk about the challenge in crafting this letter, because we're trying to kind of find things that most people agree on, a lot of people agree on, but just that there were times when we didn't agree. I don't know if, on some of those specific topics, we should mention that we were not in agreement, and so -- Then we just have a few points about what we could agree on, and so maybe we mentioned that a few times throughout the document, and so that was one of my things.

MS. MURPHEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Jessica, I agree with you there, and I think that's really fair, because that emphasizes one reason why this fishery is so difficult to manage, right?

MS. MURPHEY: All right, and I think everybody is in agreement with that, about some places where there were no consensus. Jessica, I'll just --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go to Robert.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Go ahead, Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Well, I also think some people might point to that being the reason why the Secretary should proceed with some actions here, because of our inability to find consensus, and so I would suggest that consensus was tough to find in the limited actions that we had. I think that we talked a lot about some options that were not included here, that we wanted to further explore, and so I remain confident that we can find consensus on how to deal with dead discards, but I don't think we had the tools in that document in front of us to deal with that at the time.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Robert. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: One of the things I had in my notes that we -- We had a long discussion on it, but I didn't see it listed in here, and I'm not sure where it goes, was that we're trying to improve descending device usage, and we're working on descending device outreach, et cetera. I didn't see that in the letter, and we had an extensive discussion on that.

MS. MURPHEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Yes, and I don't know exactly how to go about this, but, you know, one of the first comments I made yesterday was to voice a little bit of support for this, or, you know, have something positive to say, and I want to reiterate that today and make sure that it's not lost in this letter. You know, from a strictly commercial standpoint, for the State of North Carolina, this is a good thing. This helps us. It moves us in the right direction. It does a lot of positive things. There is a lot of good things in here.

Yes, they're hard to swallow in the short-term, but, yes, this is not all bad, and I do want to be on record saying that, you know, anytime we have an increase in ACL for an important species, it is a good thing, and, you know, status quo is not working here, as far as catch levels go, and so this increases catch levels, both recreationally and commercially, and that, in and of itself, is a good thing. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tim. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Tim, I wasn't completely clear on that, but I actually think that, based on Action 1 and 2, and Action 3, the increase of the catch level naturally is going to happen and not alternatives without the assumed reduction. When we change the F -- Well, we'll see what happens. We've got to go back through and recalculate that.

MS. MURPHEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Yes, but the way this is presented in the secretarial amendment, without the discard reduction portion, there is no increase in ACL. In fact, it's the opposite. It's a decrease.

MS. MURPHEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: To that point, I think Tim is exactly right. I think there needs to be -- Certainly for the people that I represent, they need to understand that this Amendment 59 is a net increase to the commercial fishermen of South Carolina, and anything other than that will be at the expense of the commercial fishermen of South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Kerry. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: That may be part of the issue of consensus, right, where there are at least some feelings here internally, right, and I've heard it again and again, right, there needs to be accountability, or, you know, fingers kind of pointed at the rec sector. The rec sector is just doing what they're supposed to do, in accordance with the rules, and so, you know, this opportunity to kind of shift some fish back to the commercial sectors is not something I could be supportive of.

MS. MURPHEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Well, we're not shifting any fish back to the commercial sector at all. We're just maintaining the fish that we have. The only shift in fish would be if the ACL is increased, but, right now, other than that, you're going to be decreasing fish. You're going to be taking fish away from the commercial sector, because the quota is going to go down.

MS. MURPHEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and, you know, there's -- Like Tim says, there's some good things in there, and there's some hard things in there. It's really hard to, you know, hear what we heard from public comment, but one of the -- There's lots of -- We talk about MRIP discard numbers, and it doesn't matter where they come from, and we know we have a discard problem, and it doesn't matter if the number is 500,000 or 300,000 or whatever. It's a lot. It's too much, and we get that from public comment.

We get that from everybody we talk to. I mean, across-the-board, commercial people, recreational people, everybody. We know there's a discard problem, and if we can start working -- If we just agree to start working toward the discard problem, then you're probably going to have to take hooks out of the water. There may be some other options that we can do, and descending devices may help, but I think if we, you know, just acknowledge that we know we've got this discard problem, and I think that's consensus, pretty much, and then we can start getting, you know, some more fish, but, whether we agree with the MRIP numbers or not, I don't know that that really matters because we already know we have a severe discard problem.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Charlie. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So I think we need to -- This is where I think we don't agree on the discards. I think that we all think that there's a discard issue, but part of the reason we sent back 35 had to do with MRIP. It had to do with overestimation, but, actually, our SSC chair, and past NOAA administrators, are on record as saying that discards can't be used for management in the current form that they're in. This is one of the reasons why Florida has these EFPs, to try to get more specific numbers and to try to test ways to reduce discards, because we don't know what the magnitude is.

That's why I'm saying you need to be careful in how you talk about that in this document, thinking about why we sent back 35, and what we said then, and I don't think there's consensus about discards and the magnitude, et cetera, now, and so I just -- I would be -- That's why I find it challenging to write this letter, and that's why I was suggesting that we kind of go through and put some statements in there about this disagreement.

Then I also understand that that's -- This was also why some people were uncomfortable with using some of the bullet points of why we sent 35 back, but it was partly because of MRIP and how the discard numbers could be -- They could be overestimated, or they could be underestimated, and we don't know those numbers, but that's one of the reasons why NOAA did the EFPs, and that's why some of us are going out and trying to not only get better numbers, but to try to think about ways to reduce it and not kind of worry about what the magnitude is.

MS. MURPHEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: You know, and, to that point, I understand we don't really -- There's a lot of wiggle room on what the number really is. To say that we don't need to just figure them in in management, I don't see that, because discards have actually caused this fishery to be basically nonexistent for everybody, but we need to address them, even if we don't know the exact number, as best we can.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Charlie. Jessica.

MS. MCCAULEY: Yes, but I guess -- Let me just caution us again, because we're at record abundance levels of red snapper. We are rebuilding at gangbuster levels. We have no other fishery that's doing this well. Think about the high levels of recruitment, and everything else has low recruitment, and we don't know why, and so that's why I'm saying that it's almost like that kind of what's happening here is we're being punished for being successful, which was exactly what happened with Gulf red snapper.

I just -- That's why I'm saying it's hard to write this letter and think about this. I think we recognize that there are discard issues, but red snapper might not even be the worst fish, with the worst discard issues, and it seems like black sea bass is actually worse, which is even more counterintuitive, if it's in state water, and so there's just a lot of issues here, and so I do, I guess, understand the challenges in going back to the 35, the reasons from 35 about why we sent it back, but it's --

Part of the issue here is because they're -- At least for me, and I'm not going to speak for others, that they're putting a specific number, and percentage, on it, in a preferred, and tying it in there with the ACL, and I think that we don't -- It makes it seem like it's a black-and-white number, when, really, it's some sort of a sliding scale, that we don't know, and so that's why it's challenging to write the letter.

Then I also -- I mean, the council was on record about all these things with Amendment 35, and then I don't know that anything has changed, other than we have this assessment that shows exactly what we all thought, that red snapper is even better than what we thought. It's rebuilding ahead of schedule, despite all these discards, and, holy crap, recruitment is so good, and, in everything else, recruitment is so bad, and so it's just -- I see why it's challenging to write the letter, but I'm also trying to help you understand where I'm coming from, why there's not consensus on it, and why, on some of these things, I'm like, well, wait a minute, it's not really consensus, and so that's just -- That's why I was trying to interject that in multiple places in the document.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jessica. Any other comments at this point? So what -- The additional bullets that Mike has added, has that -- Does that capture your discussions? I don't know if you need more about the discards, the discussion we just had on the discards, that it's not black-and-white. Anything?

MS. MURPHEY: I've got other topics.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay.

MS. MURPHEY: I think Kerry has a question.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Go ahead, Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, honestly, for me personally, I'm not not consenting because of the limited range of management actions in the amendment, and so maybe it says challenge in development comments, because there was not a consensus, period. One of the reasons, or something like that, and some of the -- I don't -- That's just not my reason that I'm not agreeing, personally.

MS. MURPHEY: Would you like to add something to that, or what -- Okay. So he's capturing it. Okay. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Yes, and, I mean, I think any solution -- As we sit here trying to figure out a solution for the entire fishery, any solution that, you know, benefits -- Moving forward, benefits one sector versus the other is going to be difficult to find consensus on. That's just going to be the case, which is why I think coming back and dealing with Charlie's point, the dead discards, in a holistic way. I mean, what happens next year, or the year after? Even if we move forward with this, dead discards still are not addressed. This is a temporary solution for an issue that we have to deal with on a perpetual basis.

MS. MURPHEY: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that's why I wanted to -- Because I think, after we talked about this, then there was the motion about looking at the recreational aggregate limits, which I think we're saying in the letter was not one of the management actions that was considered but rejected, and so maybe we should indicate that, you know, our intention is to consider a recreational aggregate.

I have a couple other points. Under the closure portion, two things on that, and so, at least from my perspective, I don't think that the tradeoff of closure for fifty-five, or fifty-four, species, or however many it is, is worth it to get a couple extra days of fishing for the recreational sector, for one species, and I didn't see it listed like that in there, as the word "tradeoff", but maybe there's a way to talk about the tradeoff and say that some members of the council feel, and then explain it that way.

That was also something that we heard from the public, and then there was one more thing inside the part about the closure section that said, if the agency pursues this action, the council recommends consideration of a region-wide one-month discard reduction area as a way to kind of spread out the pain, if you will, for these discard reductions. I don't know that there was consensus on that. It was just an idea that was thrown out. I don't know that there was -- We didn't, you know, check for consensus on that point.

MS. MURPHEY: Any thoughts of that comment going in tradeoff? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, we can get the comments around the council, around the table, right now on that. As far as I'm concerned, I would definitely think that could be an alternative, a viable alternative.

MS. MURPHEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Could you say that again? What are you saying was a viable alternative?

MR. PHILLIPS: Just to have a one-month closure for everybody. I mean, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, but that would just be recreational, and just spread it out.

MR. GRINER: Yes, and I like that. I think that's, you know, a good way to look at it, a good thing to explore. However, I think the numbers won't bear out that that bears any fruit. You know, I'm not sure, but, when you look at where the discards come from, that's the real problem with the red snapper. I mean, will a one-month across-the-board do what a three-month does in that one area?

That's really what you have to look at there, you know, and, going back to Jessica's point about the -- You know, the actual number of the discards themselves, I no more believe that number is correct than a man in the moon, just like the black sea bass, right? The problem is there's not much we can do about that number right now. Even if you said it was 40 percent off, you've still got a problem that we got to overcome, and so, you know, how we overcome that is the less -- Or the most efficient way is to go after the area where the discards are taking place.

In my mind, the real question that we've got to -- You know, that you've got to get your arms around is -- Is a total closure, all the way to the beach, better than a longer closure for a smaller area, where it still allows access, and it still allows people to catch that same species, and, I mean, you know, quite frankly, if you were in a headboat, you would go to seventy-nine feet of water in those areas and catch fish, and there's no two ways about that, and I don't know. I just caution you that a coast-wide closure for a shorter period of time will not -- I don't think it will accomplish the same number of discards. Now, if you did the coast-wide for the same period of time, you'll really get some bang for your buck.

MS. MURPHEY: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so I was -- I'm just going to go back -- I'm going to put Amy on the spot. She was the one that brought that up, and there was kind of a gap in the estimation percentages in the document, and so there was an option in there that was the whole area, and so North Carolina through Florida, through the Keys, and it was like -- It was a 32 percent, and it was like all of January, and most of February, or half of February, and so she was saying that we don't know what the percentage is if we chose the whole area, because if you -- The preferred was, I believe, 24 percent reduction in discards, and this was a 32 percent reduction in discards, and so she was saying maybe if we had that number, but Andy is coming to the table, and so I was just trying to refresh you on where that one-month thing came from, because we didn't have a number like that.

MR. GRINER: Yes. Thank you, and that would be really good to know.

MS. MURPHEY: I'm sorry, and I've got -- Let me get Andy, because he came to the table, and then I'll get Carolyn.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I'm not weighing-in on your letter. Obviously, you're writing it to the Fisheries Service, and just a couple of clarifying points, and so that 32 percent reduction also included a year-round closed area off of Jacksonville, which encompasses probably about 10 percent, or more, of that reduction, and so that's the reason you get a little bit more bang for your buck. Remember, with my presentation, about 87, or 88, percent of the discards are occurring in Florida, and so, when you extend it north, right, the bang for your buck diminishes considerably, because a small fraction of discards actually occur north of Florida.

Then I've heard a lot of comments about MRIP. Just recall, during my presentation, that we did those sensitivity runs. Regardless of what you think about them, the outcome was, obviously, that the assessment still was reaching similar conclusions with regard to status determination, and so I just wanted to add those clarifying points for your discussion.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. I've got Carolyn, then Robert, and then Charlie.

DR. BELCHER: Just a reminder though, again, as we talk about the MRIP estimates, two of the states that you're talking about, during January and February, are not sampling during those two months. Wave 1 is not sampled in Georgia, and I believe it's not sampled in South Carolina too, right?

MS. DUKES: To that point, this was the first year we started with the catch, but there is no effort going on and so, correct, we don't.

MS. MURPHEY: I had Charlie next.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, to Tim's point earlier, I mean, if the numbers can't get there, to where it makes a difference, then it just -- I was willing to look at it, and see what the numbers are, and, if it doesn't look like the numbers -- I will admit that I don't remember there being a year-round closure for that area off of Jacksonville, and so, yes, that's probably not going to be viable.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Charlie. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I've just got to reiterate again that this discussion is discussion that I look forward to us having here at the council. I mean, I even -- I almost feeling comfortable providing -- You know, this is a new idea, and it wasn't even in the secretarial amendment. We're throwing new ideas up to them, and so I just -- I don't even know where this is really going.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Robert. More comments?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I have a separate topic.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Jessica is going to take a separate topic here. Okay. Go ahead, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just, before the separate topic is kind of brought up, I put on the screen that you all -- I don't hear a consensus recommendation for this, and so just laying that out flat out in there, that the council doesn't have a consensus recommendation for this action.

MS. MURPHEY: I think that's correct.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, but did you add the thing about how we -- After we had this discussion, we made that motion about aggregate bag limits?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and I put that higher up in the document, but I can move that down.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I've got one more. In the economics section, in my notes, I had notes that said that we wanted to go back to Congressman Rutherford's comments and pull some of that economic information there, and ask for some additional economic information, and I didn't see that listed in the document either.

MS. MURPHEY: Robert, did you have something else?

MR. SPOTSWOOD: Yes, and, Mike, when you're done typing, if you can go back to the aggregate bag limit reference. I think the letter should state that the council has already taken action to start a process to address the dead discards, right, and we've had an amendment. Well, we are starting, or initiated, an amendment to work on addressing these, and so we have, in earnest, taken the first step at starting the work to do that.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Anybody have -- Okay. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I mean, in that note, is it worthy to mention the MSE that we have ongoing that's supposed to look at all of this stuff holistically?

MS. MURPHEY: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So I'm wondering if maybe there's a discussion that's about all the things that we have ongoing, and not just the aggregate limit, but the MSE, the EFPs that -- I think that that might go back to there are these things underway, and I think it goes back to the comment, which I saw in there, that there are a number of items here that maybe are really in the council's purview, and that we're working on it, and we're trying to get to it, and so I think that that's true. It's part of a bigger thing, where we're working on this from multiple angles, I guess.

MS. MURPHEY: That includes the public outreach, the education, and the MSE, and so yes. Anyone else have any comments, or anything that they saw in this document when they reviewed. that they would like to see added, taken out, edited? Does everybody -- Go ahead, Tim.

MR. GRINER: Yes, and I just wanted to go back and kind of clarify, and so we're saying the use of aggregate bag limits is not considered as a discard-reducing measure, and that's true. The council has initiated an amendment considering -- Considering this measure, and this is recreational only, and I think maybe we need to clarify that.

I guess maybe I would need to go back to that workplan. I want to make sure that, if we say that, is it in another document? Is it in the workplan document somewhere? Is it somewhere backed

up that we've done more than talk about it, that it's actually on the plan somewhere, and that it's got a slot?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, I saw that, and so, when I was looking at that Excel thing, I don't know that I saw it there, and so maybe John can tell us where it was. Maybe it was under -- Like maybe it was inside the MSE. I couldn't tell where it was. Is that right?

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I asked John. Jessica, I asked John about this, and he said that we had talked about it in the meeting, that we were going to do that as part of the MSE.

MS. MURPHEY: The aggregate is going to be part of the MSE?

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Correct.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: So it will be coming back. Well, I'll go back to Tim, when he feels that's clear, but I also think we also said that we're going to explore aggregate bag limits and other potential opportunities to reduce.

MR. GRINER: Yes, and maybe we just need to make that clear that it's not a separate amendment, that it's within the MSE that's already ongoing.

MS. MURPHEY: I concur with that, but I'll let John -- John has come up to the table.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and, you know, we have kind of the next phase of the MSE, and the basic tool has been built, and looking at trying to get it actually focused on management things that we're considering, and what Chip and I have been talking about is, you know, we haven't sent out the next phase of that, and we're waiting to see, but making that really focus on the aggregate limit aspects, you know, within those fisheries.

We're thinking, you know, we can look at it descriptively, but then this would be a way to say what does this do on a group of species, and truly on all their populations and stuff, and so I think that would be really helpful and give us the kind of information we need to show the utility of such a new regulation, where we're kind of treading a new territory here, in terms of the impact, and so I think that's going to be really important to letting us use that effectively, and so, yes, we heard that, and we're planning on that, and so that would put that right into that amendment.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John, for clarifying that. Other thoughts on this, if anybody would like to add -- Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I just -- I want to be clear about -- To make sure that the word is in there, but it says to optimize fisheries performance, however we do it, and, you know, the goal is to reduce dead discards, and so I'll make sure we got that language in there.

MS. MURPHEY: I think Mike is getting at that then. Is that okay? Is that okay, Robert? John.

DR. WALTER: Thanks. I'm not really commenting on the letter per se, but just a little -- Sharing a little bit of a concern about some of the potential precedent setting that I think we don't want this action to necessarily do. Remember that a secretarial action is a rare and really unprecedented and exceptional circumstance.

It's not something that the agency wants to embark upon without the council as a partner. It's not something the council wants to have happen, and so I think we want to be careful, in a lot of ways, not to set precedence that would potentially wind up having unintended knock-on consequences, and there's a couple of places in the letter that could probably be a little bit maybe polished.

Like there's the use of during overfishing in quotes, which, since overfishing is, one, a legal definition, and a very specific one, it's probably not good to have it be sort of left like that. It could probably just be removed, in that case, in terms of there may be different interpretations of the magnitude of what was going on, but there is strictly a legal definition. We probably don't want to leave things to be somewhat like nebulous there, just in that sense. There might be a couple of other places, and I would say, just to the authors of it, just to look at it such that there isn't situations that kind of leave doors open to unfortunate precedence. I'm happy to chat offline with some other things that I've seen in it. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John. All right. More comments? Jessica, do you have more, or did we get all your list?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Any other comments? Is everybody good with what we've added here, and then staff will be putting this letter together, and Jessica and I will review it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Before the deadline.

MS. MURPHEY: Before the deadline. All right. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Well, will your final draft of the letter come back to the council members, or it will just go out?

MS. MURPHEY: It will go out, but you guys will get a copy. Everybody will get the final copy, as is typical, and so any other -- I assume we are done with this discussion. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Under Action 4, we talked significantly, yesterday, about this idea of law enforcement, and I'm struggling with the word "unfeasible" in one of those bullets. I think perhaps maybe softening that might just be a little bit helpful, under Action 4. "Challenging", and that would be a good one. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Amy. I think that was good addition. Anything else? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Just a quick question, and so I know we're going over bullets right now, and I know that you and Jessica have final say on the letter, but will we see a draft letter? We won't see any kind of form of the draft letter, just to kind of see how all the comments come together?

MS. MURPHEY: No, and I think -- I think it's going to -- As we typically do, and we've had the opportunity now, and it will be written up, and Jessica and I will review it for final sending out, and then, once it's finalized and sent, you guys will all get a copy.

DR. BELCHER: So, if there is, by some chance, something that kind of rolls around in our head between now and Monday, is there anything that we can do to bring it to the council, or not? I'm just thinking in terms of we've reviewed the bullets, and they're still -- As you're trying to coalesce a lot of this, and I'm just trying to figure out, if something were to kind of shake loose between now and Monday, and not that it would, but --

MS. MURPHEY: I think Myra is coming up.

MS. BROUWER: So, I guess my suggestion would be that you send an email through them. There's just not going to be a whole lot of time to get this letter to where everybody just is happy with it.

DR. BELCHER: I was just thinking if there were something that -- Again, as we've gone through and clarified, there's still -- I mean, I'm still chewing through on some things, and I don't have a fundamental disagreement with anything we've got in there. It's just, like I said, as things start evening out, and you're thinking about other things, because I'm also working on my letter for the state and so that's kind of where I think the struggle is a little bit, for me, but maybe that doesn't matter, because I'll catch it at the state level, as opposed to the council.

MS. MURPHEY: I've got Jessica, and then Tim. Thank you, Carolyn.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that's what I was going to say, is you could always put it in your state letter that you're submitting. It's similar for us. You know, we're still thinking about it. We're still pulling data for the state letter, and I know that there's not going to be consensus around all the items, you know, that are going to be in our state letter, and so that's why I was trying to caveat, caveat, caveat this letter, but, yes, I would say it can also go in your state letter, for sure.

MS. MURPHEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Yes, and I agree. I mean, I hear you loud and clear, Carolyn, and I just -- I hate that it's such a short timeframe, that, you know, all of a sudden, we've got this in front of us, and we've got -- You know, we're in real time to get your comments here, and then it's pulled away from you, and you don't get to see the final product, and I agree, and, you know, it seems like the ride home, or whatever, you might have some other things may pop in your head, or tomorrow, or some other --

You know, before Monday, but, you know, the other problem with that is individually emailing the chair, or vice chair, to add something to a letter doesn't -- Without everybody else getting to review it, it doesn't give you the opportunity to respond to something new that goes into the letter, and so I don't like that either, you know, and so I don't know. Like Myra said, you know, this is

such a short timeframe, and I just don't know if that's feasible. I just -- You know, I wouldn't like the thought of me sending in a bunch of bullet points that got put in this letter without any of you guys having the opportunity to say, you know, that's crazy, Tim, and what are you talking about?

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tim. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I don't really -- I understand both points, but, you know, it's like Amy changing "unfeasible" to "challenging". You know, if there's a suggestion that still fits within the intent, I don't have a problem with that. If it's a totally different bullet point, Tim is right, but if it's just something, you know, that's still within the intent, I don't have a problem with that.

MR. GRINER: That's a good -- That's a good clarification, Charlie. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Carolyn, do you have anything else or --

DR. BELCHER: No, and, I mean, that's kind of where I was going with. I mean, it's back to, again, what we're wordsmithing, and was it too strong, or is it not strong enough, and, you know, to the level of John's comment was taken at least from the understanding of not being, you know, a little dismissive with how you're using terminology.

That's -- I just -- You know, again, thinking about how people are taking away what they're currently reading. If you chew on it a little more, you're like maybe that's not the intent of what we were saying, but, again, I definitely don't have a problem with it. I was just hoping that we would see more of the letter, as opposed to the bullets. That's all, is just how it all comes together.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and I appreciate that, and everybody's concerns, but, I guess, with the speed that we've got to get this done, and I think everyone has gotten an opportunity here to look at this, and discuss it pretty fully, and we've got Mike -- I mean, staff, and I trust staff to put together a really good draft, and then we'll just review it, remembering these, and I took notes from this discussion as well, and so we'll review it to the best of our ability, that it captured this discussion. Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I just note, in the Federal Register Notice of Availability and Proposed Rule, there's two ways you can submit the comments. One is to put it on the regulations.gov. The other one is to submit written comments to Nikhil Mehta, and it gives the address. You just might want to do both, and so the public can see your comments even more quickly. Otherwise, I'm assuming Nick would upload it to regs.gov.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Monica, for that. Robert, did you have something?

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Andy, when we had the presentation on this, were our comments, or discussion there, incorporated, or were they taken as comments, or was that mostly just for us to have discussion, and this is the only way that our comments are getting back to your team?

MR. STRELCHECK: So the questions and statements you made during the Q&A are not summarized. We did, obviously, take notes, but we're accepting, obviously, the formal comments

through regulations.gov, your letter, as well as, obviously, the public comments we received during in-person meetings.

MS. MURPHEY: Anything else? Seeing none, no other business, then I adjourn this meeting. Thank you all very much. I'm sorry. Unadjourned. Unadjourned.

MS. BROUWER: We need to correct, on the record, that the motion that was approved to initiate an amendment to look at aggregate bag limits is something that's going to come out of the management strategy evaluation, and that was not clear, and so I had suggested that we bring back up the Snapper Grouper Committee, and make that clarification under that motion.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on March 7, 2025.)

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Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
April 7, 2025

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Hemilright	Dewey
Horton	Chris
Huber	Jeanette
Hull	Jimmy
Iberle	Allie
Iverson	Kim
Klasnick	01Kelly
Klibansky	Lara
Knowlton	Kathy
Larkin	Michael
Lazarre	Dominique
Lee	Jennifer
Marhefka	00Kerry
Marinko	Jeff
Masi	Michelle
Matter	Vivian
McGill	Maria
Mehta	Nikhil
Merck	Nicole
Moore	Jeff
Murphey	Trish
Oliver	Ashley
Ott	Emily
Package-Ward	Christina
Ramsay	Chloe
Records	David
Reichert	Marcel
Roller	Tom
Schmidtke	Michael
Seward	McLean
Silvas	Rachael
Smart	Tracey
Smit-Brunello	Monica
Spurgin	Kali
Sramek	Mark
Stephen	Jessica
Stephens	Haley
Stephenson	Sarah
Sweetman	CJ
Turley	Brendan
Vara	Mary
Waine	Mike

Waldo	Jennifer
Walia	Matt
Walsh	Jason
Walter	John
Wamer	David
Webb	Greyson
White	Geoff
Wiegand	Christina
Withers	Meg
Zapf	Daniel
burgess	Erika
collier	chip
gwin	earlgwin
I	I
leonard	edward
moss	david
sandorf	Scott
thomas	suz
vecchio	Julie
zales	bob
Alnes	Alex
Alger	Brett
Amick	Scott
Aukeman	Trip
Baker	Scott
Balderson	John
Batsavage	Chris
Beaty	Julia
Bell	Mel
Binion-Rock	Samantha
Bogdan	Jennifer
Bristle	William
Brogan (Oceana)	Gib
Bubley	Walter
Buntin	Jesse
Carrigan	Abby
Carvalho	Avelino
Cathey	Andrew
Charydczak	Jenna
Cody	Richard
Coffill-Rivera	Manuel
Conklin	Christopher
Corey	Morgan
Cox	Jack

Dancy	Kiley
Darrow	Jamie
Davis	Christopher
Davis	Conor
DeFilippi Simpson	Julie
DeJohn	Frank
Delrosario	Leeanne
Denson	LaTreeese
Dieveney	Beth
Dobbs	Jeffrey
Dyar	Ben
Flowers	Jared
Fluech	Bryan
Foor	Brandon
Forrestal	Francesca
Foss	Kristin
Franco	Crystal
Franco	Dawn
Franke	Emilie
Gahm	Meghan
Gamboa-Salazar	Keilin
Garber	Chip
Gatchell	Courtney
Gentner	BRAD
Gomez	Josalyn
Griffin	Aimee
Grist	Joseph
Haddad	Nick
Hale	Robert
Harrison	Alana
Hart	Hannah
Hendon	Read
Hiers	Homer
Hildreth	Delaine
Hill	Kaleigh
Hollensead	Lisa
Horn	Calusa
Howard	Lawton
Howell	Mary
Kalinowsky	Chris
Karnauskas	Mandy
Keppler	Blaik
Ketn	Russell
Kimrey	Captain Chris

Klibansky	Nikolai
Kolmos	Kevin
Lam	Sarah
Levy	Mara
Lewis	Savannah
Lloyd	Victor
Loeffler	Michael
Lorenzen	Kai
MCCLAIR	GENINE
Malinowski	Richard
Markwith	Anne
Markwith	Anne
Mason	Gina
McGovern	Jack
McWaters	Mark
McWhorter	Will
Mendez-Ferrer	Natasha
Merrifield	Mike
Meyer-Gutbrod	Erin
Mitchell	Kathy
Muffley	Brandon
Murphy	Allison
Neer	Julie
Newman	Thomas
Nietert	Dessie Anne
Norelli	Alex
Nuttall	Matthew
Ostroff	Jenny
Owens	Marina
Paul	Eric
Pehl	Nicole
Petersen	Andrew
Peterson	Cassidy
Pierce	Brett
Poholek	Ariel
Poland	Stephen
Porch	Clay
Potter	Caroline
Ralston	Kellie
Ramsey	J
Reding	Brandon
Reese	Dylan
Reichert	Marcel
Rios	Adyan

Robbins	Megan
Runde	Brendan
Rutherford	John
Sagarese	Skyler
Salmon	Brandi
Shaffer	Charles
Shertzer	Kyle
Shirley	Jody
Shultz	Chris
Siegfried	Kate
Sinkus	Wiley
Smillie	Nick
Smith	Matthew
Snyder	Dave
Solinger	Laura
Somereve	Jake
Spanik	Kevin
Spottswood	00Robert
Stam	Geoff
Stein	Sarah
Stemle	Adam
Stevens	Molly
Stewart	Jimmy
Takade-Heumacher	Helen
Thompson	Laurilee
Vaughan	Nathan
Wheatley	Thomas
Wilhelm	Catherine
Williams	Erik
Williams	John
Williams	Travis
Wilms	Olivia
Woodstock	Matt
colby	barrett
curtis	Joe
everett	Nathan
hallett	fletcher
lavine	craig
oden	jeff
scott	sean
shervanick	kara
vincent	matthew
zales	robert