

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL SESSION II

**The Beaufort Hotel
Beaufort, North Carolina**

December 6-8, 2023

Transcript

Council

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Observers and Participants

Other observers and participants attached.

The Full Council Session II of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at The Beaufort Hotel, Beaufort, North Carolina, on Wednesday, December 6, 2023, and was called to order by Chairman Carolyn Belcher.

DR. BELCHER: If everybody can please come back, we're going to go ahead and get started. Janet is going to speak with us today, and, Janet, if you don't mind, would you let us know your title and responsibilities, just for the record? Thank you.

MS. COIT: Good afternoon. My name is Janet Coit, and I am the Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries, also sometimes known as the Director of the National Marine Fisheries Service, and so thank you so much, Carolyn. Thank you for inviting me. Thank you, council members and staff, council staff, NOAA staff and leaders, and all the stakeholders, for the discussions here today, for the discussions that we had last evening, and it's really a pleasure to be here, and I appreciate your commitment, your tireless commitment, to managing our nation's fisheries.

I truly never cease to be amazed at the work that these councils do, and so, really, hats off to you for the tremendous work confronting difficult issues here in the Southeast region. You have a very hard job, and, on behalf of the Secretary of Commerce, and the head of NOAA, Dr. Rick Spinrad, I just want to say thank you. Thank you for the important work you do for the benefit of the public and the benefit of the resource.

As mentioned, we're part of the Department of Commerce, and it's on my mind every day, and I imagine on all of yours, the importance to the economies of your communities for the work that you do, and so we have a lot of diverse economic interests, and sectors, that are supported, working families and communities, by this work. It's always on our minds. I want to acknowledge Andy Strelcheck and John Walter, all of the staff at NOAA who are such high-caliber people, with such integrity. Thank you, Monica and Shep and our Office of Law Enforcement, and all the folks who are in the room keeping us on track. Thank you.

The requirements, and the standards, for our work, for your work, are set forth in the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and I know that you have a full plate. I talked earlier about the importance of that act, in terms of bringing stakeholders, and interested folks, to the table to bring perspectives to bear, to make sure that we make good decisions. The transparency, and the engagement, in that process are so important, and so your work to ensure that overfishing does not occur, to work to end overfishing when it does occur, to reduce discards, particularly with regard to the snapper grouper species, to address climate change impacts, and the potential shifts in the species you manage, is complex and consequential, and so, again, I just want to acknowledge the value of the work, and I thought I would start by highlighting a couple of your efforts, just during the past fiscal year, because it really is amazing.

In the past year, the council, in partnership, of course, with NOAA Fisheries, completed seven amendments intended to modify catch limits, end overfishing, and rebuild overfished stocks. You're working hard to explore innovative options to reduce dead discards in the South Atlantic region, and I very much appreciate your citizen science and your best fishing practices, the initiatives around those, and your work aligns very much with my priorities, and so I wanted to just call that out.

First, confronting climate change, the climate crisis is one of the issues of our time, and, across NOAA, and across the nation, we're confronting changes to the ecosystems regarding impacts of climate change, while simultaneously trying to carefully safeguard habitats, restore imperiled species, and build healthier and more resilient ecosystems. We know that climate change is already impacting our nation's marine ecosystems and the communities and economies that depend on them, warming waters, more intense storms, sea-level rise, acidification.

We need to understand what's happening, and I want to commend those of us who were at the dinner last night and heard lightning talks that were really informative about the impacts of climate change, how we're using new tools to understand that, and I thought they were also inspiring, or hopefully, in that some of the presentations demonstrated that, despite the uncertainty and the unknowns, you have information on hand to make good decisions.

In regard to climate change, I want to, again, commend you for the work that the South Atlantic Council has done and coordinated with the Mid, and with the New England Council, around the climate change scenario planning. That's been a multiyear process, and an east coast climate change group has developed out of that process, and you have a list of action items that are intended to improve our ability to respond to climate change along the east coast, and we want to work with you to press forward. I think that new group is a great example of the collaboration, and the initiative, of the councils as we tackle some of the governance, and the management, issues associated with shifting stocks, changing distribution, prey/predator relationships affected by climate change.

I wanted to acknowledge that, about a month ago, you sent a letter to NOAA in regard to our initial draft guidance under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, Section 304(f), in regard to governance when there are fisheries that inhabit multiple geographies and how we should look at potentially changing the locus of the council that creates an FMP, or creates species FMPs, that are managed by multiple councils, and you have some experience in that already, and I talked to John about that over lunch, and your letter was filled with constructive criticism, and so we always appreciate that. I know you're worried about instability, and so are we, and you're worried about the differences in data that is collected in New England and in the South Atlantic, and you raised a lot of good points, and so we're taking those. We have lots of comments, and we are considering them now, and we will certainly be going back to the councils before we make -- With the next round, with the next iteration, before we make any decisions there. It is a responsibility, and an authority, under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and so that's something that we take seriously, and we want your input, so that we do it well.

Also, just the -- I saw recently that "rizz", which means charisma, is the word of the year, but I am going to nominate "non-stationarity" as the word of the year next year, because I hear it so much in regard to these climate change challenges. Our chief scientist likes to say this isn't your grandfather's ocean, and I think some of the graphs that certainly I've seen over the course of the last couple of years, and that we saw last night, demonstrate that the way species are behaving, and the ecosystems are changing, is not something in line with past practice, and so, again, I just can't overemphasize, I think, how difficult the job is right now and how exciting it is to be on the councils and grappling with these issues.

I just wanted to briefly, since I'm talking about climate change, mention offshore wind. It was interesting, Bob's report-out, because I come from New England, and I'm from Rhode Island,

home of the nation's first offshore windfarm, off the coast of Block Island, a little island eleven miles offshore, but it's interesting how those issues also play out differently in different regions, and I would like to simply say that we've learned a lot in New England, and that I think that the South Atlantic will be better prepared to work with the developer community on the siting and mitigation of impacts of offshore wind, because the first few projects are already underway in New England, and it's something that I put a lot of time into, and I'm happy -- Andy joins regular meetings on that, and I'm happy to work more closely with the council, but, from what I heard, it doesn't sound like there's the same degree of conflict with surveys with commercial fishing, but certainly this administration has great ambitions to scale-up offshore wind, and that's clear, and it becomes a crowded ocean, at times, and so that's been a big focus of mine, to look at how do we mitigate those impacts and have clean energy offshore, as well as healthy and abundant fisheries.

A few other priorities that I wanted to mention, and one is equity and environmental justice. That's a priority for me, and for the administration. You know, it's really focused on -- We're serving all communities, with the work that we do, and, when you look back historically, not all communities had the same seat at the decision-making table, the same access to fisheries, and so that's something that we're looking at, in terms of a strategy that we developed, and I know that the South Atlantic did many scoping meetings, and had input from all four states, and I know that Andy is going to report on that later. Like fisheries management, it touches down differently in different regions, but it is a priority of mine, and I'm really interested to see what this council, and what this region, does around equity and environmental justice.

This year, we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Endangered Species Act. For us, it's a celebration. It's one of our nation's strongest laws, and it was enacted fifty years ago this month, and it passed unanimously in the United States Senate, overwhelmingly in the United States House of Representatives, and I noted that we're in the Rachel Carson Conference Room, and so I think a commitment to conserving biodiversity is really core to our values, and the Endangered Species Act is a demonstration of Congress's commitment, at least fifty years ago, to conservation.

I was asked, by John, to mention endangered North Atlantic right whales, and so they are, obviously, one of the iconic species under the Endangered Species Act that affect your work here along the Atlantic coast, and it's been challenging -- There's less than 370 individuals left, and we've been experiencing an unusual mortality event with right whales, and some other whales along the Atlantic, and it's been challenging to come up with additional mitigation measures to try to stop the decline and promote the recovery of right whales.

I wanted to mention a few, and I think you're probably well aware that vessel strikes and entanglement in fishing gear are the two top reasons for mortality of right whales, and so, when you look at the levers that we have to improve their status, those are the two places that we look. We have a draft -- We have a proposed rule out on vessel speed.

In place since 2008 has been a vessel speed rule that requires the reduction in speed to ten knots for vessels sixty-five feet and over in certain zones, and we have found, primarily due to climate change, that where the right whales are following their prey is different from where they were when we created that rule, and so the new proposed rule changes the geographical and the temporal nature of the areas where that rule would apply, and so, in other words, we know now where whales have been for the last fifteen years, and when they're there, generally, and we're trying to make sure that we have vessel speed restrictions that are aligned with where these whales are at different

times of the year, and so we changed the geographies in the proposal, and then the probably most controversial aspect is the proposed rule applies -- During the time of year that the rule would be in place applies it to smaller vessels, and the proposal is all the way down to thirty-five feet, and so that --

I was having some conversations about the yesterday, and that is, of course, well beyond fishing vessels, but it does affect charter boats, recreational vessels, and many, many other vessels involved in commerce or recreation, and so we got a lot -- We had over 90,000 comments in response to that rule, when the proposed rule was issued over a year ago, and that's something that we have been evaluating all of the input and hope to have a final rule that will be responsive to the input, but will also be protective of whales, and so that's one thing that I know is of a lot of interest in this area.

Secondly, and perhaps not of as much interest as it is in the Gulf of Maine, but we are also looking at reducing entanglement, and that involves both investing in development of ropeless gear technologies, looking at the interoperability and how having ropeless gear that isn't marked by end-line buoys, and how that interacts with other types of fisheries, and I mentioned last night, and I know that you're doing some work for pot fisheries around black sea bass, and I really commend that, and we're working hard to improve this technology, and make it affordable, so that we can maintain the lobster and Jonah crab and other pot fisheries, while reducing the millions of vertical lines that are in the waters and that inevitably end up increasing the risk of entanglement of endangered right whales.

That's another area of focus, and, in fact, Congress provided \$20 million, and that just went out, through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, in grants, to further develop ropeless gear, and then, lastly, on that, we are working hard to identify new technologies that can help with detection of right whales, detection avoidance.

I guess we're looking at that in two ways, and one is better monitoring, and so we have a partnership with NASA, and we're working with the Navy, and can we do a better job of knowing where the whales are, so that they can be avoided and so that we can reduce the footprint of the restrictions that we're imposing on others, and then new technologies on vessels that would facilitate -- There's infrared technology, and other things in development, that would facilitate detection, so that whales could be avoided. It was interesting, last night, the LED lights, and I'm not saying that's going to work for whales, but, you know, some of the deterrent ideas that people have used with other species I think is another area of interest.

We're having a vessel strike risk reduction technology workshop in March, March 5 through 7, to be exact, and I hope that some people from this council will participate in that, and I think it's a promising area, and we are investing now, really heavily with our Inflation Reduction Act dollars, to try to accelerate work to improve the future for North Atlantic right whales, and I call them out because they're relevant, but, obviously, there's a lot of work on other listed species, and we heard an interesting presentation about sea turtles last night.

Okay, and so I wanted to mention right whales and conservation priorities, and I also wanted to mention our National Seafood Strategy, and that is, of course, aimed at commercial fisheries, but I'm pretty excited about doing more from our bully pulpit, and with our science, and with our bullhorn, to let people know that we have the best-managed fisheries in the world, that fish from

our oceans is healthy, and that you can be sure, if you're eating American seafood, that you're eating seafood that was sustainably harvested and that is helping our economy and is good for you.

We have a number of -- I don't want to get too into the details on that, but we have a National Seafood Strategy, and we're working on an implementation plan, and part of it is just talking about the work that you do, but other parts of it involve trying to have a stronger voice in trade, and other parts of the Department of Commerce are responsible for some aspects of our trade policy, as well as, you know, looking for partnerships across government, with USDA, with other large buyers, with states, to promote our seafood. That's kind of a passion project for me, and it's something that I did a lot in my Rhode Island job, and I think we can do more and better.

I wanted to mention, since I just had some local shrimp for lunch, that probably most relevant, in terms of the National Seafood Strategy, from what at least I've learned over the last couple of days, may be the shrimp industry's current economic struggles.

I know we got a number of letters from states asking us to declare a fishery disaster, and, as always, we have to apply the law to the facts, and, under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, what's going on, with the prices and the sort of flooding of the market with shrimp, does not qualify as a fisheries disaster under our Magnuson-Stevens Act, but I do think that there's more that we can do to help assist the industry, in cooperation with other federal agencies, and so part of our seafood strategy is just looking for ways to leverage our know-how, and our relationships, to move other federal agencies and move trade policy.

Shifting gears, you know, we talk, all the time, about science-based decision-making, and our statutes require the best available science, and I know you're all committed to, and aiming for, true ecosystem-based fisheries management, and I can't recall who I was talking to yesterday, but, you know, the work you've done on menhaden is probably the best example of that, but I wanted to address a couple of issues head-on, when it comes to science and data, and one is the Marine Recreational Information Program, affectionately known as MRIP, and I know you're all aware of that program, which attempts to, or does, track year-to-year data, as well as long-term trends, around recreational fishing effort.

It supports the work that you do, the stock assessments and the management, and we are committed -- We are constantly looking to improve our data collection, and I know the states are as well, with some additional responsibility in North Carolina right now along those lines, but, anyway, there's been a lot of discussion about MRIP, after the Fishery Effort Survey, FES, and I think -- I expect that most people in the room know that a recent pilot study that we did, and we're constantly examining this information and trying to do better, and it suggested that the order of the questions led to an overestimation of the private boat and shore-based fishing effort.

I think that's something we've been hearing for a long time, and I had a conversation last night that, when something doesn't seem right, maybe look into it more, and we certainly did that, and we know that we need to further consider how to improve that data, and that's something that we're committed to doing. We're committed to doing it with the states, and we want to be very transparent, and get good ideas, and have it be a true partnership.

I just want to acknowledge that that creates -- It's disruptive for the work that you're doing, and it creates some real challenges, in terms of your management actions, and so I know that you are

thinking of kind of putting a few things on hold, as we sort out what it means if we've overestimated catch, and how to move forward in a consistent way. One of the things that we're doing is moving to monthly, instead of every-other-month, sampling, but there's a number of things that we're going to do in 2024, and I just wanted to acknowledge that, and that we need to work closely with you and that it is disruptive.

Secondly, I wanted to mention the SEFHIER program and just commend you for being proactive there and working hard to get better data from the recreational sector through SEFHIER, the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting, which implements the electronic reporting for the for-hire vessel catch data for nearly 2,000 vessels, I'm told, in the South Atlantic. That program, of course, was another endeavor intended to provide more accurate and reliable fisheries information about the for-hire catch effort and discards, and so I think the electronic reporting, through that SEFHIER, can really provide timely and accurate and reliable information, and so it's the kind of collaboration that gives us access to key data, and we want to continue.

There's been a lot of talk about new apps, and new approaches, and I think the key is to have consistent standards and for the participants in the for-hire industry to know that the data is used, and is useful, and so I look forward to working to improve that system, and, of course, red snapper.

They're always a hot topic, and I have to say that red snapper didn't come up once in the ten years that I oversaw the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management and Fisheries in Rhode Island, and so it's been a real learning curve for me, and I certainly have appreciated it, and I've learned a lot from multiple briefings, from Andy and Clay Porch and John and others, but I know how important red snapper are to this region, and there is such passion around the issues around science, access to the fishery, discards, and it's something that I have spent a lot of time on.

We're definitely working with you on integration of the Great Red Snapper Research Program in the South Atlantic, and we know that that research track will begin next year, through SEDAR, and then I just wanted to highlight the opportunity for test piloting some innovative new strategies to reduce discards, and, just last month, the opportunity to submit proposals closed, and we received a lot of proposals, which are currently under review, and we will share the outcomes, and the grant process, next year on these new approaches to reduce red snapper dead discards, and so my hope is that the research that's ongoing, and the pilot programs, will certainly further our understanding of the health and the management of the red snapper fishery, and certainly that that will -- Our hope is we want better outcomes, and we want to increase fishing opportunities in the snapper grouper fishery, and I just want to highlight that there's a lot of work going on around that, and a lot of goodwill towards addressing those issues and reducing dead discards.

In closing, all of these issues -- I'm really only touching on a few things that are of importance, and the scope of fisheries -- I heard, at a presentation last week, that our responsibility to manage fisheries in the EEZ is a geography as big as the continental U.S., and so it is a big, awesome responsibility that I have, and I appreciate it, and I could never do this work but for the support of the staff at NOAA and the councils, and so I will continue to engage.

It's so valuable for me to come and meet and talk to folks face-to-face, and I really want to highlight the importance of all the constituents who are here, and all the people that participate in the advisory panels, in the council meetings, and I truly think that wise management of our resources

depends on that level of participation, and so thank you, again, and it is an honor to be here and to learn more about your ideas, and your challenges, and, again, I'm very grateful, and thankful, for all that you do. Thank you for having me, and I'm happy to answer questions or to engage in a dialogue. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Thank you, Janet. In the interest of time, what I would like to do is, if there are questions for Janet, I would like for it to be on topics that weren't necessarily things that Janet had touched on, and so, if there are those types of questions first, and I'm going to look around the room for that, and, if nobody has any, then we can go ahead and take just a couple minutes for questions. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: That packet that I gave you would make a lot more sense if I had thought to print my questions, and so can I email them to you?

MS. COIT: Sure.

MS. THOMPSON: Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, Janet. Thanks for being here, and I appreciate your remarks. I'm just curious, and what is the agency's goal for releasing, I guess, what will be I assume the next version of the vessel speed rule? I know it's been put off, and I think everybody is very interested to know what is a realistic projection of the timing of that.

MS. COIT: Sure, and, well, I think your question is about timing, but, because at first I misunderstood it, I want to say that, obviously, the goal of the new vessel speed rule is to reduce significantly the risk to endangered North Atlantic right whales from being struck and killed, or mortally injured, by vessels. I had hoped -- We had hoped to get the rule finalized before the calving season, and we've already seen at least one new calf, and so I would say a more realistic timeframe, right now, is probably early in 2024.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. I will take two more questions. Jessica had her hand up.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Carolyn, and thank you so much, Janet, for coming to visit us here at our council. You mentioned that shrimp does not qualify for a fishery disaster, and you said that there might be some other ways to help, and I guess I was wondering if you had any ideas, or should states just get with you, or should the shrimp industry get with you, about some steps forward here for the shrimp industry in the southeastern U.S.?

MS. COIT: Thank you. I think, you know, I had -- A lot of the information that I received I sent along to our International Trade Administration, which is another part of the Department of Commerce, and then I had some -- I did not personally, but some of the staff then had follow-up conversations with them, and so, Jessica, I think I would suggest -- I would be happy to set up a meeting, but I would have to have broader than NOAA Fisheries to talk about what are some -- I know there are some ideas that are being discussed right now, and nothing that's going to be a silver bullet, but things that might be able to address progress long-term, and so why don't we follow-up?

DR. BELCHER: Okay. One last person in the queue. Does anybody have an additional question at this point? Okay. Seeing none, thank you again, Janet, for your comment today, and it was greatly appreciated.

MS. COIT: Thank you very much. Thank you, everyone.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on December 6, 2023.)

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DECEMBER 7, 2023

THURSDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

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The Full Council Session II of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at The Beaufort Hotel, Beaufort, North Carolina, on Thursday, December 7, 2023, and was called to order by Chairman Carolyn Belcher.

DR. BELCHER: While we're waiting for everybody to come back, we will be doing a little bit of reordering, and it's just that, right now, John has recommended moving the Council Coordination Committee report to later in our discussions, with the idea that we may be able to bank some time to do the closed session this afternoon, and so we would be able to do our Executive Director review as well as go back and talk about those few AP things that we need to tie up. We could start with -- John, if you want to start us off with the Staff Report, I can circle back around for Monica.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I will, yes, and I don't -- I think she said earlier that I'm not sure she has any more litigation brief, but, if she does, we'll do that, and so the staff report is a little lighter, mainly because we've had a lot of the committees meeting that don't normally meet, such as Citizen Science, and I did want to highlight, you know, just to start out, how well I feel like Tuesday night went, and just really give thanks to the Science Center folks who came out and talked.

I think we all got a lot from that, and it was good to see some of the things that are going on, that we don't always hear about, and some of the research that's going into the issues that we keep dealing with, non-stationarity in particular, as Janet highlighted, and that could have a big impact on us in the future, and so, you know, thanks, John, for that idea, and I'm glad that we were able to come up with a venue, and you were able to get folks in here to speak, and I think it was a really good night for everybody.

We got a good review of the website, and Nick continues to add content on that, keeping up with, you know, reaching further back into the archives, to get the older information there, so that there's more and more things there that you can just go get yourself, and not have to ask one of us that, hey, I want these meetings, or I want this from the briefing book, et cetera, and then, as you've heard from these guys, we continue to push social media, and keeping the rules and such updated,

which is kind of in the background, and you don't really see it, but it does take an awful lot of time, and energy, from people, and we've just a really energetic group that keeps the word out there about us, and is always looking for opportunities to, you know, point out the positives that we do and not always just the regulations, that can be so negative.

MREP was held recently, and it was the first year of trying to combine the science and management portion of the workshop, which I think went well, and it could be a way to make it just more accessible to people that find it hard to find two weeks within their year to be away from their businesses, really, because we're talking about fishermen, for the most part, or they're employer, if they're recreational guy and, you know, they have another employer that they've got to deal with.

The climate change scenario planning is continuing on, and so we're really at the stage now of trying to get into implementation, and so we had a meeting of what will become an oversight coordination group, in conjunction with the NRCC that was held up in Gloucester in early November, and so, going forward, we're going to have that group, which consists of council executive directors and representatives from the Regional Office and Science Centers, Northeast and Southeast, and ASMFC. We'll meet occasionally to coordinate our efforts to achieve the action plan that's been laid out for climate scenario planning, and it's really helping us to continue to work more closely together, to keep the lines of communication open, as we have to start dealing with stocks that are going to change their boundaries and issues that are going to cross over our typical jurisdictions.

I'm pretty excited about that, and we're all -- At least for the three councils, I can say we've all been talking quite a bit about how to use this IRA funding opportunity to really kickstart the scenario planning process, because the Pacific Council went through a similar thing, a number of years ago, and their advice, when we were starting on this, was, you know, going from just holding the workshops, and doing the planning part, to actually implementation is really the challenge, and, if it's a challenge for one council, it's got to be an incredible challenge when you're dealing with three councils on the Atlantic coast, and, as we remind them, we also have another council coming around the corner of Florida, the Gulf Council, and so, you know, it is an important thing, and we're just hoping that this infusion of money is coming at a good time for us to really make some real progress, over the next few years, on the things in the action plan that, otherwise, we would all look at it and say we don't have staff time to deal with this kind of stuff.

I'm really excited about the opportunity, and seeing these pieces of the pie come together, and hope that, you know, it does put us in a better position, in the future, to deal with things we've been talking about, like the Spanish mackerel shift and the blueline tilefish and stuff like that, and so a lot of these stocks are going to be subject to climate impacts, and we're already seeing it, and we're dealing with it, and this hopefully gives us a better set of tools and ways to approach it.

We had a few staff attend the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute, which is a long-standing scientific meeting around the region. I was excited to be able to send Chip and Julia down there, and hopefully we can continue to take part in that in future years, because they present a lot of leading-edge, cutting-edge, research on species that are very important to us, and we have a lot of connectivity, with some stocks, with what goes on over there.

Then, to give an update on the IRA funding, which I kind of mentioned, and so recall that each of the eight councils -- We're all getting a split of \$20 million. Initially, we're getting \$375,000, and we have to submit our proposal by the end of the month for the \$375,000 and then with a general prospectus of what we're going to do for the remaining amount.

For the \$375,000, our primary intent is to hire someone who will come in and really coordinate our efforts with the overall IRA funding plan and work on some of the tasks related to scenario planning. It will be a contractor position over the three years, using a good bulk of that, and we're also going to use some of the money and try to do a data workshop, which is a follow-up to the Atlantic Science Coordination Workshop held a few years ago, where we'll look at what kind of information may be out there within our region, and within our states, that could help deal with climate-related issues, ecosystem-type information, that could make its way into the management system.

Then we can put in for up to a total of \$3.5 million, and so what NMFS has told us that they really encourage everybody to put in for the full \$3.5 million, with various projects. It's unlikely that anyone will get the full \$3.5 million. If all the councils go with an equal divide, we would all get about \$2.5 million, but what the instructions are is that, whatever you put in for in December, as a total, it will be the max you will ever get under these grants, and so they're basically going to set a grant up in December, that will submit additional information for our remaining projects by the end of January, and then they'll be able to fund those, over time, and put the money into that same grant.

We will have a suite of projects that we're looking at to make us more climate resilient, because that's the goal of this, looking at a programmatic review to see if there are efficiencies we can find in our system, considering looking at our fishery management units, and is there information on stocks, distributions and such, that we need to update, trying to identify if there are some data-limited stocks that we would identify and benefit from better management measures that are, you know, maybe not as locked into time and space and permit restrictions that inhibit fishermen from moving around appropriately.

It's very much a work in progress, but I will continue to keep you guys updated, as our grant documents come together and we get a real clear handle of the actual projects that we're going to pursue for this second component, which we'll have to submit by the end of January.

This has been done with a very short deadline, and I don't think we got the information until late October, and so the turnaround has been really tight, and, even into mid-November, we were still getting details from NMFS as to what we needed to do, and so, you know, a lot of that is the best of intentions of the folks up in Headquarters, who have been working on this, but, you know, grant funding like this, from the higher levels of the agency, with a lot of earmarks and stuff, and direction on it, and it just took them a long time to even figure out how they were going to be able to provide the funding to us in the councils.

You know, they've got \$20 million that they've got to split up eight ways, and that just -- You know, without knowing upfront what everybody is going to want to do, or needs to do, and that has just created a challenge, and so we're doing the best we can with that, and we'll continue to try to keep you up-to-date.

Then the last thing to highlight is there was a recreational fisheries economic constituent workshop, and you recall that Spud Woodward went to that, and it was really well received, when they did it, and it was a great opportunity for people to get together and talk about these topics, and then so the final report is now available, and you can follow the link there go see it, but it was interesting what they were learning, and it was nice to see this attention going to fisheries economics, recreational fisheries economics, which has always been a big question, and so that's kind of what we've been up to, in addition to all of the exciting things you heard about this week. Any questions? That's the end of the report.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks, John. Are there questions for John? Okay. Seeing none, Monica, I was going to come back to you, to see if there was anything you had for litigation to discuss.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I don't have a report. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Thank you, ma'am. All right. The next item on the agenda is the Allocations Review Guidelines with John Hadley.

MR. CARMICHAEL: John will come up and run that show.

MR. HADLEY: All right, and so what you have in front of you is Attachment 3a, and this is the allocation review guidelines, and so, as you may recall, at the last meeting, we spent a good amount of time going over the draft guidelines, your existing trigger policy, allocation review trigger policy, and then updates to that policy, and what we've done is staff has taken the input from the September meeting, and it was all captured in the meeting report, and have essentially taken that input and put it into the revised version of the allocation review guidelines, and you can see, in here, several of the additions.

Any additions that are in response to the council's recommended changes, or added language, are highlighted in yellow, and so you can see, throughout the document, there are several areas where there was a request of the council to add this, or clarify that, and that has been done in this version of the document, and you can see, in the various highlighted areas, those responses, or additions, to that input, and so I'm not going to go over all of those, because we spent a pretty good amount of your time last time going through that.

What I do want to point out was there was one suggested additional item that came up when reviewing the allocation triggers, allocation review triggers, and that is the mention of annual optimum yield, and so you can see there that one of the indicator-based -- It's struck out, and highlighted in green there, but one of your indicator-based triggers was that either sector underharvests its ACL, or annual optimum yield, but at least 50 percent in three out of five years of the most recent consecutive fishing years.

As we discussed, and it's come up several times at this meeting, and we're trying to move away from the mention of an annual optimum yield. On top of that, there is not necessarily a sector-based optimum yield, and so, typically, it's discussed in the context of the whole fishery, and so all participants, commercial and recreational together, and so, for that reason, the suggested additional edit to that is to strike "annual optimum yield" from that, and, really, when you think about it, you have two sets of triggers there, where, if you have a sector harvesting all of its ACL, and closing prior to the end of the fishing year, in three of the most consecutive five fishing years,

then that's a trigger, and so that's kind of a high-end trigger, and then you have a low-end trigger, where, if you have a significant underharvest by a certain sector, and so a sector is underharvesting its ACL by 50 percent, and so that low-end buffer, you know, that's a trigger as well, and so you kind of have your bound covered there anyway.

With that said, that's a suggested additional edit there, highlighted in green, and I'm happy to go over any specific portions of this, but, really, the two main items that we're looking for on this agenda item is to approve or disapprove that suggested edit in green, and then we're looking for a motion of approval for your allocation review guidelines and the updates to the allocation review trigger policy, and I'm happy to field any questions.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I don't know, and I either missed this last time, or maybe the discussion happened and I was zoning out, but it's interesting, and can you scroll back to the couple of little triggers? Perfect. Thank you. One, you know, assuming, when we talk about allocations, we're talking about recreational versus commercial, although we do have gear allocations, and so I forgot where that falls into -- Because what I'm thinking is, if either sector harvests its ACL, blah, blah, blah, or closes prior to the end of its fishing year in three out of the five most recent consecutive fishing years, and, well, speaking of golden tile.

You know, I'm just trying to think how that would work, and we don't have to change anything, and I absolutely, at the end of my little diatribe, will make the motion to remove the annual OY, but, gosh, that like -- That's going to be golden tilefish, at least by gear type every year, and I'm pretty sure we close -- I know that longline closes early every year, but I think hook-and-line does too, and so that -- In theory, based on this, we would be triggered to have an allocation discussion for that, but my understanding, when we talked about this last time, is, just because it happens, it doesn't mean that we have to do it, correct? Okay.

MR. HADLEY: Yes, and so you're correct. Just because the allocation review gets triggered, it doesn't mean that you have to have an allocation change. Really, what the trigger is is it's a mechanism that says, if these conditions occur, then it will be brought to the council's notice, essentially, and then, really, it's up to the council, as the management body, to decide that, you know, that's okay, or do we want to, you know, take some -- Set aside some time and dive into it a little bit deeper, but there's no forced, you know, allocation revision, just because the review is triggered.

MS. MARHEFKA: Okay. That makes sense, and don't anyone take that that's what I was suggesting, that we look at that here, but I was going through species, in my mind, that already meet this, and that's one of them that already meets it, and so I thought that was interesting. **With that said, I will make a motion to adopt the changes --** I know you have it written out better than I can say. **Approve the allocation review guidelines and updated allocation review trigger policy.**

DR. BELCHER: It's seconded by Jessica. Is there further discussion on this? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Not to hold this up, but I think we'll have a couple of comments that will improve clarity with the document that we would want to offer, but we're not prepared to, I think,

provide that today, and so my economists have provided a few thoughts that we want to share with John and the team.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you for that, and noted for staff. Okay. **So any objection to the motion?** No further discussion, no further questions? **Any objection to the motion?** Okay. **Seeing none, the motion passes.**

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you, and that was all for this agenda item, and so I appreciate it.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Thank you, John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Thanks, John. I'm glad to see this getting to its conclusion. It's been quite a process getting here, on this allocation business, and then, up next, we have Christina, Madam Chair.

DR. BELCHER: All right. She's going to talk with us about stakeholder meetings planning. Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so you guys have had stakeholder engagement meetings mentioned a couple of times in the stock report, but this is sort of the first time that we're presenting anything in detail to you, and so I want to give some background on why staff thought a series of meetings like this could be beneficial to the council process.

We all know that stakeholder input is a pretty key component of the way fisheries management has been designed in the U.S., but it's no secret, I think, to any of you, that there is quite a bit of frustration from stakeholders, feeling like their input isn't being heard or considered, and this is all occurring against a backdrop of some really challenging issues that you all are trying to grapple with, making getting input from stakeholders even more important, and so what we're trying to do here is design a new way to gather input that's very different from the traditional public comment process, where fishermen, you know, get up and make a comment and sit down, and there's not really that opportunity for two-way discourse that I know you all find really valuable, because we regularly hear that one of the great things about this meeting is sort of those side conversations that you're able to have in between conversations at the table, and so trying to take that environmental and formalize it.

Sort of to that end, developing what we're terming right now as stakeholder engagement meetings, where we would be meeting with fishermen along the coast, in their communities, to have sort of facilitated, two-way discussions with that, and how that will actually look, in practice, is something that we intend to develop over the next year with the council, but one of the things that I really want to harp on, at the start of this process, is that it will be working towards building relationships and momentum for participation in the council process, be that on advisory panels or with citizen science or coming to make public comment at those more formalized opportunities, and that's going to take time, and it's going to take consistency.

It's going to take a lot of participation from council members. We want fishermen, stakeholders, to be having conversations with you guys, as council members, and not necessarily with us, as staff, and so, for these meetings to really be effective, it's going to require council participation

consistently at all of these meetings that we would hold along the coast, and we see this as becoming sort of a regular part of what the council does on a yearly basis to solicit input from stakeholders.

There are a couple of things that we're hoping to sort of accomplish at this meeting. We'll look at some of the draft goals and objectives, look at sort of the tentative timeline for when we would actually start holding these engagement meetings, and then gathering volunteers to participate on a council planning team that would work closely with staff to develop the structure for these engagement meetings, but, before I sort of go into the draft goals and objectives that we have for you to review, I was hoping that we could have sort of a broader conversation, because, when staff has talked about this, one of the things that we anticipate getting questions about from stakeholders is what is the council actually going to do with the information that we're providing at these meetings.

These meetings wouldn't necessarily be tied to a specific management action, the way like public comment and scoping is, and so it's going to be important for us to be able to accurately communicate, to stakeholders, how the input that you all would be gathering, at this type of a meeting, would be used and the benefit of participating in a meeting like this that may not be provided by that traditional public comment process, and so, to answer that question, we were hoping that you guys could start having a discussion, a little bit, about what you would like to get out of this style of meeting, but also what you would hope that stakeholders would get out of this style of meeting, and so I know that's a pretty broad topic, that can feel a little obtuse, but I think, sort of as you all start talking about it, we might be able to sort of drill down into some of the goals and objectives, based on what you all are saying.

DR. BELCHER: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you. I think this is a wonderful idea. One of the first ways that I ever got involved in the process was through a series of -- I think we called them visioning townhall-type meetings, and they were -- You know, we held them a couple of different places in the state, and fishermen loved it. We had great participation at those, and it was so good that it was one of those ones where you just took ideas, and you just literally put them on a sticky note and started plugging them up on the wall, and everybody could see them, and talk about them, and so I kind of -- Is this kind of what you see this being?

I think this is a great idea, and I think that format worked really, really well, where there was -- We really didn't have a set agenda, and it was just, you know, almost like a brainstorming session, where you got to talk about what you wanted to talk about, and throw your ideas out there, and then the council came back kind of formulated all of those into kind of a formal visioning blueprint, if I remember correctly, and so I would love to see this move forward, and I think it's a great idea.

DR. BELCHER: Judy and then Jessica.

MS. HELMEY: I agree, and I agree too, Tim. The fact that you could get in a room with a bunch of fishermen, and just -- As long as it's not so formal, and it was informal, and you could get a bunch of -- You could say, well, what do you expect, what would you like, and let them -- You know, write it down, and we'll discuss it, and then, when they start asking us direct questions, we won't be able to answer them, because we're just now getting the information, and we could also

get -- We could find out what's biting and everything, and it would be a great way to kind of get with people, talk with them, so that they won't forget that we're just still regular fishermen.

DR. BELCHER: I've got Jessica, Kerry, and then Tom.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We did these at FWC, a few years ago, before COVID, and they were the most well-attended public workshops that we've ever had, and people loved them, and we had really large venues, and just -- We kind of sat up at the front of the room, kind of our division leadership, and then let people tell us various things that they thought that we should be working on, or, hey, I want you to change the format of workshops, or, hey, can you do outreach materials in this format, instead of this format, and just asked questions, and it was great.

I think this is a great idea. I like what Tim is suggesting, and Judy, kind of about what is it that you would like to see the council working on, visioning, kind of what is your favorite topic that you would want to see us tackle, in some set time period, but I guess I would also add that I don't know that everybody understands what the council does, and what the council process is, and so I'm wondering if there's an informal way that people can learn that this is what the council does, this is what their purview is, this is what their authority is, how often they meet, those types of things, because I find, when I go to council workshops, or if I go out like on yellowtail, to try to talk to people about what the council is doing, people still don't seem to really understand what the council is, what it does, what the purview is, and so, if there's some way that that could be incorporated, I think that would be great as well.

DR. BELCHER: Kerry and then Tom.

MS. MARHEFKA: To piggyback off of that, I think it's also like letting people know what the council isn't in control off too, and, you know, we often get, you know, justifiably so, the shark comments, and things like that, and one of the things they do over in the Gulf, at their public hearings, that we don't do, and I'm not suggesting that we do it in that format, but that I think this could be good for, is people give comment, and then all the council members -- Someone says, you know, does anyone have any questions for these people, and so there's more back-and-forth, and I think this gives us those opportunities to have someone, you know, say what they're upset about, but for us to be able to start that dialogue back-and-forth with them. Shoot. I had another thing, and, obviously, I love it, and that hopefully should go without saying, and I think this should be a regular part of our -- Of what we do. I blanked. I had something else, but I didn't write it down.

DR. BELCHER: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. You know, my thoughts have started to morph, hearing the other council members' comments, and, you know, first of all, I do really like the idea of using it as a way in which to kind of -- To look at stakeholders and give a really brief overview of how the council works, right, which I think is something that is really helpful. I really also like this idea of looking back at those original visioning projects, which I also attended and really enjoyed, as a way to have kind of a very conversational idea.

The general idea that I love so much about it is I think it's really helpful, for us, to have these sort of like different formats for conversation. Public comment is intimidating. There's a time crunch,

right, and we appreciate it, but this is another way in which to have these discussions, and, you know, my state of North Carolina just recently had a bunch of for-hire workshops, which were very similar, and they were extremely well attended. The conversations were excellent, and the feedback was awesome, and it was just a great way for our state agency to also connect with some of these stakeholders, and I know we've had them with other groups as well, but this is an excellent idea, and I'm really excited about it.

DR. BELCHER: I've got Trish and then Judy.

MS. MURPHEY: Just to add to Tom's stuff, yes, we had several of these type of meetings, and, actually, I would describe it similarly to Jessica. You know, folks just, you know, sat around, and, you know, we were at a table, and we could have a two-way conversation, and actually, getting at how to show them what the council does, or doesn't do, we actually started out with just like a little tutorial on MRIP, and, you know, how MRIP samples, and how the survey intercepts all come together and everything, and that was more or less the theme for that particular series of stakeholders, and I think they were very successful, and I think we're going to look into trying to do those yearly, and so -- Then, yes, that just gets at who your target -- You know, we targeted for-hire, but, you know, do you want to target, you know, different groups, or have it all open or whatever, and that's -- I guess that might be a question for later on, but we did kind of -- We did target for-hire.

DR. BELCHER: I've got Judy and then Tom again.

MS. HELMEY: Maybe we could have some kind of handout material, like regulations, how we do things here, you know, like formulas for dummies, you know those books that come out that really lay it out for layman's terms, and maybe that might be a little bit helpful for them, too. I would like a copy, also.

DR. BELCHER: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: So one of the other thoughts I had is one of the great values of this is us, as council members -- It's very easy to get kind of in your own world. The fishing community is small, and we have our own little spheres of community, right, and I think it's really valuable for us to expand that and hear from other people. Even in our state, from outside our stakeholder groups, as well as outside of our distinct regions, and that's one reason why I love the MREP program so much, because I was able to connect not just with other fishermen across the coast, but in my own state, and I formed a lot of relationships there, and one of them is Tim right there, from that program.

DR. BELCHER: I kind of had a thought, and Christina was talking with us last night, during the social downstairs, and, you know, similarly, within our fields a lot of times, we get asked to do, as John Walter did with his crew, the lightning talks or, you know, the industry things, the TED talks, and, you know, I look at you guys who are industry people, and all of you have come up that ladder, whether it's been starting out disgruntled and coming in and making your comments, and so you've had that dip into what these people struggle with.

I think, in certain ways, those of you who sit in those seats are probably the key council people to put out there, but they don't want to talk to another one of us bureaucrats. I can go and represent the state, but that's -- I'm just giving them the same lip service, whether it's state-related or federal-

related, right, but you guys have had the experience, and you've been through what it is and what it means to come up through these situations, and, you know, see you how Alana has engaged us over the time that her voice has been popping up, and so I think that hearing from those of you who have been there, and can bring those experiences to them, I think it would be really, really key if you guys were the frontrunners for it. Kerry, did you have something else?

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I was thinking about -- Not to bring up the past again, but like, when we did the very, very early MPA, when we did informal meetings, one of the ways that happened is -- We did some where we said, hey, we're going to be here if you want to come, but there were also ones where like West Palm Beach Fishing Club said, hey, will you come to us, and so I didn't know if you were thinking it would always been like, you went -- We, we, and I do think that you're right, and it's critical that, as council members, we are there, and we are a huge part of this, but where, you know, we sit, and they come to us, or would you be open to taking invitations from groups that asked us to come?

MS. WIEGAND: I think some of that is discussions that we'll have with this planning team that we're going to form. I certainly hadn't thought about doing these in a way that was hosted by a fishing club, for example, but I think that's something that could be really effective, and so it's something that I would want, you know, the council planning team to discuss.

MS. MARHEFKA: To that, I mean, if you think about like three of us, and it's not my state, and so I'm not volunteering anyone, but, you know, three of us council members showing up to the Jacksonville Offshore Sportfishing Club, and that goes a long way, and I remember -- I mean, it was painful, and you walk in that room, and you know everyone -- You're on their turf, and everyone is made at you, but it really, really -- I really think it went a long way into solving communication issues, and our life was only in danger once or twice, and so, you know, I'm still here.

DR. BELCHER: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Real quick, it's also an opportunity for us to help not just humanize the process, but also engage the stakeholders and teach them to be more effective in the process, right, and one thing that I do, and, you know, I'm on my state commission, as well as this council, is, when I hear good public comment, but there's things that they probably could have done better to communicate it to the council, I will go and talk to that individual and say, hey, let's help you make a really good public comment in the future, and that's also a thing that we can do, as well as engaging stakeholders, to help them be better engaged in the process and tell us what we need to hear from them.

DR. BELCHER: Other comments, or questions, for Christina? Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Just as another comment, I know that I learn a lot from everybody, and, I mean, every time we have public comment, and, you know, I listen to APs and stuff, and I learn a lot every time that our stakeholders speak to us, and, you know, I just learn -- It's going to be great for -- It will be great for the stakeholders, but it's going to be great for folks like me as well, that I'm not able to get out and, you know, talk to people all the time, and see them all the time, but all the comments that I get -- It's been a great learning -- It helps me try to stand in their shoes and understand, you know, the issues that are important to them.

DR. BELCHER: Further comments for Christina?

MS. WIEGAND: I did just briefly want to go over these draft goals and objectives, to make sure that they're aligning with what you all think you would like to get out of these, and, sort of as I go over them, again, keep in mind that we're going to have to be able to answer the question of what is the council going to do with this information, and so I think a lot of these goals hit on what you guys have already talked about, with that overall goal, of course, being to build relationships with stakeholders by engaging them in that informal setting that allows for dialogue.

Sort of staff came up with four different objectives underneath that overarching goal. The first one is provide an opportunity for an open dialogue and mutual learning between council members and stakeholders, and I feel like you guys talked about that a lot just a minute ago, and Objective 2 is to increase knowledge of the fisheries management process, to encourage stakeholder engagement and council initiatives, hoping that this sort of gets at some of what Tom was talking about with the council process can be an intimidating process, and hopefully providing stakeholders some tools to help them confidently participate in the process, and then, of course, increase involvement in all the many initiatives we have going on at the council.

Objective 3, you all haven't talked about quite as much, and so I do want to just pause here, and it would be providing a mechanism for stakeholders to bring their concerns, and observations, forward directly to council members, with the hope that gathering that input would be able to help inform proactive management. Often, what is done, at the council table, is, you know, we're reacting to a stock assessment, or we're reacting a problem that has been identified, but the idea here would be that, by gathering some of this input from stakeholders, it might allow for some more proactive management action, and it also might be helpful for setting workload priorities, but, since you guys didn't talk about that in quite as much detail, I do want to pause here and see if that goal fits with what you would imagine for these meetings.

DR. BELCHER: Kerry and then Tom.

MS. MARHEFKA: I like that, and I'm wondering, and this can get fleshed-out later, but, in the sort of the manner that we get an advisory panel report after AP meetings, you know, whether it's once a year or twice a year, and we get some sort of, you know, summary of key themes that came up during these meetings, and, I mean, I can -- Somehow, we need to be able to, you know, gather what we've heard, and collect it in some manner, and then it gets reported back to the Full Council, and, you know, not in super detail, but here are the key themes we've heard this year, or this quarter, at this meetings.

DR. BELCHER: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I think this conversation has two parts, right, and I think the part that Kerry brought up is one of those, and I think that goes back to the comments about how we orchestrated this visioning project, right, and we allowed people to just bring up ideas, and I think that's how we frame this conversation. I mean, it's almost a more vague fisheries performance report from stakeholders, and we're going to ask people like what are you seeing, and what's important, and we can try to frame that conversation about looking at proactive things, something that's, you

know, personally important to me. Then, on the backside, let's make sure that we do get a report, like Kerry said.

DR. BELCHER: It may be worthwhile too -- I know this objective is kind of directly to council members, but I think it would be good too to kind of help them understand their AP member roles for their fisheries, so that folks have those abilities to -- Again, it's that -- I hate using the phrases that we use, but that co-mentoring, helping them understand and navigate, and, you know, again, you've got somebody who is already one step higher than them, and not four steps higher than them, that kind of help them navigate that is this something that's better suited to go to the council or better suited to go to the AP for a discussion point. Other comments? Sonny looks like he wants to say something. Come on, Sonny.

MR. GWIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Is this something that just the South Atlantic is doing?

MS. WIEGAND: To my knowledge, and I know that other areas of the coast have certainly done similar stakeholder engagement efforts over the years, but this specifically is just for the South Atlantic.

MR. GWIN: It would be something that I would like to keep up on, to see if it's successful, that maybe it could spread to other councils, because I think it's a great idea to go talk to the people and find out what the councils do, especially when it comes to how quotas are made. That's the biggest question that I get, as a council member, when I go home, is how are they making these quotas, and the general public just doesn't understand that, and so that would be one thing that I think you would need to express pretty good. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Other comments or questions? Okay. Moving down to your next one.

MS. WIEGAND: So the last objective is providing an opportunity for council members to share information on salient management issues with stakeholders, and, like I said earlier, you guys are undertaking a number of challenging topics, and so this would provide an opportunity to communicate about some of those topics to stakeholders.

Sort of, again, in just some of the conversations we've had as staff working on this, the thought would be, if we were in, you know, North Carolina, we would work with the three North Carolina council members to identify maybe, you know, two or three key issues that we wanted to make sure we had information readily available for, of course understanding that stakeholders would be able to bring up sort of whatever was of interest to them at the time, but still providing that opportunity to share information on these challenging topics, and, of course, maybe sort of standing management 101 topic.

Those are the four objectives. Before I move on to the timeline, I just want to make sure that you guys don't feel there is anything missing from this, or any modifications or changes you would like to see to these goals and objectives for stakeholder meetings.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I just want to say that I was really pleased with the discussion that we just had, and it was like one of those exercises in communication, where they tell one group to say "and", and "but", and you definitely were the group saying "and". It was really good to see how what you wanted so much aligned with where this was going, but yet you put that out yourselves,

without being kind of fed the information, and so I've been excited about this since day-one, as I know Christina has, but I think the way she handled that was great, and I didn't want to miss the opportunity, but I think this is going to be good, and I appreciate you all's support, because you are going to have to be involved, as you're going to see. You know, this is for you to be interactive with constituents, and so I'm glad to see the support for that as well, and so please carry on, ma'am. Sorry.

MS. WIEGAND: I just wanted to note the timeline that staff is thinking for this. We were thinking we would sort of work to develop the structure for these meetings over the next year, and we wouldn't really look to start holding them until sometime maybe early in 2025, the thought being that there's a lot of other stakeholder engagement efforts going on, the mackerel port meetings, the MSE, and we don't want to sort of muddy the waters, or stretch staff's time too thin, and so the plan would be to just sort of develop these over the next year and not look at implementing them until 2025.

DR. BELCHER: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I just want to say that I like that timeline, because I think it's like a continuation of all these events that we have, like you said, and I think that's a good thing. We can build upon it.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and then so sort of the last thing we were hoping to do is -- As I've harped on a lot at this meeting, this is going to be a council-driven process. As council members, you guys are going to be sort of the ones in the front talking to stakeholders, and not as staff, and so we want to make sure that council members are involved heavily in the planning process for these, and so we're looking for volunteers, and we would like at least one from each state to participate on a planning team, and I have seen volunteers now from every state.

DR. BELCHER: So let's get everybody on the mic. Who do we have that would like to self-nominate, or nominate, for North Carolina?

MR. ROLLER: I enthusiastically volunteer.

DR. BELCHER: All right. Same call for South Carolina.

MS. MARHEFKA: Me, please.

DR. BELCHER: I don't know that you're limited to just one, or do you just want one right now? That's why I'm looking at Gary, and it looked like he was going to push a buzzer, too. All right. Georgia.

MS. HELMEY: Judy Helmey.

DR. BELCHER: All right. Florida.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jessica.

DR. BELCHER: All right, and hopefully Laurilee would be willing to at the points that she could too, and, like I said, I really do think that you guys -- Like I said, you guys who have been through the system, because you can pretty much, you know, empathize, and sympathize, with everything that they're going through, and, again, you know, those of us who are state employees are still the bureaucrats, no matter how hard we try to make it go the other way, but, anyway, I appreciate everybody's willingness, and I do think it would be a great opportunity, for sure. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I was just going to say that I will be glad to participate, too. I mean, Tom can be number one, and I can be number two or something, or we can switch, but, anyway, I will be glad to help out.

MS. WIEGAND: I will say that I'm thrilled to see so many people excited to participate on a planning team, and sort of that's all I have for you guys today. The one other thing I want to note is that I might be the one up here presenting, but there are a lot of people on staff that are going to be working on this, and helped put together those goals and objectives, and so there's a whole staff planning team too, and it's not just me.

MR. CARMICHAEL: You self-selected for all the sectors and state representatives, and so that was pretty awesome as well.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. We greatly appreciate it.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you, guys.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Christina. The next item is presentation on offshore wind energy activities. For the three folks who are here, we've got three chairs at this end, with, actually, two mics available to you all, if you want to come up to the table.

MS. SCHLENKER: First of all, we want to say thank you to the council for having us to present today. We're just going to start by introducing ourselves, and so my name is Lela Schlenker, and I'm the Fisheries Liaison for the Kitty Hawk Wind Project.

MS. BANKS: Hi, everyone. I'm Jen Banks, and I'm the Permitting and Developing Director for the TotalEnergies Carolina Long Bay Project, and I think we also -- Should we introduce the audience people, too? Here with us today, we also have Albie Solana, who is the TotalEnergies Fisheries Liaison, and Katherine McGlade, who is the Duke Energy Fisheries Liaison, and I believe we might have Nathan Craig, from Duke Energy, online, and so I'm not sure if he's there, or he can speak, but, if there's an option for us to potentially unmute him, if he has a response, that would be great, whoever does that.

DR. BELCHER: We have staff that can handle that.

MS. SCHLENKER: I also want to introduce John Harker, who is my colleague at Avangrid, and we'll just also point out that Ron Larson, who is the Fisheries Liaison for the Dominion CVOW project, and so we're going to try and keep this brief, and have as much time for questions as possible, but please also do come find us after, and we would be more than happy to answer questions.

One thing that I think came up earlier is there were some questions in the habitat presentation, and we'll try to address some of those as we go, but, also, I just want to note that we've done a couple of AP meeting presentations in the last couple of months, and we're more than happy to do more, and folks are more than welcome to just, you know, get in touch however is best, and we would love to answer questions and not have folks wondering, and having uncertainties, and so that's part of why we're here, and we're really happy to have that opportunity.

Also, as you've noticed, we work for different companies, and different projects, and we're doing this project together, as a way to kind of simplify things, not repeat information, and it also sort of represents our outlook as a group. We kind of collaborate, and work together, to think about regional strategies, and present information in a unified way, and so I just kind of want to reiterate that, as we get started.

Just very briefly today, we're going to talk about offshore wind areas in North Carolina, and we'll talk about both projects, the Kitty Hawk wind project and the Carolina Long Bay project, and then, just kind of to address sort of a frequently-asked question that we're getting a lot these days, we're very lucky to have Dr. Doug Nowacek here, from Duke University, to just sort of answer some questions about marine mammals and offshore wind, and we hope to have as much time for questions as possible, but find us after, if you have lingering questions.

Just to give you the broadest possible overview, how offshore wind areas are identified, and so BOEM works with the states, very closely, to identify areas that both have good wind resources and are relatively deconflicted, and so what you see on the left-side of the screen, those large green areas were what were originally identified, and then, as sort of conflicts with different areas are identified, whether that's protected species, whether that's fisheries, viewsapes, or military concerns, and, basically, those areas kind of get whittled down, at which point there is a competitive auction, and private developers win the right to submit a plan to BOEM for that development. In 2017, Kitty Hawk Wind, through Avangrid, was awarded the pink triangle area in the north of North Carolina, and then the Carolina Long Bay project was awarded to two different companies, Duke Energy and TotalEnergies.

MS. BANKS: Sorry, but just the leases for Avangrid were 2017, and the leases for Carolina Long Bay were last year.

MS. SCHLENKER: Okay, and so, just to get a couple of details about the Kitty Hawk Wind project, and then I will turn it over to Jen to talk about Carolina Long Bay, and some basics about the project, and so it is about twenty-seven miles directly offshore of Corolla, North Carolina, and it's a 3,500-megawatt project, which represents about enough energy for one-million homes. Windspeeds are typically about eight to nine-meters-per-second, and the depth there is about thirty to fifty-meters, and it's a pretty soft-bottom, sandy habitat.

With the colors you see, the pink and the green, those are just different regions of the lease area, and so we call it Kitty Hawk North and Kitty Hawk South, and that's primarily for just sort of ease and flexibility for permitting purposes.

I won't go into the details here, but, just to give you some sense of our timeline, 2024 and 2025, we have a lot of permitting steps ahead of us, and we have completed our site assessment, and a number of different studies on the lease area, and so you will note that, in 2024 and 2025, there

are a number of opportunities for public comment, and we are hoping to start construction in 2027 on Kitty Hawk North. Kitty Hawk South is a little further behind in the process.

One thing that I want to highlight here is our use of historical fisheries knowledge, and so, as a company, and I started just six months ago, but one of my predecessors, Rick Robbins, has spent quite a bit of time interviewing local captains, to get a sense for the use of the lease area, and one of the things that we've done is oriented the turbine spacing to accommodate some historical trawl tow patterns, and so that was something that came out of speaking with commercial captains in the area.

I also want to note here, and so this figure is a schematic of the spacing, and so the spacing between the turbines is about a nautical mile between each turbine, and so that's plenty of room for vessels to get in easily and maneuver. The lease area will not be restricted to fishing in any way, other than just during some construction and maintenance periods, and those cables that will be the inter-array cables will be buried five to eight feet in the stable seafloor, and so that's not just five to eight feet, necessarily, below the surface of the sediment, but five to eight feet in the stable seafloor. As we've been talking about today a little bit, these turbines, and the scour protection that is around the turbines, will act as artificial reefs that we hope will be very beneficial for commercial and recreational fishermen.

Just to highlight some of our fisheries engagement activities, this past year, in 2023, we sponsored five different tournaments, and so that's a great opportunity for fishermen to come and talk to us, and, basically, the purpose is just education, and, you know, you know who to contact, and we'll give you our contact information, and we'll talk to you, and we'll answer questions, and that's something that we're going to be continuing in the future.

We also have two fisheries representatives in North Carolina, and one in Virginia, Dewey Hemilright and Hank Beasley in North Carolina and Daniel LeGrande in Virginia, and so those guys are really integral to our communications strategy, and they can kind of help us identify any sort of information we need to disseminate to the community, and also just kind of act as a great source of information for the fishermen.

We are coming up on some fisheries monitoring surveys, and that's another opportunity to engage fishermen, through some collaboration with the use of their vessels, and then I will just finish here by just kind of noting some of the research that we've completed, and what we have upcoming, and so we had about two years of meteorological buoys on the lease area, and so we have a lot of data on wind currents and wave data from those buoys, and we've also some geophysical, and geotechnical, surveys to map the seafloor and collect some sediment samples, and then, as I mentioned, upcoming in the next year or so, we're going to be starting to develop that fisheries monitoring plan, in collaboration with academic researchers, agencies, and fishermen, and those will be six to eight-year research commitments, and so that's something that we will continue to keep you all updated on, and I will turn it over to Jen here.

MS. BANKS: All right. Again, thanks, everyone, for having us here, and I'm glad to be able to share information with you and open up the lines of communication. I'm talking today about the activities that have happened over the last six or eight months between both of the Carolina Long Bay lessees. You see here that this map just shows you, again, which leases go to which company, and so the one on the left is the TotalEnergies lease, and the one on the right is the Duke Energy

lease, and, as we mentioned before, these leases were awarded last May, and so we've really been working a little over a year on these projects, and we've taken a really collaborative approach with Duke Energy, in that we've decided to do a lot of our activities together, and so you will see that.

One of the more exciting things that we've done this year is that we did joint surveys to support our site assessment plan, and we were able to use a North Carolina contractor, which is Geodynamics, and they have a brand-new vessel, the R/V Shackelford, that is based in Morehead City, and we had our protected species observers and fisheries liaisons from RPS, and so I will talk a little bit more about actual survey activity.

If you were at any of our presentations to the APs, you might have seen this, but, really, it was what we're calling a postage-stamp survey, where we really focused on those three areas that we were planning to put out buoys, and it ended up being these were our sort of five potential areas that we had done some initial baseline vetting of, and we ended up only doing Site A, which is that central one to the TotalEnergies lease, and that's for a floating LiDAR and some other equipment. B is the one that is centrally located in the Duke lease, and that is also for a FLiDAR, and then that center one, which is C, and you can't really see -- Well, from here, I can't see the letters, but it's the central one, like right in between the two ones are centrally located in the two leases.

For these, we did a 300-meter-by-300-meter box around these potential areas, and we just did some HRG, high-resolution geophysical, and some benthic grabs, to get the information we needed to submit the site assessment plan.

Here is just kind of an overview of these surveys that we did, and we carried them out in August, and we were offshore doing our survey activities for three days. One of the things -- Well, you can see here the list of equipment, and so I won't read that to you, because we're trying to roll through this as quickly as possible, to leave time for questions, but what I do want to highlight here is the feedback, and so we've had several discussions, and communications, with the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council and with other agencies, and separately with NOAA, on certain topics, to share what we propose to do for the surveys, to get feedback, and then, actually, you know, we can talk about some of the ways that we incorporated that feedback, which is to have the HRG review ahead of the benthic grabs, to make sure we're not landing it on the ledge or anything like that, and then having the real-time review of the video transects also, to ensure that they're getting an acceptable quality. This is just a screenshot, or a still, from each of those sites for the video transects that we did, and I'm happy to answer -- I know I'm kind of flying through this, but I'm happy to answer any questions.

One of the things that we did for this survey is we were only required, per BOEM, to do vessel strike avoidance measures, and, for that, you can have a NMFS-approved PSO or you can use a trained lookout, and so we decided to go ahead and have NMFS-trained and approved PSOs, in order to do our vessel strike avoidance measures, and we also voluntarily committed to a ten-knot speed restriction for these surveys, based on some conversations with Southern Environmental Law Center and Natural Resources Defense Council.

We had a visual monitoring, and so the visual monitoring was fifty-eight hours total, and that was from the marina to the site, the entire time we were basically transiting and surveying, and, during that time, we only saw dolphins. We had fourteen instances of dolphins spotted, and I think forty-

eight total dolphins, and so we didn't really see anything terribly exciting, and then I will share, just real quickly, the preliminary plan for the buoys and the equipment.

This is another thing that we also got a lot of feedback from individuals and the agency, and so we really appreciate that, in terms of what equipment we should have, what sort of orientation. The recommendation to have the fish tag acoustic receivers came from one of these AP meetings that we had, and I won't read all of this to you, because I think you all have the presentation already, but some of the key things that we're doing, in addition to just getting the LiDAR information for hub height wind conditions, but we're also planning to have a passive acoustic monitoring system on each of the buoys, so that we have three out there and can triangulate.

We're happy to talk to anyone who, you know, has an interest in some sort of collaboration, or project, where, you know, you're looking for specific fish, with those fish tags and things like that, and we are open to sharing information, other than our hub height wind data, and so we're happy to have those conversations as well, in terms of research projects and sharing the data later on.

I had another slide, and I forgot that one, and I'm not going to go through this one either, other than to say that you can look at it and see the whole timeline, and it kind of gives you the mapping from the, you know, leasing all the way -- This one actually goes all the way back to when BOEM started looking at the lease areas, or the potential lease areas, in North Carolina, and so we're, you know, twelve or thirteen years now from when this whole entire process was started, and BOEM started doing their environmental assessments.

Right now, for us, we are right in the middle of this graph, and we just submitted our site assessment plan to BOEM in November, just a few weeks ago, and so we're moving into that stage where that will be reviewed, and, once we have approval, then that will give us the approval to put buoys out. At this point, I will, I guess, ask Doug to come up here and share some information on some of Duke's activities on whales.

DR. NOWACEK: Thanks for having me. Just quickly, an effort that you see here, that is actually centered at the marine lab down the street, is a program called Wildlife and Offshore Wind, and I'm big into acronyms, and this is an easy one. It's through the Department of Energy and BOEM, and we're doing a variety of things, but relevant to this conversation is we're looking at the potential impacts and interactions between offshore wind development from pre-construction through construction, and to post-construction, depending on how all the construction schedules go, on marine mammals, birds, and bats.

We are not on the fisheries side of things, in terms of sampling, and we're well integrated with a couple of other efforts that you're probably familiar with, the Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative, and also ROSA, which has a lot more to do with the commercial fisheries, and we're really looking at a couple of things specifically, like the potential noise from pile driving on marine mammals and then, obviously, collisions for birds and bats later on.

I get asked a lot what the -- About -- I guess do we want to get into the whale mortalities along the east coast and their relationship to wind? This graph is in here, and this is humpback whale strandings from Maine to Florida, and the blue is pre-UME, and the orange is post-UME, which is the unusual mortality event that NMFS declared in 2016. You can see that it jumped, sort of in the

average number of strandings per year, and there is no evidence, that I have seen, that links any offshore wind activities to any of these mortalities, full stop.

There's lots to discuss about this. 40 percent of the mortalities that have been documented as part of this event have been attributed to ship strikes and entanglement in fishing gear, and we can -- I don't know the specific types of gear, and we could figure it out, and we could talk about it, but, regardless, there is no evidence of any kind of interaction between -- There hasn't been any pile driving between any of the site surveys or anything that we've seen, and so there's probably a lot of things going on with humpbacks.

You know, the fish that they prey on are coming closer to shore, in some cases, and bringing them into shipping lanes, and, you know, that's a whole other thing, of ship strikes, and, quite honestly, there is probably more humpbacks in the North Atlantic now, and so, if you have a mortality of 3 percent in a population, and you have a bigger population, you're going to see more dead animals, right? I won't go on much more than that, and is there anything else that you wanted me to cover before the Q&A?

MS. BANKS: No.

DR. NOWACEK: You're sure? All right. Thanks again for the invite, and I will stick around for the Q&A, and then also afterwards for a bit. Thanks.

MS. BANKS: Are we ready for questions?

MS. SCHLENKER: Yes, and I think that now we can switch to sort of general questions. I did want to just make sure that also our contact information is shared, and so, again, we would love to do more presentations for the AP groups, and we plan to -- You know, if we're invited back, we would love to keep coming back to the council, and we're also happy just to kind of field questions via email, and so, if folks have questions, don't hesitate.

DR. BELCHER: All right. Thank you all for the presentation. I've got Judy, Laurilee, and Kerry.

MS. HELMEY: Thank you for the presentation. It was very nice. My question is, when you do start construction, and we know the areas will be closed, but are you going to -- In other words, are you going to put in one mill, and then -- Since there's a mile between each one, and so are they closing -- How are they planning on closing that, and how long do you think it takes to put one of them down?

MS. SCHLENKER: So great question, first of all, and, right now, Avangrid is 50/50 developer of Vineyard Wind, which is being constructed in New England right now, and, right now, it's taking them about a day to put in a monopile, the base, and, as you noted, they are pretty far apart from each other, and so how it typically works is they're putting in one base per day, and then sort of moving to the next spot and coming back to do the transition pieces and the blades, but so I don't anticipate a large closure area around that, but sort of, you know, for safety, and we will be using notices to mariners, available on our website, and other ways to communicate that, so there's no surprises about which particular area is going to be restricted, but it should be just a small area around the construction zone.

MS. HELMEY: Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: So, when you decommission one of these, how -- Will you leave it out there, because we were wondering if you could use ecofriendly materials in the bases, so that they can turn them into fish habitat, and, once they turn into fish habitat, then we would prefer that they get left out there, and so have you all talked about that, and what happens when you stop using one, or are they going to be used in perpetuity? Tell me about that. Can you cover up the cables with ecofriendly concrete material, and try to help create habitat?

MS. BANKS: I can cover I think most of your questions, and, if I miss one, just remind me, but so the general idea for decommissioning is that BOEM requires us, as of right now, per their regulations, to remove everything down fifteen feet below the mudline, but I will caveat that with the fact that, right now, we don't know what's going to happen in thirty years. In the construction and operations plans, which we haven't prepared yet, but Kitty Hawk has prepared and submitted those, we will give a really sort of simplification of what decommissioning might look like, but then, at the time where we're starting to think about if we're going to decommission, or, to your point, if we are planning to repower, and so we would maybe update the turbines and continue generating power, and we would submit to BOEM a detailed decommissioning plan of exactly what we're planning to do, and not even that, but, before we get to that point, we would be having those conversations with all types of stakeholders, and BOEM, about potentially leaving equipment out there.

I mean, they've done some of that with oil and gas platforms, and, after they've been out there for thirty years, to your point, they have become habitat, and so there could be an argument for leaving some, or all, of, you know, the stuff on the seafloor, and so, essentially, you know, if you see -- Well, I mean, you won't see a decommissioning plan until we're at the point where we're, you know, twenty-something years in, and, at that point, we would be having that conversation, specifically with stakeholders, like I said, and BOEM, to understand what we should put into the decommissioning plan, right, and so there's the rules for BOEM, but we could also have exceptions, and so, essentially, you know, what you'll hear now is people saying this is the regulations, because that's all we have to go on right now, but it's certainly a conversation that will be more involved at a later date. Did I get it all?

MS. THOMPSON: Yes, and so should we be lobbying BOEM, at this point, before you start putting stuff in the ocean, to try to make it as advantageous as possible, rather than having that discussion of, oh, well, we're going to take one apart, and now it's time to talk, and should we be trying to get their attention now?

MS. BANKS: I mean, I think it certainly doesn't hurt to, you know, make your opinion known. For our leases that are existing, you know, there will be points where there is public input, or agency input, on what we're looking at, and so, when a construction and operations plan is submitted, and opened up for scoping under NEPA, you could kind of share that information now, so that BOEM is thinking about it.

There is also leases that are still sort of being considered moving forward, in the central Atlantic area, and part of that process of getting to auction is there's some opportunities as well to provide

input, and so, yes, I mean, basically, a lot of the times, BOEM is asking questions of just what are your concerns, what are the things that are important to you, and so I think that would be a good opportunity to do that.

DR. BELCHER: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I was just wondering, and I've heard, from some colleagues, you know, in New England and the Mid-Atlantic, where this is already a little ahead of us, that some of the turbines -- They take in and discharge hot water, and that it can be up to eight to ten-million gallons a day, and that water can be ninety degrees, and also have some chlorine in it, and I'm curious if that is going to be happening with these turbines and these leases.

MS. BANKS: I don't know exactly -- You know, I haven't read the things that you've read, but I can tell you what I think this is, and it's probably associated with HVDC, which is high-voltage direct current transmission, and, when you do HVDC, there is some requirement for like a station that allows for cooling. If the project is HVAC, then you don't require that, and so it would be very specific to what the project is, if they're able to do AC or DC transmission, and, really, the thing that kind of makes the decision is the distance, right, and so the losses on HVAC lines, over a longer distance, are more significant, and then you would move to -- You would have to move to HVDC.

MS. MARHEFKA: So, to follow-up, you don't know, at this point, for these specific leases, the Carolina Long Bay and the other one that we're discussing here, whether or not it will be that HVDC or HVAC?

MS. BANKS: I can only speak for the Carolina Long Bay, that we don't have a final landing or point of interconnection, and so I will let you take that.

MS. SCHLENKER: We're also working to establish our cable paths, and our landing points, but one of the avenues we've proposed will not require DC, and so that's -- It's, obviously, easier, and cheaper, to have less cable, and so that's still being decided, but I would say that's kind of what we're -- That's sort of what we're working towards, but great question.

MS. BANKS: I can't really speak to the chlorine, and I don't know the specifics, and I just know that there is some cooling water discharge from HVDC.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Are there further questions? John Walter.

DR. WALTER: Thanks. John Walter, and I'm the Deputy Director for Science and Council Services for the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. I want to commend the developers here, for you guys coming together, with a unified approach, and I think that's -- One, it's very helpful for us, because we are going to often be advising on construction and operations plans, and surveys and monitoring, and to have a unified approach, a programmatic approach to those, it streamlines that, and it also allows each one of the monitoring plans in each project to be greater than the sum of its individual parts, and I think one thing that we, as an agency, have wanted to say is that we need to know what's going on, not just in the lease areas, but in the entire ecosystem, as we do things in the environment.

To the extent that those projects can serve in that capacity, and work together, under one -- Each a part of one unified plan, I think it will get us where we need to go, and so our agency is working on those kind of programmatic approaches and outlining the specifications for what that kind of surveying and monitoring would look like, and so I think we're aligning now, and we want to work together on that, and, since we do a lot of the long-term surveys in the area, having them be aligned with whatever goes on within the lease areas I think is critical to being able to understand what goes on in the lease areas, and then outside of it, because, if the lease areas affect animals, by having them excluded, if they go to areas that are maybe more problematic, then we need to know that as well, and so I think -- I also think that some of you have met with our staff already, and I think that's -- We want to continue those conversations, and probably make them regular meetings, so that we can work together to develop that plan.

I think it probably aligns with some of the council efforts here, particularly the habitat, and I would imagine the council has a high interest in ensuring the integrity of our monitoring, which we are calling survey mitigation, to ensure that the surveys that might be affected by these maintain the integrity of their information, and then whatever additional monitoring we might need to do also occurs, and I think we're at basically 1946 in the Gulf of Mexico here, because nothing is in the water in the South Atlantic, and 1946 was the year that the first offshore oil platform went into the Gulf.

If we knew then what it would become, and had the opportunity to put in the monitoring to be able to track what went on in the environment, we would have been in a much better place to be able to understand the changes that would have occurred, and the Gulf has had a lot of changes, and you can't deny that oil and gas has changed a lot, and I think we've got an opportunity here, and so thank you for coming, and I hope it's the first of more and more engagements, as these processes follow through to getting things in the water, and thank you.

MS. SCHLENKER: Thanks, John, and I just want to reiterate that, yes, we are happy to give presentations to the AP groups, and here to the council, and I think, for both projects, or all three projects really, you know, this is a -- We're happy to come back, and this isn't the first time that we've given a project update, but we would love to make that a regular thing, and I appreciate your comment.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. I've got Trish and then Tom.

MS. MURPHEY: I just want to thank you guys for all the effort and time that you all have taken to talk to all of our different APs, and to come and talk to us, and that was actually my request, that you guys do that, because one of the things that I think we learned from up north is that you really need to start engaging early, and often, so that, you know, everybody is on the same page, and everybody is aware of whatever issues that may come up in the future, and so I just really appreciate the time, and effort, that you all have done for the communication, and I appreciate being able to work with you guys, as far as North Carolina's involvement and our agency, and so, anyway, thank you very, very much.

MS. SCHLENKER: You're welcome, and we appreciate that comment as well. Thank you.

MS. BANKS: Thanks for all your help in working with us around the state.

DR. BELCHER: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Yes, and thank you for being here. I was going to say what Trish said, but kind of a big-picture question. You know, as we look at offshore wind, and its impact on fishing communities, one of the things that has always come up is data from fishermen, and is there any data deficiencies that would help you understand, as wind developers, the impacts to fishermen better, like whether it be spatial data or not, as we as, you know, a regulatory body look toward the future of data collection, and what kinds of things are missing that would have made that -- Not easier, but where do you see gaps there, I guess is what I'm saying.

MS. BANKS: So, yes, and I think we'll probably have just slightly different answers to this, but, for the Kitty Hawk project, you know, we're really grateful for the two really wonderful FRs we have in North Carolina, and one in Virginia, who have given us a lot of insight into their experiences in the fishery, and I think I mentioned that Rick Robbins had done a lot of work talking to local captains, but I think, you know, that's maybe one generation. Some of the landings data we've gotten goes back to about 2008, and so I think -- Having, you know, always more data is good, and to have more sort of a historical picture. We know, for the Kitty Hawk lease, there's not a lot of recreational and commercial fishing in the area right now, and what little there is has been sort of declining in the last decade-and-a-half, but having a picture of that historical data would be nice, in a perfect world.

MS. BANKS: I was just going to say that, you know, for us, we've been having conversations with fishermen who potentially fish in the area, and we've been bringing maps, to try and get some information on exactly where people fish, and we've been -- We've gotten feedback on how that's helpful or not, and we've updated those maps, and so, in the future, we're going to continue having those discussions, and I don't know if Katherine, or Albie, out there want to add anything to this, in terms of any gaps that they've seen, and you could just nod your heads yes or no. No. All right.

I mean, for anything, really, and I think we've said this plenty of times, but, you know, we're open to having any conversations, with any stakeholders, especially representing fishing interests, and, you know, if there's information that you think is helpful for us, that would be great to tell us, but just having those conversations, and kind of back and forth, in terms of what we have, and what we don't have, is kind of what is still going on for our projects, like at this time and into next year.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. I've got Laurilee and then Sonny.

MS. THOMPSON: On your fisheries engagement page, and I hope I'm interpreting this right, and it says you have a Kitty Hawk website that would send out notices to mariners, fisheries notices and facts, but, for the Long Bay project, how are you making the public aware of the buoys and any -- What kind of outreach are you doing on any surveys and stuff like that?

MS. BANKS: The surveys that we did this year, we -- Essentially, for several months leading up to it, we were talking about it, in terms of what we were planning, and, as I said before, getting feedback on what we're doing, to make sure we're collecting data that's helpful for us, but of interest to others as well, and we did do a local notice to mariners, and we had a fact sheet that we sent out to a lot of the local stakeholders in the area, and we did some media, just to, you know, let people know what was going on.

I would say that the biggest amount of that outreach was associated with the fact that, you know, we're going out there to do this, and how can -- You know, how can you help us design these surveys to be the most effective, and so we do have, on our website -- We have a lot of information, but we also sent the local notice to mariners out to District V and District VII, because we're kind of at the line, where we're in both of those districts for our lease, and so that was our key outreach for that, and, also, in a lot of our agency meetings, we had information, and provided information, that could then be shared with interest groups.

MS. THOMPSON: So there's like a website, or something, that people from up on the north end can look at too, and it has that kind of information on it?

MS. BANKS: Yes, and so our website -- I can't remember exactly when our website went live, in comparison to our surveys, and I think it was maybe around the same time, but certainly, moving forward, our local notice to mariners, and sort of survey updates, and notice of surveys, would be posted to the website.

DR. BELCHER: Sonny.

MR. GWIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted, for the record, that there's been a massive kill-off of whales, mostly humpbacks, up north, and, to my knowledge, there has not been one of them that has had rope on them, and whether they be ship strikes, or there's no evidence of wind power killing any of them, because of the surveying, but I just wanted to put it on the record that there has been no rope on any of these whales. Thank you.

MS. SCHLENKER: Doug, I don't know if you want to --

MR. GWIN: Commercial fishing gear. Thank you.

MS. SCHLENKER: So I know that Doug spoke to that, to some extent, but I don't have any information on that specifically.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Are there further comments, or questions? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: So one of the issues that we face is the disappearance of infrastructure, where can tie our boats up and unload our fish, and I am sure that you guys are going to have, you know, a pretty good chunk of dock space, wherever you're tying these big ships up, and would there be an opportunity to carve out a section where, you know, you could have a dock where the commercial boats could tie up and unload their project?

MS. SCHLENKER: Absolutely, yes, and I think one of the things that this sort of development presents is the opportunity to do a lot of community partnerships, and that's one area where it's sort of a win-win, as far as we're concerned, in terms of we will be having a lot of ships, and people, moving back and forth between these development areas, and so that's something we're looking very closely at, and have already had some conversations with, both in the Hampton Roads area, for our project, and in the Wanchese area as well, and so that's something we're actively talking to stakeholders about.

DR. BELCHER: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: There's been a lot of discussion about potential impacts to long-term fisheries surveys, and I was just wondering if maybe you could briefly touch on plans to mitigate any of those impacts.

MS. SCHLENKER: Great question, and so, yesterday, actually, we had a really wonderful conversation with some of the NOAA Beaufort folks, and talking to John Walter about, you know, making that a regular conversation, and so all I guess we can say right now is, you know, that's something we are very aware of, and talking to them about, and so we hope that we can kind of find a good solution that benefits, as John said, you know, both groups and add to those long-term datasets, and as well as do our, you know, fisheries monitoring and the construction that needs to happen for the project. We can provide more updates on that, as we have sort of more concrete ideas, but I think, for now, we've gotten those conversations started, and we're really happy about that.

DR. BELCHER: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Just to add to that, I believe that Total and Duke have been in touch with South Carolina DNR, for SEAMAP and MARMAP stations and everything too, and so, anyway, just to add to that.

DR. BELCHER: Any other further comments, or questions? John Walter.

DR. WALTER: We should have our survey mitigation strategy document published very soon, and then we'll also have the implementation part of that, and I think that the monitoring that the developers are going to be doing we hope can somehow augment, or work together, with that, so that it keeps the integrity of the surveys whole, which I think is the absolutely key there, because, as we've talked about today, losing a survey really puts us in a difficult bind for trying to give management advice, like you saw with tilefish, and so I think we'll be working on those plans, as well as a science strategy document for the region, which says what is the science that we're going to need to embark upon to be able to predict, and mitigate, impacts of many things in the marine environment, but offshore wind being one of them, so that we are in a good place, in the future, when this reaches its full realization, but we also can say what the potential, what the impacts, on the environment are, and, if possible, mitigate them, and so thanks, Tom, for bringing up survey mitigation.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. I've got Laurilee and then Tom.

MS. THOMPSON: So what about bird strikes? I know that, on land, they've had a big problem with windmills knocking birds out of the air, and somebody told me that you have sensors on the turbines that sense birds, but, by the time the bird runs into the turbine, a sensor is not going to help, and are you working with somebody on bird strikes? Some of those offshore, you know, pelagic birds are -- You know, their populations aren't in very good shape.

MS. BANKS: That's a great question, and so, for the Carolina Long Bay leases, we are required to put a MODIS station onto the buoys, and that listens for, or detects, tags, and I'm not exactly sure how it works, but that gives us a -- It kind of adds to the baseline that we have already, in

terms of understanding what birds are there, and then we would be able to determine, you know, what sort of mitigation might be required, based on that.

We've been having conversations with the Fish and Wildlife Service about those MODIS stations, and we're looking at whether or not there are specific species of concern that we could help support projects, and like sort of talking about the idea of collaborating with researchers, and others, and, you know, there is the potential that we could support, or partner, with a group that is looking to find a specific species and understand if they're out there, and it also just gives two more data points for the MODIS system that's already sort of up and down the coast.

I will say, for the monitoring that you mentioned, or the sort of radar that's looking for them, I would think that's probably -- After a turbine is already there, and you've determined what mitigation was required, and you've designed the project based on some feedback that you've gotten, but, for that type of thing, you're more monitoring, to understand what is happening, right, so that you can ensure that there are not, you know, an unacceptable -- I don't know what that number is, or anything like that, but just to keep an eye on it and see what kind of strikes might be happening, if they're happening, and so it's not meant to do something to stop it, but a lot of studies in Europe have found that many bird species will take a straight line through the middle of a row of turbines, and so, as Lela said, they're about a nautical mile apart, and so there's plenty of room for them to kind of create a path through, and some of them also just kind of avoid the whole area, as a result, and so I don't know if you want to --

MS. SCHLENKER: I guess the only thing I will add is that, yes, we're working with Fish and Wildlife, or, I guess, for Kitty Hawk, we already have done that process of what species are in the area, and doing the permitting with them, and so I think, for many of the species, they have found that they also just sort of fly over the whole thing, and there is fewer impacts than maybe on-land.

DR. BELCHER: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: This is my last question. So, you know, over the years, we've lost a lot of our offshore weather stations, and there's a real dearth of real-time like wind and wave information, and I am sure you're going to be gathering these in these sites, and is there any plans to share any of that basic weather data with the public?

MS. SCHLENKER: I will say, with our meteorological buoys, and they're not out on the site anymore, but, when they were, that information was all real-time on our website, and we had a lot of fishermen sad when they were decommissioned, and they were like, well, that was a great weather check out there, and so that's another potential opportunity, when there is development, for some potential kind of community engagement support, to have a bit of a weather station out there.

MR. ROLLER: I would highly suggest that, and it would be a great way to get some buy-in from the community.

MS. SCHLENKER: Yes, and they loved having it out there.

MS. BANKS: I will just reiterate that, for the Carolina Long Bay, with our buoys, which, just to reiterate, they have not gone in yet, and we don't have approval from BOEM yet to put those in,

but we're expecting our staff approval sometime mid-year next year, but we have been having those conversations with fishermen, and other stakeholders, in terms of the value of providing some of that real-time data, and so yes.

DR. BELCHER: Okay, and so any other further questions at this time? If not -- Chip.

DR. COLLIER: I just wanted to let the council know, and whoever is listening as well, that they went through the presentation very quickly today, but we are hoping to have a -- Or we're going to have a seminar series with them on January 9, and so they're going to be able to explain a little bit more at that point, and you guys will also have another opportunity to ask questions.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Thank you, again, for your time today, and we appreciate the efforts in keeping us all informed.

MS. BANKS: Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. The next item is topics for the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and so I have this very short document, basically just a list of topics for your Law Enforcement AP to potentially discuss, and so I wanted to just run that by you and make sure that we haven't missed anything. The AP is scheduled to meet in Charleston on January 29 and 30, and so we would give them, as usual, an update on developing amendments, like a general sort of thing, on amendments that they don't really need to do a deep dive and provide more specific guidance on. We would request that they sort of do updates on joint enforcement agreement activities, and also the enforcement priorities for NOAA that just came out, any updates from the U.S. Coast Guard.

We also thought that doing an update on enforcement, or compliance, in the spawning SMZs might be a good topic, and so I'm just running through all of these, and then we can just discuss, and you can tell me what you want and what you don't and whatever.

More specific input would be provided on some of the amendments that we have been discussing this week. The wreckfish amendment, there were specific items that the Wreckfish Subcommittee wanted the AP to discuss. Also, for Snapper Grouper Amendment 46, the private recreational permit, and the education requirement in particular, and also the amendment that addresses the ropeless, the on-demand, gear for black sea bass, and so those would be the three specific ones that they would give input on.

The next bullet was something that came up as a possibility, and there was a presentation on an application that was being built as a pilot through ACCSP, using Harbor Lights, which is the same contractor that's been helping with our CitSci apps, and this was an application to assist fisheries enforcement boarding, and so it was developed as a pilot, and I talked to Julie Simpson the other day, from ACCSP, and she explained that the ACCSP is no longer going to be involved in that project, and so I don't know the status of that, and it just seemed like something of interest to the enforcement community, and so I put it up there for you guys to potentially consider, and I can get more details and see if that is a possibility and whether that would be useful in our region. This was being done, I believe, for a shrimp fishery, and for scallops.

Other possible topics would be an update on compliance with the for-hire electronic reporting program, compliance with descending devices, and king mackerel tournament sales was another topic that came up this week as a potential item for law enforcement discussions, vessel speed zone enforcement for North Atlantic right whales, and then I'm not sure if it's premature to also schedule a presentation for the Law Enforcement AP on what you just heard about offshore wind activities, and so this is what we were able to compile for you guys to consider, and so let me know what you think.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think this is a great list, and it seems to cover everything that I can think of that we had talked about. Just a couple of points on wreckfish. A reminder that there was a directive to go get wreckfish citations, and I guess -- I'm assuming prior to this meeting, so that they could talk about it, and so just a reminder to get that from the state agency law enforcement folks, if needed, and I guess I would just make a request to make sure that you have plenty of time to talk about that wreckfish ITQ program, one because there's so many added actions, and we had a bunch of specific questions in there now, that there's a lot more specifics, and I don't really want to hold up the wreckfish amendment any more. You know, we've been working on it for so long, and I would hate for their discussion to be cut off, and then we don't get all the law enforcement input that we need, and then that prevents us from finalizing the amendment, and so I just wanted to put that out there.

MS. MURPHEY: I've got Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I have a number of thoughts, and so, with regard to the Coast Guard, they had provided me, after the 2022 season for recreational red snapper, search and rescue and issues related to that short derby season, and so I think it would be worth getting kind of incident reports, information, and then weighing-in on concerns about the derby fishing season.

You mentioned a mobile application, and it being, I guess, discontinued for use, or support by ACCSP, and it didn't sound like, based on what you were telling us, there was kind of a strong linkage there, and I would probably -- Unless there's a better tie-in, in terms of what we want to convey to the LEAP, I would probably just discourage that item.

Then, in terms of your list of possible topics, I agree that I think SEFHIER is important, from an update on compliance, but I think it's more of a question of how can they help us with compliance with the program, and then I think king mackerel tournament sales -- It may be worth at least getting some feedback from them, just on, you know, do they deal with enforcement on this, have they seen problems in the past, have they made any cases, kind of give us some guidance, and advice, and give them a synopsis of the problem, as we understand it now, or the perceived problem.

DR. BELCHER: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I agree this is a good place just to point for the king mackerel tournament landings, which we've had a lot of debate on, and, you know, it's well worth, I guess, asking if states are enforcing it to the intent of our previous amendments, I guess I would say.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Are there other comments for Myra? I guess I have one question, and so would the right whale speed zone enforcement -- Is that to get a handle on currently how they manage that, because, obviously, we don't have any known change yet for what's going to come in with the future.

MS. BROUWER: Right, and so that would be just to request an update on how that's going. I mean, as far as I know -- I just don't know much about it, and I thought that you guys might want to know details, from the enforcement folks, on how that is being addressed.

MR. WOODWARD: I'm the one that suggested that, when we were drafting this out, I think, because there is some emerging technologies, and things like that, and I think it would be interesting to see, you know, what some of that is, as much as can be shared, obviously, and some of it might be confidential, but I think for us just to have a perspective on what enforcement tools are being used and what expectations are of JEA partners and that sort of thing.

DR. BELCHER: Judy.

MS. HELMEY: Well, when we were at MREP, they had a great presentation on this from enforcement, on the whale -- On the speed zones and everything.

DR. BELCHER: Mel.

MR. BELL: Thank you. You may scrolled past this, and I missed it, but have we asked them, recently, about MPA or spawning SMZ -- Just issues, and was that on there up there? Okay. I see the spawning special management zones. Okay. Good. MPAs as well, I guess.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Any other thoughts on the list, as it's provided by Myra? Okay. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: So just a clarification on the ones that I still have question-marks by, and I'm assuming that an update on compliance with descending devices would be good with you guys, and what about offshore wind? Okay. Maybe that's too soon. Okay.

DR. BELCHER: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, I guess just a comment, and, I mean, I appreciate you putting the list together, and I keep going back to kind of what is the purpose that we would be talking to the enforcement panel about, and, you know, what do we want to get back, and, to me, I'm not sure there's really a lot of feedback that we would need for offshore wind from them at this point. Descending devices, I guess I would be good to get some information on compliance, but I'm not sure how much they'll be able to contribute to that.

MS. BROUWER: Well, thank you. That's all I had.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. We have a couple of reports left, but what I'm going to do is I'm going to ask that we hold off on those until tomorrow morning, and so John will give us the report from the CCC meeting, and we'll have Andy and John Walter give their respective reports in the morning, when we start in with the open session.

The plan, right now, is to go into the closed session, to finish up on the AP appointments that we were working through, and that we had on hold from the other day, and so we're going to start out with the AP assignments, and then, from there, we'll move into the Executive Director's review, and that's how we'll wrap-up today, and so, at this point, we're going to recess the Full Council, and, like I said, we'll start back up at 8:30 tomorrow morning, so that we can pick up with the reports and then go into our committee reports and carry out the rest of the day, but we'll do closed session activities right now, and so, if you want, take a five-minute break, and just get yourself oriented, and we'll get everybody out of the room, and we'll proceed with the closed session.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on December 7, 2023.)

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DECEMBER 8, 2023

THURSDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

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The Full Council Session II of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at The Beaufort Hotel, Beaufort, North Carolina, on Friday, December 8, 2023, and was called to order by Chairman Carolyn Belcher.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Well, welcome to the home stretch, day five of the December council meeting. We're going to start first with Trish has something that she would like to put on the record from Mel.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Good morning, everyone. I just know that everybody knows this is Mel Bell's last meeting. He is retiring, and so this December meeting is his last meeting, and it's kind of hard for me to put into words what an asset that Mel has been to this council. I've only been on this council a couple of years, but I have seen just how well respected that Mel is by all the council members, the council staff, our stakeholders, and he brings a lot.

He brought a lot of experience to this council, I mean, between all of his work in artificial reefs and how all that work translated into all of his experience and knowledge on snapper grouper, especially his beloved gag grouper, and, on a personal note, my husband Steve and I, we first met Mel in 1985, when we started working for South Carolina, with Mel giving Steve his very first job, or his first job in the field, and he's been a valuable mentor for Steve, and he's been a valuable mentor to me, and I think he's mentored lots of folks around this table, and the staff and everything, and John, and he just brings so much experience to everybody, and so, on behalf of the council, I want to thank you, Mel, for your passion to this council, and I'm really going to miss you, and so I love you. *(Applause)*

MR. CARMICHAEL: Go ahead, Mel.

MR. BELL: Well, thanks. Actually, it's a good thing that I'm not there. Thank you, Trish, and thank you, everybody. Just I really hate not being there for my last meeting, and forty years with DNR, and it's just time to move on to something else, like my grandchildren and other things, and

I have other things to deal with right now too, but I really appreciate all of that, and it's been -- It's just been a great privilege, being on the council and working with you guys, even before the council, and I just can't say enough good things about you all, but I really appreciate all that, and it means a lot to me, and Patsy is here with me too, and she's crying, and so, anyway, listen. Thank you so much, and I love you all, and I will miss you, and just please stay in touch. I mean, I will be technically working until -- My first day of retirement is 1 January, and so I'm still working for a little bit, but please stay in touch. I will miss you guys a lot, and thank you very much.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks again, Mel. Okay. Moving on down the agenda, we're going to finish up with the few reports that we had outstanding, starting out with the Southeast Regional Office report with Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: That's a hard segue there, and so I'm not going to segue quite yet, and so I do want to also thank Mel for his service to the council, and I believe he has served on this council since 2012, and I asked a couple of his former employees that I was able to steal away from him, that he did a really good job training, and they had a few things that I wanted to share with you about Mel.

Mel, Jack McGovern and Jessica Stephen shared some input with me, and what they said about you is everything I know about you, that you're positive, optimistic, never negative, that you always treat people with respect and kindness, and even the lowliest graduate students, or interns, you have always been helpful, and Jack shared a funny story that you would always call him the grim reaper when he would call and let you know about seasonal closures, and so I appreciated that.

You also put the resources and people above politics, and I respect you for that. You're always here providing constructive input and comments and suggestions for management, and so you leave a lasting legacy, some really substantial shoes to fill, and I know, over time, South Carolina DNR has lost employees, and you've taken on more roles and hats, and so I respect you immensely, Mel, and we're going to miss you around this table.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Andy. I really appreciate that, and, speaking of graduate students, Todd Kellison was actually one of the earlier graduate students that I worked with, way back, and so I have all kinds of connections.

MR. STRELCHECK: You do. All right, and so, with the Southeast Regional Office report, I'm not going to go through the Protected Resources update. You can read it, and it's in the briefing book. We have a lot of things that are kind of in progress, in terms of rulemakings, but no real major updates between the September and December council meetings.

A couple of things that I wanted to note that happened in the last few months is we're getting very close to releasing our joint Science Center and Regional Office Southeast Geographic Strategic Plan, and so I look forward to sharing that with all of you in the coming months. As you're aware, yesterday, the golden tilefish fishery opened, and so thank you for your work on that amendment. I wish the weather was better this week, but hopefully it will get better and allow for some additional fishing opportunities for the commercial sector.

We also have approved Snowy Grouper Amendment 51. That will become effective on the 2nd of January, and then the last thing that I just wanted to note is that we have now completed, I believe, seven focus groups, and two additional scoping conversations, as well as gone out and done a public request for information and done a virtual webinar in English, Spanish and Vietnamese for our national equity and environmental justice strategy. That effort is now going to roll into a regional plan, and we're working with Christina on that, but we've gotten a lot of great feedback from stakeholders, and I would ask that we are able to come back to the council in March and meet with you and present on our regional strategy, as well as gather your input.

Our goal is to complete a draft plan and submit it to our Headquarters office in early April, and so more to come on that, but fantastic feedback, and we're learning a lot from those efforts, in terms of how we can better engage underserved communities, and I think a lot of opportunities there that align with those stakeholder meetings and other activities that the council is already working on, and so, with that, I will take any questions. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Questions for Andy? Okay. Thank you, Andy. Next up would be the Southeast Fisheries Science Center report from John Walter.

DR. WALTER: All right. Thanks, Chair. We have a presentation. I have a brief report, and then we'll have a presentation from Todd Kellison. I also want to echo our appreciation for Mel and his stewardship of South Carolina DNR. They have been absolutely excellent scientific partners with us, and I think the legacy of science that Mel leaves is wide, and broad, and I think it's going to persist, and I think we're reaping the benefits of that in a lot our surveys that are run out of South Carolina DNR and the life history work, and so -- I think it's going to be in good hands, Mel, and I think the science is going to keep on going, serving our resources, and I just want to thank you for your leadership on this council and on a lot of the science that gets done.

Todd may want to say something, because of his tenure as a grad student under you, and so I will let Todd, when he comes up and gives the presentation, say what else he may want to say, but I did want to go into -- Just pivot to just a couple of things that I wanted to note that are going on in our center.

We have received some funds for the climate, ecosystem, and fisheries initiative, and so we're going to be hiring four positions under that, an oceanographic modeler, a stock assessment and MSE modeler, an economist focusing on community vulnerability, and then a protected species spatial modeler. We hope that those positions are really going to be able to jumpstart a lot of our climate work and be able to incorporate a lot of these things into the management framework, and so we're excited about that.

As you heard yesterday, talking about offshore wind, that's something that is a big item for us right now, in terms of survey mitigation, and then also trying to lay the foundation for the science that's going to need to be done to understand -- To predict and mitigate the impacts. We'll be publishing our survey mitigation strategy soon, and our science strategy document soon, and then we look forward to working with also the developers, as they've got leases, to ensure that the science that they have to do in their lease meshes well with the science that we need to use to inform the whole system.

There is also the National Seafood Strategy, as Janet pointed out, and I'm the regional representative to that, and I think that there's likely to be a regional focus project on Southeast shrimp. If that comes to fruition, I think that might provide some opportunities for a lot of the fisheries that we're hearing are in -- Are experiencing some major difficulties here.

I'm excited, if that happens, but it's also something that, right now, is really just planting a seed for a lot of work that would need to be done to achieve what might need to be done for that fishery, and so, in concert with that, and, while it's not the same as the seafood strategy, we are embarking on something that is a little bit of a pivot from another initiative. In the Gulf, we were going to do a management strategy evaluation for the shrimp fishery, and we had kind of discussed that in a listening session, with a lot of stakeholders and with the council, and they determined, and kind of told us, that, you know, actually, I think we're okay with the management of shrimp, but it's other aspects that are outside of the management of shrimp that are the problem.

We are pivoting to something we're calling shrimp futures, and this is going to basically be a couple of steps, starting on some listening sessions throughout the Gulf, and they could extend to the South Atlantic, because I think they're quite -- The issues are shared, but it's going to start with identifying what the problems, and the pressures and drivers, that are preventing the fishery from achieving its vision, and we're going to also try to help elucidate what the short, medium, and long-term vision is for the future, and, ideally, a healthy, sustainable, profitable, wild-capture fishery in say 2050, and so where do we want to be in the long-term, and then how are we going to get there, and then do a scenario planning, or projections, of what is likely to happen, absent some interventions in the fishery, or interventions in other aspects, perhaps working on trade issues and perhaps working on marketing.

That will help identify the interventions that might need to be made to achieve that 2050 long-term vision, and it might need to be supporting a refreshing of the fleet, as the fleet is aging, and ensuring that infrastructure is there to land, and so these are all topics, and things, that have come up repeatedly in this meeting, and I think it's something that we've got an opportunity, and a lot of our staff, our Science Center staff, want to embark upon this, and so we're really looking for partners in helping to achieve this shrimp futures.

That is going to be something that we're going to be working on in 2024, and so we've got, right now, a one-page document that outlines that. We'll be presenting that at the Gulf Council in January, and, if it's something that this council is interested in also being a part of, I think we can present that maybe in March, and at least get some conversation on that, and perhaps with the Shrimp AP, this council's Shrimp AP.

The next item is that the MAFAC nominations are open until December 16, and this is the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee, and it's a national committee that advises on a number of marine fisheries topics, and so, if people are interested in applying for that, it's still open, and then, lastly, something that's pretty exciting to a lot of us is that we've received funds to purchase a new vessel for the Southeast, and it will be about a 150-foot vessel that will be primarily able to do a lot of our reef fish surveys, and so it will be able to fill in for lost days that we've had from some of the OMAO vessels and allow us a little bit more autonomy to conduct the surveys that we need to, when we need to, and so this will support the SEFIS surveys, as well as the GFISHER survey, and then fill in for other surveys as well.

That purchase, right now, we're scoping out, and searching for vessels, and we think we may have found one, and so we'll be able to purchase that, and we also have funds for staffing it, to ensure that we'll be able to staff it, and then do the retrofitting to turn it into a scientific platform, and so, with that, I will take questions on this, and then we'll have Todd give his presentation. Are there any questions on my report?

DR. BELCHER: Questions of John Walter? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I don't want to grill you any further, and I think I've tortured you enough this meeting, but I just want to thank you, John, on behalf of the shrimp industry, because we need help, and you guys are stepping up, and, Andy, you too, and we really appreciate it. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Other questions for John? John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: John, where is the vessel going to be based?

DR. WALTER: Probably in Pascagoula. That's the deepest water access.

DR. BELCHER: Other questions or comments for John? Okay. So, John, back to you for Todd.

DR. WALTER: All right, Todd.

DR. KELLISON: Good morning, everyone, and so I'm Todd Kellison, and I'm with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and thanks for giving me a few minutes to talk about some cross-jurisdictional work that we're doing within the Science Center, but I would like to just take a moment to say, Mel, congratulations, and thank you so much for your service. I echo all the great comments that have been made previously, particularly the ones that Andy conveyed, going back to, like Andy mentioned, the lowly graduate student, and I was one of those when I first met Mel Bell, back in the early 1990s, at the College of Charleston, and Mel was on my master's committee, and I did my first open-water dive with Mel, and I forgot my weight belt, and he was always kind and instructive, and he gave me so much great advice, and it's been great to watch his so-significant contributions over the path of his career, and so, Mel, thanks so much, and I look forward to following-up directly with you this month, before you get out of there.

With that said, again, thanks for giving me a few minutes to talk about our center's cross-jurisdictional efforts. A quick thanks to Kevin Craig, who compiled most of this presentation, and to all the people whose work I'm going to highlight, and I will start back in August of 2021, when we held a NMFS Atlantic Coast Science Coordination Workshop.

The objectives of that workshop were to assess the degree of coordination with our agency's science and data collection efforts along the Atlantic coast and to identify areas where we could strengthen that coordination, and it's from a perspective of changing climate, and changing ocean ecosystems, and potentially changing species distributions. The participants in that workshop were predominantly agency personnel, but it also included representation from the three coast fishery management councils, ASMFC, state agencies, academia, and industry, and I think it's accurate that it was our agency's first real formal effort to assess cross-regional coordination, and I think it may not be the last.

During the workshop, which occurred over a period of about two-and-a-half days, we spent time talking about eight different areas of focus, and seven of those -- Those eight are listed here, and seven of them are science and data collection, and one of them was fishery management perspectives.

The outcomes of the workshop are -- It's not linked here, and so, maybe since this briefing book was submitted, a NOAA Technical Memo was published with the workshop summary, and recommendations from the workshop, and so I can definitely provide the link to that, so that it can be distributed. A sort of core finding across all of the areas that we examined was, not surprisingly, that there is considerable scope for increasing coordination across our regions along the Atlantic coast, and that degree of scope differed across the different areas of focus, and so some were already coordinating more strongly than others.

Certainly within fishery-independent surveys, which is an area that I work with with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, we did have some coordination, but we did have a lot of scope for increase, and so, over the next couple of slides, I will talk about some progress that we've made since that workshop, in terms of pursuing sort of cross-regional surveys, and the first is with our trap video survey, which is the -- So we call it SERFS, the Southeast Reef Fish Survey, and it targets hardbottom habitats within the South Atlantic, and the spatial distribution of that survey is from Cape Hatteras down to Port St. Lucie, which is a broad spatial coverage, but it's not as broad as the council's jurisdictional coverage, and so we're missing this northern area between Cape Hatteras and Virginia, and also south of Port St. Lucie, down to the Tortugas.

Partly to address the potential for spatial expansion with that survey, in 2023, with some additional sea days we received, we did some bathymetric mapping north of Cape Hatteras, and that's shown in the red on this right figure, and that was to give us some information on the distribution, potential distribution, of hardbottom habitats north of Hatteras, and we're also pursuing that information from other sources, including coordinating with fishermen, and we're anticipating -- We're planning, in 2024, to sample in that area north of Cape Hatteras, and I hope that that's something that we'll be able to continue to do in subsequent years.

We're also planning for potential expansion in the southern region, where we're not sampling now, and south of Port St. Lucie. Thinking through the logistics, thinking through the cost of that, thinking about potential challenges, such as sampling over sensitive coral habitats, and the Gulf Stream is closer in there, and so getting gear on the bottom, and keeping it on the bottom, are issues that we're working through, but we definitely think that we can perform the trap video survey in that southern region. It's going to require additional funding or reallocating resources that we currently have.

We're also working with the Northeast Fisheries Science Center on potential expansion of that trap video survey into the Mid-Atlantic and New England waters, and that conversation has been spurred by offshore wind energy development, and the need to mitigate impacts to surveys, and the potential for using our trap video deployments within those wind energy areas, and so those discussions are ongoing, and so I hope, in subsequent council meetings, I have might have some more progress to report on further southern expansion or further northern expansion.

For our South Atlantic Deepwater Longline survey, or SADL survey, if you're not familiar with that, it's a relatively new survey, and it was initiated in 2020. It does have -- The distribution of

the survey effort does match the council's jurisdiction, and so we sample from the Virginia border down to the Tortugas. It's a deepwater survey that focuses on tilefish species, snowy grouper, other deepwater groupers, and, taking a step back in, probably in 2016 or 2017, in the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, we started coordinating with Mid-Atlantic Council, and Northeast Fisheries Science Center personnel, about deeper -- About our longline surveys, and we continue to stay in touch about approaches, particularly as we've planned and initiated the SADL survey, and, in late 2022, Mid-Atlantic Council staff approached us and asked about the potential for expanding this survey northward into Mid-Atlantic waters, and those discussions were fruitful.

The Mid-Atlantic Council then provided some funding to support that expansion, and so, in 2023 -- This middle figure shows the sampling distribution from 2022, which, again, it's the Virginia border to the Tortugas, and you can see, in 2023, that we sampled north to offshore of the northern extent of Delaware Bay, and the reason for the extent of that northern spatial coverage was to cover the core range of blueline tilefish, in anticipation of the upcoming blueline tilefish assessment, and I will also note that this northern end, on the right figure, the northern end of sampling in 2023, meets up with the southern end of the golden tilefish survey that the Mid-Atlantic Council has sponsored in 2017, 2020, and I believe they're planning to do it again in 2024. The SADL survey and that Mid-Atlantic tilefish survey have very similar -- Purposefully, very similar methodology, and so we have the potential to combine those data.

Last, I will note that Captain Dewey Hemilright was our -- I forgot to mention that this SADL survey is a survey that's cooperative with industry, and so we work with industry participants to do it, and the industry participant that samples off of central and northern North Carolina, and who sampled in the Mid-Atlantic waters this year, is Captain Dewey Hemilright, who I think is no longer here, but big thanks to Dewey.

Some other broader, within our center, cross-jurisdictional activities are, from a fishery-dependent side, we coordinate very closely with the NMFS Office of Highly Migratory Species, the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, regarding vessel and dealer data collections. From the socioeconomic, or the human dimensions side, you're likely familiar with participatory workshops that the center has led, our social sciences research group has led, working with fishermen and building that conceptual model of that fishery, from the fisheries perspective, and we're working on species distribution modeling, focusing on the snapper grouper complex and on mahi-mahi, and we have done some exploratory analyses of Northeast Fisheries Science Center trawl data, and with coastwide MRIP data, to try to make some inferences about whether the frequency of more southerly species is increasing in the trawl survey, or in the MRIP data, in the Mid-Atlantic and farther north waters in more recent years.

Lastly, and this is not all Atlantic coast, but looking at cross-jurisdictional between the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic, and we've been working on larval connectivity between those two regions, for a number of species, like gag, scamp, red snapper, red grouper, and I believe black sea bass as well, and so we're making a good bit of progress, and then I will also touch on two other broad topics that were touched on during the lightning talks that we had on Tuesday night, if you were able to see those.

One is the NMFS distribution mapping and analysis portal, or DisMAP, and so this is an online accessible database, and we generate data products very quickly from it, for all of our -- For all of the U.S. coastal regions. For the South Atlantic, the data are solely from the SEAMAP coastal

trawl survey, which is limited to near-coastal waters, but I pulled this figure on the right for Spanish mackerel out, and so one of the data products that you can generate from DisMAP is one that shows the center of abundance of that species, like the geographical center of abundance of that species, and how that has varied over time.

For this one, the Y-axis here is latitude, and the X-axis is years, and you can see that, in more recent years, based on the coastal trawl survey data, it does look like the center of distribution of Spanish mackerel in the South Atlantic has been shifting northward. Also, you can generate and look at the depth distribution of species, and species compilations, regional summaries, with DisMAP, and so, while the DisMAP portal for the South Atlantic contains solely coastal trawl survey data now, it's anticipated that the trap video survey data will be added, and available for generating data products, in this coming year.

Then, lastly, and I'm going to skip that slide for a moment and talk briefly about our climate vulnerability assessment, which you also heard a little bit about the lightning talks, if you participated in them, and so I will say, just relatively briefly, that the climate vulnerability assessment is a broad look at the vulnerability of a broad suite of species, managed and non-managed, to changing climate, and so you can get a quick look at a species' vulnerability, which is a function of its sensitivity to effects of climate change and its exposure, anticipated exposure, to those effects, and, also, the potential for a distribution change.

The South Atlantic Climate Vulnerability Assessment, or CVA, is published as a NOAA tech memo, and that link is down here at the bottom-left of this slide, but there's also a -- Like DisMAP, there's an online tool, to quickly generate results, and the link to that online portal is down at the lower-right of the slide, and then the last slide, aside from a thank you slide, John already touched on, and so the NOAA climate, ecosystem, and fisheries initiative, and it's an agency-wide effort, and, within the National Marine Fisheries Service, CEFI is intended to give agencies the capacity, and expertise, to generate the science that managers need to prepare for and respond to climate change, and, as John mentioned, we're going to realize some new positions, four new positions, within the Science Center in 2024.

The type of things that I've been talking about, we're going to considerably increase our capacity to work on those things, and so I anticipate considerable progress in the coming years with this boost, and, with that, I will stop and try to address any questions, and so thank you for your time.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Todd. Questions for Todd? Okay. Again, thank you for your time today.

DR. KELLISON: Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Next up will be John, giving us a briefing on the CCC meeting.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I do want to say, to Todd, that I'm glad to see the consideration of expanding the reef fish survey into the Northeast. It's been one of my sticking points and point of sticks that I have poked the agency with, at the CCC, quite often, about DisMAP and, you know, the difficulties in going across that critical junction between the Northeast region and the Southeast region that we know is going to probably create -- It's already creating data issues, and it could

create governance issues, and it creates permit issues, and so I know you guys have a plan to do that, and so I'm really encouraged to see that happening.

I did have a PowerPoint that I was going to go through on this, and, Myra, could you look around and see if you could find where that is? I thought I had a PowerPoint on the website to hit on some of this. I thought I had a PowerPoint for the Full Council stashed away in the not-for-website folder, but I will get rolling though. If you find that, let me know.

The CCC met in October, and just a reminder that this is a gathering of all the council regional executive directors and the council chairs and vice chairs and representatives from NMFS, and we talk about issues that are important across all of the councils, and at a national basis, and so we get updates on the NOAA Fisheries priorities, and what they're working on, and we hear things about the budget, and, you know, we get the high-level agency things, and then there's a number of issues that we're working on, from the councils perspective, that we have working groups and various things, and we get reports on them, and so this is the group that manages things like the council member ongoing development that we send people to, as well as the scientific advisory committee, which is the gathering of SSC representatives nationwide.

During 2023, the CCC was hosted by the Gulf of Mexico Council, and that's a rotating duty amongst the eight councils. Next year, it's going to be hosted by the Caribbean Council. We did a few years ago, and we have a few years before it's going to come back around to us.

The budget outlook is really anticipating a flat level of funding, essentially, again, and there may be a slight percentage increase in some of the various budget drafts, but I think everybody is well aware of the situation with the federal budget and continuing under continuing resolutions, and, given the passage of time so far in the fiscal year, we're not going to be too surprised if it ends up with very much a status quo budget, which would mark a number of years when we've been under status quo funding, essentially, and you're all well aware of the purchasing power of the dollar, and where it's been trending in the last few years, and so, really, in terms of real dollars, we're kind of below where we were probably back -- I think you've got to go back to about 2015, or 2018, to get a point where, you know, we were at our peak, in terms of purchasing power, in today's dollars.

Dr. Cisco Werner gives an update on the science, and one of the things that they pointed out is there's a lot of maintenance work that's going to be done on NOAA vessels, and apparently vessels get a lot of hard use, and they're getting to the midpoint of a number of their lives, and they're going to be updated, but they also continue to try to promote surveys and science, and the issue, with the CCC, often comes back to maintaining the basic capabilities to do the basic science that's necessary, in spite of knowing that there is increasing demands for things like, you know, dealing with wind power, as we heard, and dealing with climate change, but the CCC is definitely consistently going to bat for maintaining survey capabilities and monitoring capabilities.

Dave Whaley, who you guys heard, gave an update on legislative, and, really, you heard, in great detail, what's going on at the meeting this week, which was kind of an update from what we heard at the CCC, but fairly similar.

There's been a lot of discussion on the governance policy, and so we recently submitted a letter, which is called the 304(f), and the Secretary has the authority to assign councils jurisdiction over

species, and they came up with a policy to provide some clarification on what they would do if species changed their distribution, and it caused concerns with the CCC, mainly about process, information that's available, who is going to look at, potentially, shifts across all of the managed species, on top of all the other work that we need to do and the work that we need to do that we're not getting done, and so, on this one, the CCC passed a motion that they requested NOAA Fisheries to engage the councils, and the CCC, to develop a revised version of the policy.

Really, what the CCC is asking for is include us in your draft. We're going to be directly affected, and we know what's going on in our regions, and we know the data limitations in our regions, and we feel like we should have a voice in what the policy ultimately says.

We've also talked a lot, as we have at this, about the Inflation Reduction Act. At that time, they were still coming up with how the funding was going to work, and how the process was going to work, and we know a little more, as I said earlier, and we're working through that.

There's a climate subgroup that started out dealing with the climate issues. Usually, when there's a big national initiative, like climate, EEJ, wind power, the CCC will create a workgroup, where we get members of our staffs together to deal with it on a collaborative basis across all the councils, so we have a united front, and so one of the things we have is one on climate, and they gave a report on what they were working on.

We've had ongoing issues with the Endangered Species Act, primarily to getting access to information, and opinions, in time for the councils to review them and act on them, and then NMFS position has basically been that the councils are equivalent to the general public, and we don't get draft versions until they're ready to be disseminated to the public.

This has been particularly a big issue in the West Pacific, because they have a lot of endangered species positions, and so Kitty Simonds, from the West Pacific, has been pushing this, and pushing this hard, and has requested, many, many times, to just say, you know, we are not the general public when it comes to these things, and, you know, we're not the general public with many, many things related to what the National Marine Fisheries Service does and why, on this, are you treating us like the public, and we should have access to these drafts and have ample time for the councils to consider how they affect our fisheries.

It's just been one of those things that I guess the Endangered Species Act, the highest levels of the agency, what have you, they just continue to come down and really resist giving us early copies of drafts, until they've worked through their process and have an opinion. This largely remains a large point of frustration on behalf of the council, and then, along these lines, the ESA-MSA Working Group is another direction working at that same issue. We got a working group together to try and promote this and see if we can get clear timelines, and a process, for working with the agency, and it remains a work in progress.

This is another place where we put forth a motion to have the working group discuss the changes in the policy that's coming, and there is changes in the ESA policy, and they want a chance to look at that, and review the policy directive, and work with General Counsel and have NMFS work with the working group to develop a revised policy that's more consistent with council needs. This is kind of the traditional nature of what you see for CCC motions, and it's really just trying to get the agency to work with the councils, effectively.

We have the Habitat Working Group. It meets about once a year and keeps up with habitat issues. They're probably going to meet again coming up next year, and they're dealing with their climate issues and EFH designations and such.

There's a Communications Workgroup, which is our communications experts, and they talk about best practices for spreading information, and they deal with communication directly related to the CCC. Those guys met this past year, and they shared a lot of information, across the different councils, on how they deal with communication issues, and one thing that's coming up will be the 50th anniversary of the council process, and so they're going to have another meeting to start planning on what we do, as council, and through our regional councils website, to point out the 50th anniversary and what the councils have done in fifty years and all that we've accomplished.

The CMOD that I mentioned, which a number of you guys went to, we have approved having another CMOD workshop, and it's going to be held in probably early 2025, and, conceptually, what we're doing, and I mentioned the SES, which we call the scientific committee, and they also meet and talk about technical topics, and our plan, for the future, is to have the council member development have a similar topic to what the scientist topic was, so that the scientists talk about something like, you know, MSEs and management strategies from a technical perspective, and then, at the council member training, you would be talking about that same topic, but how you would implement it in the council process, and so, you know, we've set up this intent to have this coordination between the two things, and so, you know, we really think that will put a lot of value added into these two important workshops that we're doing.

There's an EEJ workgroup that's been going on, and they've met quite often. It's really just trying to understand how the councils deal with this, how the councils can address EEJ within the limited things that we as councils can actually do, and we largely control fishing mortality rates. We're not social engineers, you know, and we don't have the ability to do a lot of that kind of stuff, and so just understanding how this factors into our core goal, which is, first and foremost, we prevent overfishing, and that's usually what this group has been working on, trying to find out what's the real council role here.

We had some discussion on establishing regulations in sanctuaries, and this is an issue that we're working on with the Florida Keys Sanctuary, and this has been pushed, again, by the Western Pacific. They have many, many sanctuaries out there, and they're very large, and they've been frustrated with the process for establishing regulations, and this is another ongoing topic that the CCC is going to work on.

We had an area-based management subcommittee, which was convened to deal with the 30-by-30, and I think people probably remember that, where the goal was to set aside -- To conserve 30 percent of the oceans by 2030, and defining what "conserve" means has been a big question for this group, as well as identifying just how much of the oceans are already protected, in some ways, by the actions of the councils.

One of the issues that has come up is the South Atlantic doesn't allow any trawling, but so we wanted to make sure that actions like that, that protect habitats, should get some credit in this 30-by-30 initiative, and to make sure that areas that councils have set aside for protections actually get due credit, and this remains a bit of question, because no one has really determined what

conservation means in the context of this 30-by-30 act, and so you don't know if a protected area that allows say trolling, but not bottom fishing, would even count. You know, a protected area that allows somebody to go in and fish it, but doesn't allow other things, would that even count towards the goal? I think we just will continue to monitor this, through the CCC, and see where it ends up.

The Scientific Coordination Subcommittee that I mentioned, they did meet in 2024, and they talked about ABC control rules in a changing environment, and so, in 2025, the CMOD will talk about communicating complicated topics like this to the councils and how we incorporate those, and then we'll be looking at having another SCS meeting in -- Actually, that's right, and it's in 2024 that they're going to meet, and they met a few years ago, and that's where they will talk about the ABC control rules, and then, in 2025, the CMOD gets into that. That's going to be hosted by the New England Council in that year, which will be good.

Let's see. The next one is -- Again, there is some changes in NEPA, and we've talked about them some, and we've been monitoring it through the CCC. We're not exactly sure how this is going to affect our process, and what we have to do, and so we've had a CCC group just keeping an eye on it, understanding it's going through the CEQ, which is a higher level, and that's had a lot of impact on the timing of the process, but, again, like I said, we're going to form a working group, which will make sure that we have council staff as eyes on the game, and letting us know what's going on, and we bring that back to you guys.

We had a pretty productive meeting, and it's great for me, for the chair, for the vice chair, to go there and meeting with our council members and share issues. Much like these meetings, you do things around the table, but then you actually get time, afterwards, to interact with the other executive directors and keep those lines of communication open, which are going to be critically important as we deal with climate change and species shift in the future.

Then, next year, we'll be hosted by the Caribbean Council, and so the CCC is going to meet in May, in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and then in October in Washington, D.C., and so, as always, we should have an idea of some of the topics, and we'll try to reach out to you guys, to get your concerns and questions and anything you would like to bring forward. If you ever have a question about a national topic that, you know, you feel would be good for the CCC, feel free to shoot it my way, and we can try to get it on the agenda, and so thanks, and that's the CCC report, Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks, John. Any questions, or comments, for John at this time? Okay. Moving on, we will be wrapping up with our committee and council reports. What we are going to do is a little bit of reorganizing, only because we still have some outstanding conversations with Snapper Grouper, and so we're going to go through the order as-is, with Snapper Grouper moving to the end, behind the SEDAR report. Okay, and so we will start out with the report from the Executive Committee, which is me.

This is a summary report from the Executive Committee, which met on October 24, 2023, and it was held via webinar, and some of us were able to be there in-person. The South Atlantic Council's Executive Committee met via webinar on the 24th of October. The committee approved the meeting agenda and the minutes of the prior meeting.

In the closed session, the committee initially convened to discuss personnel and contract items, and several contract projects were reviewed and brought forward for further consideration during the open meeting session. Budget review, we were provided with an overview of the 2023 budget and expenditures and proposed draft budget for 2024. Currently, expenditures for 2023 are on-track with the budget expectations at this point in the calendar year. The final 2023 expenditures are expected to fall at, or slightly below, the total budget for 2023. No funding allocation information is available for 2024 at this time, and proposed federal budget information suggests status quo funding is likely, although the current continuing resolution, and delays in approving federal budgets, add significant uncertainty.

The draft 2024 council budget exceeds the 2023 budget and anticipated 2024 funding level, due largely to increased contractual and nonrecurring expenses related to ongoing projects, such as the MSE, increased state liaison grants, temporary project staff, and several new projects, which are noted below.

Nonrecurring 2024 expenses contributing to the increased budget are supported with the budget surplus accrued over the last few years. Costs of supporting core council activities and staff obligations do not exceed the expected funding for 2024. The council approved the draft 2024 budget. The budget will be revised and brought back before the committee if the 2024 funding is significantly different than assumed.

As discussed in prior meetings, the council has surplus funds available to be used during the current grant period that accrued due to the reduced travel during COVID, recent declines in personnel costs, and ongoing cost saving measures. To reduce the risk of possible budget shortages, in light of the uncertain funding climate that existed following COVID, the council chose to delay spending these funds until the end of the current grant period. Having reached that point, several projects addressing council needs were considered. The committee approved supporting the following activities with surplus funds: assistance to South Carolina DNR for the new SEAMAP vessel refit; gathering increased public input for the snapper grouper MSE; conducting an SMZ evaluation; purchasing updated outreach materials; developing the Snapper Grouper Amendment 46 education program; and incorporating habitat information into the new council website.

Council operating grants are provided in five-year blocks, with the current period running from 2020 to 2024. Unspent funds from one year can be carried over to be used in later years during each five-year grant period. At the end of the five-year grant, the council can request a one-year extension and carry over those funds necessary to support continuing work into -- To support continuing work on incomplete activities that were planned to be completed during the five-year grant period.

The next council grant period will begin in 2025 and will likely extend for four years, rather than five years. NMFS has indicated a change in the grant period is likely so that the total grant period, including the base years and the one-year extension opportunity, does not exceed the five years.

We reviewed the 2024 activities schedule, detailing the planned meetings and related expenses. The activities schedule has expanded in recent years, to more thoroughly incorporate the full extent of council activities. The council workplan was also reviewed, and some updates noted, due to the changes in assessment plans that will be detailed to the council during the SEDAR Committee at the December 2023 council meeting. The overall workload for 2024 appears manageable across

most council meetings, and there will likely be an opportunity to revisit Coral Amendment 10 later in the year.

Coming out of that committee, we had the following motion, which was to approve the draft 2024 operational budget, as presented and modified, and that was approved by the committee. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Is there any further discussion on this item? Okay. **Seeing none, is there any objection to this motion?** Andy. Sorry. Discussion.

MR. STRELCHECK: Moving quick. I was not a part of the discussion on Monday, and I got in afterward, and one thing I would like to have the council committee consider is inclusion of consideration of supporting the wreckfish ITQ system development. We don't know what the cost of that is going to be, and the Fisheries Service is seeking temporary funds, but, if additional funds are needed, and they're available with the council, we would like that at least for consideration.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So would that be with the new funds, the IRA funds, or would it be part of our regular budget? I see that Myra is shaking her head no, and then I guess one more question of timing, and when would that need to be completed, and so which year budget? Is that 2024? I'm just asking some more questions about it.

MR. CARMICHAEL: So the IRA is directed toward implementing things to make us more climate resilient, and I don't know that wreckfish fits within the strict, strict rules they've given us on that. The carryover that we have remaining from COVID can carry over into 2025, and 2024, next year, is the last year, but it needs to be all wrapped up by then, and it is a little bit difficult to -- I don't know, and it may be something we can find a way to make it happen, and, if it gets all done in 2024, then it's great, and, if it carries over into 2025, it is a question, because this isn't something that, you know, we planned to do back then, which is like the carryover stuff that you planned to do and didn't get to, and this was sort of coming to the game late, but we can probably work with that, but I think it would have to be covered through the carryover funds, and do we have any idea how much this is going to cost? I guess it depends on what you get to start.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, yes, and, I mean, it depends on the design of the program and how much it aligns, or doesn't align, with existing programs, and so we -- I don't want to speculate, and, I mean, we have some ballpark numbers, but, at this point, they're in flux, and so I'm not asking for like a definitive yes, right, and I'm just asking for it as a consideration, if, you know, these carryover funds are available and could be spent on the program, and then certainly I will be able to come back, at some later date, and say, yes, we've secured some temporary funds to update the system, but we may need a few additional dollars, in order to build it out.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I think we can work with you guys on that, and see what the costs are, and what you're asking of the council, and make sure the council is happy with what they would be buying, essentially.

MS. MARHEFKA: With all due, I think part of my frustration with this ask is there are things that the agency is insisting on us doing in this wreckfish plan that we don't want to do, and I feel like we never were going to do, and we're being told we have to do it, and now we may even have to pay for something that we didn't really want to do, and am I thinking about that wrong?

Then I also feel like it sets us up -- Now that we're talking those dollars, when we get back to the plan, are we going to then have to make a decision between getting the off-the-shelf what the Gulf does, versus, you know, what we want to do for our guys, which is a different fishery, and maybe I'm being too cynical, but that's -- That's where my mind went.

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, to your point, Kerry, even if we didn't include some of the things that we're asking to be included, building out the electronic system is still far more expensive than maintaining the status quo with paper-based coupons, right, and so I have a cost that I'm going to incur to implement this program, regardless, right, and this is a program that I think we all agree should be modernized, and brought into the electronic era, and certainly there might be some additional costs that we're asking for, from an accountability standpoint, but they're incremental relative to just the build-out of an electronic system.

DR. BELCHER: Further comment on this? Okay. It sounds like we will consider this as it comes up in the future. So, at this point then, back to the motion. **Is there any objection to the motion?** Okay. **Seeing none, then this motion carries.** That is the end of the ExCom report. Moving on, we have the report-out from Full Council I, both the closed and open sessions.

The report-out from the Full Council session, the closed Full Council session, is we received the legal briefing from Monica Smit-Brunello, and it was relative to what's recently going with litigation, both in the Gulf and up and down the coast.

We reviewed applications, and recommendations, for appointments, and so this is where, moving forward, we'll have some motions that will need to be made. The council reviewed applications for advertised seats on the Dolphin Wahoo Management Strategy Evaluation Stakeholder Workshop, the Private Angler Reporting Education Ad Hoc Advisory Panel, the Citizen Science Program Advisory Group, and other open seats on various advisory panels. The council provided recommendations for new appointments and reappointments.

The council reviewed the Habitat and Ecosystem Advisory Panel structure approved during the September 2023 council meeting and provided recommendations for appointments and reappointments to the AP. The council reviewed applicants to this council's Scientific and Statistical Committee and the SSC Socioeconomic Panel and provided recommendations for appointments there. The following motions are presented as recommendations for the council's approval.

For the Dolphin Management Strategy Evaluation Workgroup, the following motion was made, or recommended, sorry, and the recommendation was made to appoint the following individuals to the Dolphin MSE Workgroup. Rather than me read it, for someone else to come back behind, does somebody want to make the motion for these appointments? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Do you want me to read it all out?

DR. BELCHER: Please.

MR. ROLLER: Okay. **I move that we appoint the following individuals to the Dolphin MSE Workgroup. For the other vested stakeholders, Alana Harrison, David Wamer, Gregory**

Jackosi, and Scott Travers. For the northern region. Mark Decabia, Christopher Jobs, and Anthony DiLernia. For North Carolina, Chester Conklin, Rom Whitaker, Ernest Doshier, James Byrd, and Dewey Hemilright. For southern North Carolina to central Florida, Chip Berry, Peter Loy, Arnold Brunell, Taylana Sterns. For south Florida and the Florida Keys, Jonathon Reynolds. Jordan Schleider, and Trip Aukeman.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Do I have a second for that motion? I've got Laurilee. Any further discussion on the motion? **Any objections to the motion?** Okay. **Then that motion carries.** Okay, and so next is the Private Angler Reporting Ad Hoc AP. Who would like to make the motion for these appointments? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: **I move that we appoint Trip Aukeman, Martha Guyas, Darrin Willingham, Clement Cullens, Austin Dohrn, Logan Barnes, Daniel Leschorn, Brendan Runde, Bradley Schenk, and John Cooper to the Private Angler Reporting Ad Hoc AP.**

DR. BELCHER: Do I have a second for this motion? Jessica. Any further discussion on this motion? Okay. **Seeing none, any objection to this motion? Then this motion carries.** Okay. Citizen Science, we have a motion for appointments there, and who would like to make that motion? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: **I move that we appoint Scott Baker, Walter Bublely, Rob Cheshire, Rick DeVictor, Stephen Donalson, Michelle Duval, Bryan Fluech, Will Heyman, Rusty Hudson, Jimmy Hull, Kathy Knowlton, Shelly Krueger, Nik Mehta, Sara Mirabilio, and Matthew Perkinson to the Citizen Science Pool.**

DR. BELCHER: Do I have a second for that motion? Tom. Any further discussion on this motion? Okay. **Seeing none, any objection to the motion?** Okay. **Moving on, that motion passes.** Okay. The next motion I need from someone, and who would like to make that? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: **I move that we reappoint Walter Bublely, Rob Cheshire, Scott Baker, and Michelle Duval to the Citizen Science Operations Committee for three-year terms.**

DR. BELCHER: Do I have a second? Kerry. Any further discussion on this? **Any opposition to this motion? Then that motion carries.** Next is the appointment for the Citizen Science Projects Advisory Committee. Who would like to make that motion? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: **I move that we appoint Nik Mehta, Jimmy Hull, Kathy Knowlton, and Will Heyman to the Citizen Science Operations Committee for five-year terms.**

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Do we have a second? Jessica. Any further discussion? **Any objection?** Okay. **That motion carries.** The next motion is appointing folks to the Citizen Science Projects Advisory Committee, and, obviously, I got out of order there, and who would like to make that motion? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: **I move that we appoint Richard Gomez, Andy Piland, Stephen Donalson, Thomas Newman, Jon Reynolds, Justin Smith, Mimi Stafford. Casey Knight, Bryan Fluech, and Matt Perkinson to the Citizen Science Projects Advisory Committee.**

DR. BELCHER: Do I have a second for that? Kerry. Any further discussion? **Any objection?** Okay. **Seeing none, that motion carries.** Moving on to the general advisory panels, we are talking about nominations to the Dolphin Wahoo AP. Who would like to make that motion? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: **I move that we reappoint Jon Reynolds, Chip Berry, Richard DeLizza, Robert Frevert, Richard Harris, Glenn Hopkins, Tim Scalise, and Rom Whitaker to the Dolphin Wahoo AP.**

DR. BELCHER: Do I have a second? Trish. Any further discussion? **Any opposition? Seeing none, that motion carries.** Okay. We have another appointment here. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: **I move that we appoint David Moss to the Dolphin Wahoo AP.**

DR. BELCHER: It's seconded by Kerry. Any further discussion? **Any opposition? Seeing none, that motion carries.** Next applies to the Outreach and Communications AP, and who would like to make the motion for those appointments? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: **I move that we reappoint Steve Dougherty, BeBe Dalton Harrison, George Patane, Mark Phelps, and Robert Todd to the Outreach and Communications AP.**

DR. BELCHER: Do I have a second? Jessica. Any further discussion? **Any opposition? Seeing none, that motion carries.** Next appointment, please, or motion for appointment. Who would like to make it? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: **I move that we appoint Camilla Warren for the at-large seat and Jeanna Merrifield for the commercial seat to the Outreach and Communications AP.**

DR. BELCHER: Do I have a second? Jessica. Any further discussion? **Any opposition? Seeing none, that motion carries.** Moving into the Snapper Grouper AP appointments, who would like to make the motion? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: **I move that we appoint Gettys Brannon to the NGO seat and reappoint Richard Gomez to the Snapper Grouper AP.**

DR. BELCHER: Do I have a second for that motion? Jessica. Any further discussion? **Any opposition?** Okay. **Seeing none, that motion carries.** Next is relative to the Habitat and Ecosystem AP restructure. We have a motion, which approves the appointments and reappointments to the Habitat and Ecosystem AP. Who would like to make that motion? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: **I move that we reappoint Brendan Runde and Casey Knight to the NC Subpanel. I move that we reappoint Paula Keener and David Whitaker to the South Carolina Subpanel, Thomas Jones and Stephen Morrison to the Georgia Subpanel, David Webb and Sam Young to the Florida Subpanel, and reappoint Wilson Laney, Kevin Spanik, and Rua Mordecai to the non-subpanel members.**

DR. BELCHER: Do I have a second for that motion? Laurilee. Any further discussion on this? **Any objection to this motion?** Okay. **Seeing none, that motion carries.** Scientific and

Statistical Committee and Socioeconomic Panel appointments, who would like to make the first motion? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: **I move that we appoint James Gartland to the SSC.**

DR. BELCHER: Do I have a second for that? Jessica. Any further discussion? **Any objection? Seeing none, that motion carries.** The next motion is relative to the SEP. Who would like to make that motion? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: **I move that we appoint Christina Package-Ward to the SEP and add one additional seat to the SEP and appoint Eugene Frimpong.**

DR. BELCHER: Do I have a second for that? Jessica. Any further discussion? **Any objection? Seeing none, that motion carries.** Okay. Then we had the following direction to staff, which is to add language to the AP application noting that council members may contact others in the fishing community regarding your application; send notification letters to appointees and email notifications to those not selected by December 21 of 2023; conduct an orientation of new AP members before the March 2024 council meeting; and advertise for open seats on advisory panels, the Science and Statistics Committee, and the Socioeconomic Panel, as needed, following the March 2024 council meeting.

Okay, and so, moving on into the summary report for the open session of the Full Council, the council approved the agenda for the meeting and the minutes from September 2023. We received reports from the following folks, Miles Dover from NOAA OLE and Lieutenant Cameron Box with the U.S. Coast Guard. The Mid-Atlantic Council and Gulf Council representatives provided their reports.

Among the state reports, the following was noted regarding requests for a fishery disaster declaration for the shrimp fishery. Florida is working on a letter that is expected to be signed by all Gulf states. North Carolina is still determining whether a request will be made. In South Carolina, the South Carolina Shrimpers association is active and discussing issues with the fishery. Georgia is not requesting disaster declaration for the shrimp fishery, but instead wrote a letter focusing on shrimp imports.

We received reports from the SSC and the Outreach and Communications Advisory Panel. Dave Whaley, who is the legislative liaison for the regional management councils, provided a presentation detailing topics relevant to the legislative process that affect the work of the councils. We received a presentation from Michelle Masi on the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting. The details of that report, or bulleted points, are provided in this report for folks to refer back to.

The unfortunate part was, overall, there is poor compliance with reporting requirements implemented through SEFHIER, and the agency is unable to determine the accuracy of submitted data. Council members requested a breakdown of compliance by state and requested information on the penalty for non-compliance. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I would like to make a motion.

DR. BELCHER: Okay.

MR. STRELCHECK: So, based on -- Well, I will make the motion, and then I can explain it if I get a second. **I would like to direct staff to initiate an action to modify SEFHIER to improve compliance, strengthen reporting requirements, and explore validation tools.**

DR. BELCHER: Do I have a second for this motion? Laurilee. Okay, and so discussion? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: That was mostly for a second, but I've got plenty that I can discuss here. Obviously, I fully support this. You know, this has been a program that I've been involved in since its inception, and we've had grave concerns about the ability of its structure to meet compliance, and I think that we're going to have to fully investigate this further.

DR. BELCHER: Other discussion? John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I don't think you need to direct staff to. Just you're initiating that.

DR. BELCHER: Okay, and so there's a suggestion to modify. All right. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Is the intent that this would be kind of coordinated with the Gulf program, or is this just a fix and update the South Atlantic program?

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, I think that's up to you guys, right, because remember that we tried to align the programs initially, and then we split at one point, but certainly my desire is to have, you know, one-to-one alignment, if we can, with the programs, and, given the Gulf Council is going down a similar path, I think there's an opportunity here to work with them.

DR. BELCHER: Other discussion, or questions, relative to this? Okay. **Is there any objection to the motion?** Okay. **Seeing none, then that motion passes.** Thanks, Andy. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: So I wanted to discuss this further, and I wanted to potentially put a motion forward to look at limited entry in the for-hire sector, and I was curious if this is the time to do that, or if we would save that for Other Business.

DR. BELCHER: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That is detailed in the Snapper Grouper Committee report, with questions about do you want that expanded to other species, and so I would put it back to Carolyn as to when she wants to look at that.

DR. BELCHER: I think it probably would be good to hold it, because there was the conversations there, as opposed to kind of floating it with the Full Council at that point, and I think it just gives you a chance to come back in, and we can talk about what's in front of us and what our comments have been, coming out of the report, and so you're good with that? Okay. Anyone else have comments at this point? Okay.

We received an update on the reliability of commercial discards. Following the June 2023 meeting, we had requested that the Science Center provide an evaluation of the commercial discard

logbook, with an emphasis on the reliability of annual discard estimates. This request was prompted by concerns that an increasing percentage of trips reporting no discards would affect the reliability of the logbook data over time. The Science Center provided a general update on the status of that request and plans to continue the work in 2024. Again, there is some bulleted items provided, with specifics that were taken away from that report, which you can refer back to.

Okay, and, with that, I conclude the report from Session I of Full Council. Okay. At this point, what we'll do is we'll go ahead and take a ten-minute break, to give people time to check out, and a bathroom break, and we'll come back and continue with the committee reports, and, Tom, it's your report.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

DR. BELCHER: Okay. If everybody can come to the table, we're going to go ahead and get started with the Mackerel Cobia Report. Okay, Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. My name is Tom Roller, and I'm the Chair of the Mackerel Cobia Committee, and I'm here to present our report from our meeting on December 5, 2023, and I would like to add that we had a very robust discussion, and we went well over an hour over our allotted time, and we've spent much of the week making up for that, and so I appreciate your patience, you all.

The first order of business was we approved the minutes from the September 2023 meeting and the agenda. Then the first item on the agenda was the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel Report, which was presented by our AP Chair, Ira Laks. The Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel met on November 7th and 8th, 2023 in Charleston, South Carolina. Our AP chair provided a summary of the advisory panel discussion and recommendations, and the committee expressed their appreciation of the advisory panel's in-depth discussions and indicated that they would ask for input on recreational permitting and reporting, tournament sales, and for-hire limited entry during the mackerel port meetings process.

The second item up for discussion was the CMP Framework Amendment 13. Catch level recommendations for Atlantic Spanish mackerel, based on SEDAR 78, were provided to the council in June 2023, and the council directed staff to begin work on a framework amendment to update catch levels to be consistent with the recommendations. SEDAR 78 includes revised recreational landings that are based on the Marine Recreational Information Program's newer Fishing Effort Survey (FES) method.

Staff presented an options paper with a draft action and alternative language, as well as analysis on when the proposed annual catch limits and quotas are anticipated to be met and the number of Atlantic Spanish mackerel landed recreationally per-person and per-vessel, and the following motions were approved by the committee.

The first motion that you can see here was to add an action to Framework Amendment 13 to consider modifications to the long-term OY for Atlantic Spanish mackerel. That was approved by the committee. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Is there any discussion on the motion? Is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.

The second motion was to add an action to Framework Amendment 13 to include in-season and post-season accountability measures for the recreational sector. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Is there any discussion on the motion? Is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries. Does anybody else have anything?

DR. BELCHER: Andy.

MR. ROLLER: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I think we're going to have to come back to this at the next council meeting, and I felt very unsettled, after our conversation about Spanish mackerel earlier in the week, and, you know, I'm concerned about, obviously, the closures in the recreational sector, the kind of health, and the status, of this population, and we're really in a bind, obviously, with not knowing what the changes are going to be with FES, but I think we do need to kind of give some careful thought, in terms of what we're trying to accomplish here, given the science and given the information before us, and maybe take a harder look, in terms of addressing some of the challenges that are now presenting themselves with this new science and information, and so I would just leave it at that.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Andy. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Yes, and I've got the same concerns. You know, I was the one who made the motion to move this along. You know, subsequent to that, the FES pilot study results come out, and we start looking at the unintended consequences of accountability measures, and things like that, and, you know, as I've said before, I'm frustrated that there are some things that could be done to improve the quality of the catch level recommendations, and they're not being done. I mean, that's -- You know, we're setting ourselves up for a situation, and we're not going to have another assessment until 2028.

I was talking to Chip this morning, and, you know, this fishery is pretty much prosecuted primarily on age-two fish or younger, and so, you know, you're talking about multiple generations of fish that are going to push through this before we get another stock assessment, and so, I mean, I know, when get catch level recommendations, you know, we asked the SSC to do it, and they did, but I think they did it under duress, you know, and didn't really want to, but, again, I will make the appeal that, you know, there's some things that could be done.

I mean, simply looking at some sensitivity analysis of natural mortality, and, I mean, that alone could make a difference in the catch level recommendations, and so I just want to go on the record that, you know, if we're going to tap the brakes on this, which I think is kind of what we're considering, that, you know, further consideration be given to doing some of those requested analyses, so that we do have the best information available.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Spud. Is there any other -- Anybody else that would like to carry this discussion? I do also retain a lot of hesitation regarding moving forward with this at this time, and I think we're going to get into a very difficult situation, particularly with the recreational quota, and, you know, we heard some good public comment on this, regarding, you know, the big adjustments to catch levels, but no adjustments to the allocation percentages, which we have to

look at under a framework amendment. Is there anything else to bring before the CMP Framework Amendment 13?

Seeing none, I'm going to move to the next item of the agenda, which is the mackerel port meetings. Based on recommendations from the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel, the council directed staff to begin work on a plan to conduct port meetings for king and Spanish mackerel to gain a comprehensive understanding of the fisheries to improve management efforts. Staff presented the committee with a draft structure for port meetings and tentative meeting locations, and the committee provided the following input on meeting structure.

One of the council's goals for the mackerel port meetings is to identify underserved communities and address equity and environmental justice concerns. To achieve this goal, staff should consider either adding an additional breakout group on this topic or ensuring that the topic is brought up within the context of other breakout groups. It will be important to provide stakeholders with information on port meetings in advance of the meeting, so that they can come prepared to provide information on what they want to see come out of the mackerel port meetings.

The committee modified the tentative meeting locations, as follows: hold meetings in both Wanchese and Hatteras, North Carolina; consider holding meetings in Port Judith, Rhode Island, as opposed to Newport, Rhode Island, and New Bedford, Massachusetts, as opposed to Barnstable, Massachusetts; hold a meeting in Pooler, Georgia, as opposed to Hilton Head, South Carolina, and consider holding meetings in Charleston, South Carolina and Murrell's Inlet, South Carolina, as opposed to Georgetown, South Carolina; consider holding a meeting in central New Jersey, as opposed to Cape May, New Jersey; when scheduling port meetings, make all efforts to avoid overlapping with scheduled saltwater fishing tournaments; and there are several national seashores along the coast who might be helpful when trying to conduct outreach on port meetings. Is there any other comments, or discussion, about mackerel port meetings? Sonny.

MR. GWIN: Ocean City, Maryland, and Lewes, Delaware were on that list, and is it not there?

MR. ROLLER: These are just changes to the -- Just to make sure everybody can hear, these are just changes to the additional lists of locations that we have. Now we have the last item of business, which is the timing and tasks motion, and do I have anyone who would like to make that motion? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I move to adopt the following timing and tasks: ask the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel to provide input on the sale of tournament-caught Atlantic king and Spanish mackerel; continue work on CMP Framework Amendment 13, bring an updated decision document to the March 2024 council meeting; and continue development of mackerel port meetings, bringing a final plan for council approval and implementation to the March 2024 council meeting.

MR. ROLLER: Do I have a second for this motion? Carolyn. Is there any discussion on this motion? **Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, this motion carries.** With that, Madam Chair, I conclude my report.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Tom. The next committee report is Dolphin Wahoo. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: The Dolphin Wahoo Committee met on December 5th, which I think was Tuesday. The committee approved the minutes from the June 2023 meeting and the agenda for the December meeting. We got an AP panel summary report, and the AP meeting was held in November, in Charleston. They received updates on recent management actions, provided input on the draft stock assessment and fishery evaluation report for dolphin and wahoo, and they reviewed progress made on the MSE for Atlantic dolphin, and they received presentations on the council's CitSci and best fishing practices outreach programs. In addition, the AP provided input to update the fishery performance report for wahoo.

The AP Chair, Chris Burrows, provided a summary report of the AP meeting and the AP's recommendations for the committee's review. These recommendations included additions to the data included in SAFE reports, potential future management measures for the recreational and commercial fisheries for wahoo, and potential future management measures for the commercial fishery for dolphin.

A summary of the dolphin management strategy evaluation stakeholder workshop was presented by Cassidy Peterson from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. The goal of the MSE is to develop an index-based management procedure that may provide catch level and management advice that best achieves the multiple operational management objectives of the fishery. As part of the MSE process, Science Center staff, and council staff, conducted stakeholder workshops along the U.S. east coast to gather feedback on dolphin management and regional aspects of the dolphin fishery.

Work on the MSE has proceeded, and a stakeholder working group is being developed to provide input on potential operational models, management objectives, and management procedures. Science Center staff provided an update on the MSE progress, noting that the report from the MSE results would likely be available in mid-2025. The committee discussed the MSE and their current timeline for discussion of potential management changes through Reg Amendment 3, confirming that this amendment is scheduled to be discussed at the December 2024 meeting. We had no other items under Other Business, and I will be looking for a motion, as stated on the screen, for timing and tasks. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I move that we continue with planned updates on progress of the dolphin MSE at the June 2024 and December 2024 council meetings; and maintain discussion of Regulatory Amendment 3 on the agenda for the December 2024 council meeting.

MS. MARHEFKA: It's seconded by Carolyn. Is there any discussion on that motion? **Any objection? Seeing none, the motion is approved.** That concludes my report, Madam Chair.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Kerry, and it's back to you again, because we're going to do Citizen Science next.

MS. MARHEFKA: Got it. Let's see. Yesterday, the Citizen Science Committee met, and we approved the agenda and the transcript from the June 2023 meeting. We went through the citizen science research priority list, and Julia provided background information on the CitSci research priorities and gave a brief overview of the process outlined in the citizen science SOPPs.

To update these priorities, the council reviewed, and discussed, an updated citizen science research priorities, which incorporated input from Citizen Science Projects Advisory and Operations Committees. The committee supported adopting the updated citizen science research priorities as presented, with the following modifications, and you will note those are highlighted in yellow, and, for the sake of brevity, and because I believe that everyone was there, I will just hit a few highlights.

We did remove maturity data from the list of citizen science research priorities, and we made some changes to the age sampling priority, and I think we added a few species there, and we made some changes to the discard information priority, and let's see. We made some changes to genetic sampling priority and changes to fishing infrastructure, and there are changes to the oceanic environmental weather conditions priority, and we did a combination -- We combined the shifting species and rare-event observations, and we had some lengthy discussion about that. We had some changes in observations in managed areas, in the movement and migration list, in habitat characterization, and some changes in the spiny lobster data priority.

Additional points from the committee's discussion are summarized below, that it would be helpful to explore partnering with existing projects, for some of the biological-focused research priorities, since these types of projects can take substantial resources and coordination among many partners. The discard information research priority was flagged as high priority. We want to explore pairing oral histories, historic fishing photos, and fishing infrastructure projects, explore incorporating questions into the fishery performance reports asking AP members about local or -- About existing or closed infrastructure within their communities.

We then had a great presentation from Julia on the SciFish platform, and she gave us a presentation. As she noted, over the past three years, North Carolina DMF and ACCSP have partnered to develop that platform, SciFish, which will incorporate the capture and sharing of information about the fish stocks along the Atlantic coast. At the end of the priority list for citizen science priorities, I will need a motion to adopt those priorities, please. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I would like to make the motion to adopt the updated citizen science research priorities, with modifications, as suggested.

MS. MARHEFKA: Motion by Carolyn, and it's seconded by Tom. Any discussion on that motion? **Any objection to that motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.** Sorry about that, you all. I will just then delve back in.

Julia gave us an awesome demonstration that's going to allow ACCSP partners to easily create a customizable app, without the need to develop stand-alone apps for each new project, and, again, we had a presentation. SciFish will transition to ACCSP administration, and it will be available for partners to use next year.

Then we got a citizen science program update on our other projects, such as the citizen science project idea portal, program evaluation work, SMILE. FISHstory, and SAFMC Release, and there was no other business that came before that committee, and so that concludes my report, Madam Chair.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Thank you, Kerry. The next report is on the Habitat and Ecosystem Committee. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. The Habitat and Ecosystem Committee met yesterday, December 7, and the committee reviewed transcripts from the September 2023 meeting and the agenda, and two motions we made to approve the committee agenda and to approve the minutes, and so, on behalf of the committee, I so move on both motions. Is there any discussion? Any objection? All right.

The Habitat and Ecosystem Advisory Panel report piece of the agenda, Paul Medders, with Georgia, reviewed the November 2023 Habitat and Ecosystem Advisory Panel report. The council was interested in the suggestion to use nature inclusive-design materials for long-term wind projects. This topic is in the beginning stages for the Habitat Panel, and there will be follow-up discussions.

EFH Five-Year Review, council staff provided an update on the five-year review process, discussed the report from the National Fish Habitat Summit, that held in 2017, focusing on what a five-year review of EFH should entail, and we will be -- And if we are meeting the goal. The council discussed the EFH review and wanted clarification on the ramifications of the recommendations of the Tidal Boundary Working Group. Their recommendation will clarify where the EFH reviews could be conducted.

Regarding the habitat blueprint, the council staff reviewed a draft workplan for 2024-2029 HEAP activities and requested feedback on council priorities. The council was curious what the website transition would entail, and staff clarified that it would involve organizing and streamlining the current habitat webpage. The council recommended postponing the space, living shorelines, and tide gate discussions until the fall of 2024. The loss of artificial reefs conversation needs to involve aggregation of fish and fishing mortality, and the council recommended adding, and identifying, higher-abundance locations for EFH in each FMP to the other section of the workplan.

Staff also reviewed an outline for the annual report that is meant to address activities during the prior calendar year. They asked for feedback on the content of the outline. The council stated that it was important to make certain to involve state agencies and be clear on what information was used and what is impactful. The review of policies will involve what is in use, the amount of usefulness, and where do updates need to be focused, and, lastly, the council recommended changing the outline wording from "future threats" to "future issues and threats". Direction was given to staff to adjust the workplan and the annual outline to reflect those recommendations.

We discussed coral management, and council staff provided a general overview of how recent modeling work could be used for management. The council discussed potential management actions resulting from the deepwater coral modeling work and provided guidance to staff. The council would want to consider a deepwater coral habitat of potential concern, and there is also existing HAPCs, coral HAPCs, for deepwater coral that are adjacent to the Blake Plateau. This change would involve a potential plan amendment to expand those HAPCs and will take at least a year.

Additionally, staff reviewed the action proposed in Coral Amendment 10 and the reason for its disapproval in July of 2022. A presentation from the Science Center was provided to the council in September 2022, summarizing the results of a survey of the proposed Shrimp Fishery Access

Area in Coral Amendment 10. In September of 2022, the council moved to resubmit Coral 10, with modifications, but no timeline had been specified. Staff then requested guidance on whether the council still wanted to resubmit, and, if so, when to do so. Submitting the amendment with no modifications -- Submitting the -- I lost myself.

Submitting the amendment with no modifications is not recommended. The council supports resubmitting the amendment with modifications, including stronger justification on impacts of EFH, details on how the amendment aligns with the Coral and Shrimp FMPs, and a bycatch practicability analysis. Staff could potentially look at deepwater coral mapping and impacts of sediment on coral for inclusion in the amendment as well. This shrimping area was never intended to be included in the original protected area, and its protection has negatively impacted the economy of local shrimpers. Guidance was provided to staff regarding Coral 10.

Other agenda items for the Habitat AP to review is listed here in bullet form, and everybody can go to this report and look at that, and, with that -- Well, with that, I will ask if there's anyone that would like to make a motion to approve those recommendations for the AP.

DR. BELCHER: I will follow behind the committee and make the motion to approve the list of agenda items for the April 2024 Habitat and Ecosystem AP meeting. Jessica seconded.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Thank you, Carolyn and Jessica. Is there discussion? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Well, this isn't discussion, or I guess it is, but I would like to change the wording on the second-bullet-from-the-last, about the Indian River Lagoon. I would like to remove the word "discharge", because the river doesn't discharge anything. You could substitute it for the word "issues". Kathleen is standing up, and she wants to be noticed.

MS. HOWINGTON: Ms. Howington's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MS. THOMPSON: Okay.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other discussion of that change? Is the motioner, and the seconder, okay with that? Heads are shaking yes. Any other discussion? **Any objections? The motion passes.** That concludes my report, Madam Chair.

DR. BELCHER: Sorry. There's a timing and tasks.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Also, I missed this one, and we have a motion for timing and tasks, and is there anyone who would like to make that motion? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. I move that we adopt the following timing and tasks: add Coral 10 and deepwater CHAPC modifications to the council workplan; convene the Habitat and Ecosystem AP in spring 2024, incorporating approved agenda items, and convene the IPT to review Coral 10 and present the modifications that are needed at a future council meeting.

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have a second? Jessica. Any discussion? **Any objection? The motion passes.** Now I conclude my committee report.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Thank you, Trish. The next one is the SEDAR Committee report. As Kathy and I say, hold please. Okay. We're not going to have the visual up, but I'm going to work off of my email report for right now.

The SEDAR Committee met on December 7, 2023. We started out by approving the minutes from the September 2023 meeting and the agenda for the December 2023 meeting. The steering committee report, Chip gave us that report-out from the October 2023 meeting, and staff described the changes to the SEDAR project schedule, due to the pilot FES study.

SAFMC representatives at the meeting recommended delaying projects with high private recreational catch, and the committee discussed potential delays in golden tilefish and blueline tilefish, due to the lack of an index of abundance. Staff from the Science Center will review data available for the tilefish species, to check on the available data. The committee will be updated in March of 2024 on the information available for the two species.

Yellowtail snapper has been requested to be added into the SEDAR projects schedule in 2024, to evaluate the use of Florida's State Reef Fish Survey to estimate recreational catch. This will result in a delay for the SEDAR 94, which is the hogfish benchmark assessments. The committee was briefed on the revised process for benchmark assessment, as it gets reincorporated into the NOAA Fishery's assessment, right-sizing assessments, carryover funds for SEDAR, best scientific information available framework, Procedural Workshop 8, and changing of the Steering Committee meeting timing.

SEDAR 94, the hogfish terms of reference, the committee was presented terms of reference for SEDAR 94 that had been reviewed by the Gulf and South Atlantic SSC committees. Due to the delay in SEDAR 94 to accommodate a yellowtail snapper assessment, an additional year of data may be requested from the data providers, and, at this point, I have a motion on the board that came through the committee. **On behalf of the committee, I so move that we approve the SEDAR 94 terms of reference. We made a motion to approve the SEDAR 94 terms of reference, and so, on behalf of the committee, I so move.** Is there any discussion?

DR. COLLIER: I just want to point out that, after the committee meeting yesterday, it was pointed out that this delay might add into that -- We have in there, in the terms of reference, would only go through 2023, and it might go through 2024, and we're just making the committee aware. If you guys are okay with us adjusting, depending on when this assessment gets started, what the terminal year of data would be.

DR. BELCHER: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes. Great idea.

DR. BELCHER: Is there further discussion? Okay. **Any objection?** All right. **That motion passes.** Okay. The next item we discussed was the SEDAR schedule. The committee was briefed on changes to the 2026 SEDAR projects. The projects originally approved in September of 2023, due to the issues identified with incorporating stock assessments using the FES into management. The 2026 projects include operational assessments for gag, snowy grouper, and king mackerel, and a benchmark assessment for red grouper.

The next item was SEDAR proposed projects for 2027. The committee discussed SEDAR projects for 2027. The committee wanted to review the projects schedule in March of 2024, after the data review for tilefish and blueline tilefish could be completed. The committee recommended a draft schedule, if the SEDAR Steering Committee meets before the next council meeting.

For the SEDAR 2027 project slots, the committee recommended the following: develop a statement of work for a red porgy operational assessment; add a red snapper follow-up operational assessment; and add a greater amberjack benchmark assessment. The committee will review these recommendations at the March 2024 meeting. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Julie Neer provided an update on when the SEDAR Steering Committee will be meeting, and it is going to be after this council's meeting, and so you guys will get a chance to review some of the recommendations that you wanted to talk about yesterday, and so we are going to have a SEDAR Committee meeting in March and provide you updated information.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks, Chip. At the time that the committee met, we did not offer any timing and tasks. Just to check with the group, and is there anything that we want to see added to a timing and tasks list at this point? Okay. Seeing none, then that concludes the report out of SEDAR. The last committee report, which I know you all have been waiting for, is the Snapper Grouper, and so Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Madam Chair. I am not going to read this verbatim, and I'm just going to hit some highlights and get to the motions and the parts that we need to clarify. The committee met earlier this week, and approved the minutes of the September 2023 meeting and the agenda for the December 2023 meeting.

We received some updates on the notice of funding opportunity and exempted fishing permits, as well as regulations and accountability measures resulting from the implementation of Snapper Grouper Amendment 53, which is gag and black grouper, and the System Management Plan Workgroup.

Then the committee went into wreckfish, which is Amendment 48, and made a number of motions, and so staff had presented the Wreckfish Advisory Group report and the wreckfish Subcommittee report for committee discussion, and so we just have one draft motion there to approve all of those motions that we discussed earlier this week, if someone would like to make this motion. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: **I move that we approve all motions and recommendations made by the Wreckfish Subcommittee, as presented in the September 2023 subcommittee report.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Motion by Kerry, and it's seconded by Carolyn. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you. I just wanted to clarify that all of those motions will be included in the final Snapper Grouper Committee report, as an appendix, and so you will have all of those in front of you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Myra. Any discussion on this motion? **Any objection to this motion?** All right. **That motion carries.**

All right. Next, the committee went into the private recreational permitting amendment, which is Amendment 46, and made the following motion to select Alternative 3 as a preferred in Action 1, and, on behalf of the committee, I so move. Is there any discussion? Is there any objection? All right. Seeing none, that motion carries.

The committee made the next motion, Motion 3, to select Alternative 2 as the preferred in Action 2. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? All right. That motion carries.

The committee then made Motion Number 4, which was to approve Amendment 46, and all actions, as revised. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? All right. That motion carries.

Then there's some direction to staff here to allow the IPT to incorporate the committee's guidance into the actions and alternatives, and then, in Action 2, include the addition of blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, snowy grouper, and wreckfish to Alternative 4. I don't know that I need to dive into Alternative 4 here, and there's some edits, it looks like, to Action 3 on the educational component. It looks like changes to Action 4 and Action 5, and then the near-term next steps for Amendment 46.

There is some items here that were worked on by the sub-group that you guys tasked with figuring out what are the next steps for this document, and so there's four items here with some sub-bullets. The first one was to gather the input from the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel prior to the March 2024 meeting, and I believe they're supposed to meet in January, and then the next step, which is Number 2, would be the council reviews Amendment 46 at the March 2024 meeting, and then the third step would be to, after that March meeting, Number 3 there, convene the technical AP and private angler AP to provide input on Amendment 46, and then the next step would be that it goes back to the council to review Amendment 46 at the June meeting.

There's a number of sub-bullets there, and I'm just going to pause here, for a second, so that people can look at this and see if they have any comments, concerns, or things that they want to add or concerns about kind of the order of operations for how this information will move, and so, basically, it's going to one AP, and then back to the council, and then to two other APs and then back to the council again. Are folks okay with this? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I'm okay with that approach, and, you know, going back to comments that were made during committee, I think it's important that we really have a lot of answers to key questions that are going to be asked by the advisory panels, and I think this will give us some time to come back, in March as well, and outline maybe some questions that can go to the technical AP and the private angling AP.

I did want to scroll up to the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel. The last bullet says "enforceability of an education requirement", and I guess I'm questioning whether we need them to weigh-in on that, because I thought we were going to tie kind of the education requirement to receiving the permit, and, if that's the case, what are we asking them to weigh-in on that point?

MS. MCCAWLEY: So I would say, if I think about how this works in Florida, it is an educational issue, and I guess you could ask the Law Enforcement AP what they think about it, particularly

the person that sits on there from FWC Law Enforcement, but, yes, are you wanting law enforcement to go on the water and make a determination as to whether somebody has the educational component, or maybe they tried to enter someone else's educational number, and they somehow got the permit without the educational course, and so I guess I would just ask some more questions about -- I think it would be okay for them to comment on it, but maybe do you want to modify this bullet, a little bit, to be more clear about what we're asking them?

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, obviously, we haven't designed the educational component yet, but, if you can't get a permit without doing the educational component, then, really, to me, there's nothing to kind of enforce them, whether they have the permit or not, right, and so they're in violation of not having a permit, and they're in violation of not doing the education, and maybe what would be more beneficial is for enforcement to weigh-in on input regarding the education program, right, and what do they regularly see, and what are things that they would find important to educate anglers about.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That sounds great, and Myra is capturing that there on the screen. All right. Anything else that folks want to add here to these newly-added bullets for the next steps? All right. Then I'm going to keep moving on.

All right, and so then the committee moved into gag and black grouper recreational vessel limits and on-demand gear for black sea bass, which is Reg Amendment 36. **The committee made Motion Number 5, which was to approve Regulatory Amendment 36 for scoping. On behalf of the committee, I so move.** Is there any discussion? Is there any objection? All right. **Seeing none, that motion carries.**

Just a couple of points there to not include the misidentification of gag and black grouper as a rationale for the recreational vessel limit changes, and then, as part of scoping, communicate with the black sea bass pot endorsement holders, particularly those that participated in the EFP project, asking which types of on-demand gear they would want to be available for use.

All right. Then the committee moved into scamp and yellowmouth grouper, which is Amendment 55, and there was some direction to staff to make the following edits to the purpose and need statement, and there is a revised purpose statement there in blue, that I am going to give you guys a second to look at, and read, and see if you're okay with this. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: So it's more editorial, and I had brought it up to Allie, but, as we moved into these, SEDAR 68 is a research track, and then we have the operational. What you find in the language right now is SEDAR 68 is referenced with two year references, and so, when the research is done, you get the 2021, and then the operational is done, and it's still using that notation with 2022, and so it gets confusing, and so Allie was going to work with the IPT folks to figure out if you could use similar to how SEDAR references it, which is 68OA, so you know it's the operational, and that was the only thing, and just to make sure we got it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thank you for that, Carolyn, and Myra is capturing some notes there on the screen. Anything else on the revised purpose statement? All right. I'm going to keep moving. **The committee then made Motion Number 6, which was to select Alternative 2 as the preferred alternative for Action 1. On behalf of the committee, I so move.** Is there any discussion? **Is there any objection?** All right. **That motion carries.**

The committee then made Motion Number 7, which was to select Alternative 3 as the preferred alternative for Sub-Action 2a. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Is there any discussion? Any objection? All right. That motion carries.

Then the committee made Motion Number 8, which is to select Alternative 3 as the preferred alternative for Sub-Action 2b. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Is there any discussion? Any objection? All right. That motion carries.

The committee then made Motion Number 9, which is to select Alternative 3 as the preferred alternative for Sub-Action 2c. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? All right. That motion carries.

The committee then made Motion Number 10, which is to select Alternative 3 as the preferred alternative for Action 3. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? All right. That motion carries.

That brings us to Motion 11, which is to select Alternative 2 as the preferred alternative for Action 4. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? All right. That motion carries.

Then we made Motion Number 12 to select Alternative 2 as the preferred alternative for Action 6. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? All right. That motion carries.

All right, and so then we had some direction to staff to include an alternative in Action 7 that includes a payback in the post-season AM for the recreational sector, and we would need to, I guess, consider adding an action to the amendment that would establish an equilibrium OY for the OSASWG complex. I'm not sure, Myra, why this one is highlighted, and do we need to take more action right here?

MS. IBERLE: I just wanted to get some clarification, and it was kind of tossed about, but there wasn't a formal motion. We looked into I believe it was the Comprehensive ACL Amendment, just to look at the current OY that's in place. In the document, we have that labeled as an annual OY, and I think we will most likely be removing the word "annual", just because of the way that that was done in the Comprehensive ACL Amendment, and so I think maybe some more clarification would be needed on how that OY is functioning now, with the way that the ABC and ACLs were determined for those species within the complex, and, John, I don't know if you had anything else to say on that one.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Allie was talking to me about that earlier, and we looked back at how they did it, and so, if you recall these, these were done with that third-highest process, where the SSC looked at the species, looked at the trends that they had, and the various data sources, and tried to see what they felt the stock was doing during the reference period of years, which were, you know, picked as a point back in time before -- You know, when you had good data, but then before they felt that regulations maybe we were being so restrictive that you were impeding things, and so things could operate kind of freely, and they felt that, if the fishery was operating kind of freely, and the stock was doing okay, and it wasn't declining, and they weren't seeing anything that caused

concerns, then they set the ABCs at the third-highest, and so, in a way, that's kind of what they were saying is sort of an equilibrium-type thing.

If you kind of change the wording on this, and you just consider that the equilibrium OY, and then we're setting ABC at OY, essentially, I think we're dealing with the whole craziness of that annual part, and getting through it just using the numbers we have for now, which has been the intent, until we get the deeper dive on the ABC Control Rule, at which time all of this probably changes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any more discussion on this? Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and so I was going back and forth with NMFS SERO staff, with Nikhil over this, and, if you go farther back in time -- I mean, there's what we did in the Comprehensive ACL Amendment, and it says that ACL equals OY equals ABC, and I would say the only way you make sense out of an ACL equals OY is to make it an annual OY, and that - I mean, I would interpret it that way, and that seems to be the most rational way of reading it.

Then, going farther back in time, when you did I think it was the Sustainable Fisheries Act amendments, you established OY, and the other status determination criteria, for the component stocks that are now managed under a single ACL for other South Atlantic shallow-water grouper, and so what I think, you know, and what I would prefer to see happen anyway, is sort of disavow the annual OY aspect, fall back on what you had on, and what you still have, on the books, in terms of your equilibrium OY, which is, for some of these species, going to be a formulaic expression akin to harvesting at F 40 percent SPR, or something like that, and so what we need to do then is just look, and confirm, that our ACL that's being implemented now is consistent with still having that an as OY, which it certainly appears to me to be, and then we just need to explain it in the document.

I think, procedurally, going forward, just give the IPT a little flexibility, and let us look at this, and I don't think you need an OY alternative for it, and I think we can explain it all in some text in the document, and then hopefully save some time, maybe. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I'm not meaning to put us in the weeds with this either, but this gets back to, when we start -- What's the right word I want for this? But, speaking beyond just establishing the OY -- I mean, I feel like, again, we're back to the discussions about what OY are we really targeting, and do we know that we can actually do equilibrium OY, when we're dealing with data deficits? So, I mean, I'm not trying to split hairs, but it just seems like that was where the struggle was, back many years ago, and, I mean, I still have PTSD with the number of times that OY and MSY are not interchangeable, a lot of times, and yet we kept doing this I'm going to set, I'm going to set, I'm going to set them, and so I just still caution with that idea of putting labels beyond just the initial idea and discussion of it, if they're not the best metric to put on there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, the gist of it that you have them on the books already for these component stocks, and we need to look to see if what we're doing is consistent with those, preferably without reopening, and rehashing, whether that OY is appropriate, and do

we need to revise the other criteria and the rest of it, and that's something we do down the road, when you get the new ABC values for those component stocks in that complex. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: John and then Carolyn.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think, you know, because -- To Carolyn's point, what Shep was saying was, you know, we have the formulaic value for OY, where we say that OY would be the yield at F 30 percent SPR. The trouble that we have is where you brought in, is putting a poundage number on that, and that's where the problems come in for these unassessed stocks, but having just the formulaic for a data-limited species, where you can't assign a numeric value to it, is acceptable if you justify the fact that you can't assign a numeric number, and so I think the guidance just needs to be to remove the reference to the annual OY, you know, as it falls between ACL and ACT, and just remove that completely. Then, as Shep said, then you fall back onto what you have on the books, which is the formulaic definition, and I think the problem is solved, and we're back to some, you know, more straightforward ways.

The SSC, as I said, when they do their data-limited ABC, they will look at this, and they may be able to come up with some data-limited approach to give us the numeric value to go with the formula, and they may change the formula and give us a numeric value, and a new formula, but I think that gives us some options to get out of this little box that we're in, at least.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: So, kind of in that similar vein, with knowing some of these things were hinged to ORCS, and the third-highest, knowing that we have had it on the record to us, a number of times, that third-highest isn't the best, if this precedes the work that the SSC does, does that presumably cause an issue?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I don't think it ties their hands in any way. We are just trying to deal with a bookkeeping problem that is created by having to create this complex in a way that we didn't expect, because of the science that put us there, and we know that the SSC is going to look at the data-limited stocks, and probably have that come out after this, and so this may just simply be in place for a short period of time, but I wouldn't think, in any way, this creates a precedent that the SSC would feel obligated to follow.

DR. BELCHER: My thing was more your timing point, and so thank you for that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I assume we're good there with what Myra typed, and she deleted the direction to staff and then has revised that, and so I'm assuming that we're good there. I'm looking around for any additional hands. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I have another conversation on scamp and yellowmouth, and so can we go?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead.

MR. STRELCHECK: So, during committee, there was some discussion about exploring some additional management measures. In looking at the closure analyses in the amendment right now, I think the projections indicate a Wave 4 recreational closure, and commercial closures that could

happen as early as August, and it seems prudent that we would want to look at setting, or adjusting, the recreational fishing season, possibly modifications to the bag limit, and specification of a trip limit, and, if people are agreeable, I have a motion that I can provide, or we can just add it as direction to staff. Either way.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Allie has a question about timing for you.

MS. IBERLE: Yes, and I just wanted to make sure that we are cognizant that this is on a statutory deadline. If we're adding in management measures, we'll have to add in additional analyses to like factor those into the projections, and so we may be kind of butting-up against that timeline a little bit more, and I just -- I just wanted to note it on the record.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: That aside, I agree with Andy completely, at least from our AP had recommended, for sure, commercial trip limits. Is it helpful -- I don't want to bog things down at the end of anything, but, in order to be efficient, is it helpful to define a range now? I know -- Off the top of my head, I think we have been talking about one of the numbers being 300, which matches snowy -- Gag. Sorry. It's Friday. So call that mid-range, and do 100 and -- You want to call that the high end?

MR. GRINER: Let's call that the high end.

MS. MARHEFKA: Match the suite with gag. Perfect.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. So any specifics on the fishing season and the bag limit that you want to consider? Tim.

MR. GRINER: Well, I know -- I mean, if we're going to -- Why would we not just match what we did for gag with the bag limit as well, except for maybe we did have that issue with the black in there, but I think you're really still getting back to -- You know, it's kind of that one-fish thing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Myra is capturing that. Anything on fishing season that we want to capture here as more direction? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I just want to go back to the bag limit. Was the intention to have a vessel, or a per-person, bag limit there?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Great question. Was that your intent, Tim?

MR. GRINER: Well, I would have to go back and look, but I thought that it was kind of a combination of both, wasn't it? It was kind of what was going to end up being more restrictive, right?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Then maybe we need to look at a modification to the bag limit and a vessel limit. Okay. All right. Tom, anything on fishing season? Anybody else have suggestions on fishing season? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and, I mean, from what I heard about gag, and I think some of the other groupers, right, there is still the interest in maintaining that May 1 opening, and so maybe look at different closure dates on the backend of the season, right, so that it doesn't necessarily run out to December 31.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Myra is capturing that. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I just want to agree with that rationale.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Tom. All right, and so we have some direction to staff there of items to include in Amendment 55, and some range of options in there, and any more discussion on this? All right. Then I'm going to keep moving through the document.

All right, and so then the committee had a short discussion on yellowtail snapper, which is a joint amendment with the Gulf, and so it's Snapper Grouper Amendment 44/Reef Fish Amendment 55. The topic here is FWC is going to go back and rerun the stock assessment with the State Reef Fish Survey numbers.

Then the committee made Motion Number 13, which is very similar to what -- The motion that the Gulf Council passed at their last meeting, which is to deprioritize work on Snapper Grouper Amendment 44/Reef Fish Amendment 55 until after the completion of the updated SEDAR 64 operational assessment that incorporates calibrated State Reef Fish Survey recreational landings estimates. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? All right. **That motion carries.** All right.

Then we went into Red Snapper Regulatory Amendment 35, and we made the following motion to rescind the March 2023 action to approve Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 35 for secretarial review, and, on behalf of the committee, I so move. Is there discussion on this? Are we ready for a vote on this? Do we want to take another roll call vote on this? All right. John is coming up here for another roll call vote on this.

MR. CARMICHAEL: So the roll call vote -- I will do the same order as last night, and so, Mel, stand by for the end. Mr. Borland.

MR. BORLAND: (Mr. Borland's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. CARMICHAEL: Mr. Griner.

MR. GRINER: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Ms. Helmey.

MS. HELMEY: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Ms. Marhefka.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Ms. McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Ms. Murphey.

MS. MURPHEY: No.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Mr. Roller.

MR. ROLLER: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Mr. Spottswood. I think I saw Robert on this morning. Robert. Okay. we'll come back. Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: Abstain.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Ms. Thompson.

MS. THOMPSON: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Mr. Woodward.

MR. WOODWARD: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Mr. Bell, online.

MR. BELL: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Thank you. Got you. Dr. Belcher.

DR. BELCHER: Abstain.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Then did you see if Mr. Spottswood is available online? He doesn't appear to be? Okay. **So the motion carries.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, John. All right, and so then we went into the items for next steps, since that motion passed, and we noted that we wanted to talk about these again, as direction to staff, at Full Council, and so the bullets are there, on the screen, of what we want to look at. I'm going to give you guys a minute to review and see if you think this encompasses everything that you would like to see staff bring back in the future. I'm just going to pause here for a second. Are there questions, or comments? Andy, was that a hand?

MR. STRELCHECK: I'm fine with the list. I guess I would like to add, and this goes beyond red snapper, and so I'm going to expand this out to snapper grouper, but, prior to this meeting, I had reached out to council staff, asking about a discussion of what our vision is for the snapper grouper fishery, and I feel like there's been a lot of effort, over the years with this council, to lay out that vision, and so there's a lot of background.

We have goals and objectives for our fishery, but, because there's turnover of the council, and there's new membership, it would be good to revisit that and kind of have a broader discussion, based on what's been decided in the past, and where we want to head with snapper grouper as a whole in the future, and, you know, the council, ultimately, is a recommending body, and the Fisheries Service has to make, you know, decisions with regard to the recommendations that you provide, but I'm very concerned right now just with the snapper grouper fishery as a whole, and the health and status of a lot of our fisheries.

We spent the better part of the last couple of years addressing overfishing, and overfished, status of a multitude of species, and now we're working on scamp and black sea bass, and so this goes well beyond, obviously, red snapper, and so I would certainly welcome that conversation, if it's supported, and whether it's March, or a future council meeting, but I think we need to have that soon.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that sounds like a great idea. If you have any ideas, at this point, of documents, or pieces of information, that you would like to see, then throw it out there. Otherwise, we could fill this in at a future meeting, but do you have any specifics of things that you want them to bring back?

MR. STRELCHECK: I'm not sure it's so much what we bring back. I mean, certainly we would want to have those background materials, but if, you know, the council could give some discretion to me, working with John and Myra and the team, and I think it would be good to kind of provide a synopsis, a summary, of what's been done in the past, and maybe even pose some questions to the council that we can deliberate over in the future.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that sounds like a great idea, and, in thinking about the two-for-one, the 225, the limited entry and all of that, I think it would be useful for those discussions as well. All right. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Would the documentation, that goes all the way back to the 2009-2010 timeframe that initiated what started all of this, would that be helpful too, a historical -- I mean, because I don't think -- There's nobody on the council that was here then, and that might be useful. I mean, why are we here?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you. I'm assuming that you're referring to the visioning project, and the council undertook that -- I believe it was in 2012, and the result of that was the vision blueprint that had goals and objectives, that were subsequently adopted for the fishery, through implementation of the Greater Amberjack Amendment 49.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: No, and, actually, I want to go back further than that, and I want to see the documentation, and the council votes, that closed the red snapper. I think that would be helpful. What do you think, Kerry?

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm not sure how helpful that -- I mean, it was a different -- We're talking about two different things, right, because what Andy is saying is he wants to look at everything, and not just red snapper, and the visioning I absolutely think is something we need to look at again, and we need to keep coming back and touching base with, and that's our touchstone for where we thought we wanted to do.

Going back and -- I get very nervous at the thought of having something like an Amendment 17A-looking document back in our briefing book, and back in front of the public, when -- For what reason? That's not where we're at right now, and so I don't know that we need to re-litigate sort of what happened way back then, and I think we work based on, you know, a history of the snapper grouper -- Of red snapper, when it was assessed, what was the outcome of the assessment, what were some concepts the council thought of, and that seems appropriate. Actually like going back and delving into the record, and the minutia, of what happened at that time, I don't know how productive that is, and it might be counterproductive to what we're trying to do.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Good discussion. Anything else? Yes, Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: We've already talked about the Law Enforcement AP topics, but is it premature to maybe get some input from them about these temporary and rotating closure things, because I think they probably have some pretty strong ideas about the efficacy of that, and so do we know enough about it to ask their opinion, or do we need to wait until -- I think it would be useful to have their input on the concept.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. It looks like Myra is capturing that. John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: At least my expectation, in the next amendment that we have planned for red snapper, after getting through 35, which we were trying to do quickly, because of the obligation to end overfishing promptly, was going to look at basically that first bullet about looking at what you want out of the snapper grouper fishery, or trying to do the MSE to give you a tool to look more at the fishery holistically, and so I think that's a big job, and I think that's one reason why we did push that amendment off, and so I totally expect that our goal is to do that in that amendment, and so, as long as that's understood, because I think, if you get into that in 35, then it's going to take a long time, and I think, Jessica, as you know, from having been through this before, and, as we all know, when we look at objectives in a fishery as complicated as snapper grouper, we're going to be here a while, and so it would seem, to me, that it just rolls over into that other amendment anyway.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So then do you -- Myra and John, do you have a response to Spud's question, which was requesting feedback from the Law Enforcement Panel on the rotating closures, and are you okay with that coming now, in January?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think so. Myra?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Just making sure that that question was answered. Back to Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Just to be clear, I wasn't suggesting like revising the revision, or adding it to an amendment, and what I was wanting to do is -- We are throwing out a lot of ideas now, again, with regard to Reg 35, and seeing what sticks and what we want to move forward, but framing that

with kind of the goals and objectives of the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan, with the vision that's been laid out, I think is really important, and circling back on it, especially given the new membership around this council table, may help then, as we start to deliberate over those management alternatives.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I like that, and I guess I would just add that I don't know that that vision -- I can't remember it, and so I'm glad that we're going to go back and look at it again, and I don't know that it got into things like the two-for-one and the 225 and all that, and so I think that we would be kind of revising the vision, or adding that to the vision, after we look at it. John and then Kerry.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think the first word then should be "review" and not "revisit". We can bring the vision blueprint to the council at the March meeting, and include it in your briefing book, and let those who weren't around for that take a look at it, and you can see how far it went. You know, the challenge, in the blueprint, at the time, was addressing the quandary between the fish that are available to harvest and the competing desires that various sectors wanted.

You had people that wanted a year-round fishery, and you had people that wanted to have high enough limits within the fishery to justify going out there and catching the fish, and the reality is, in many cases, there aren't enough fish around to give the limits that people wanted, along with the access, open, unlimited access, whenever people choose to go out there fishing, and the council kind of got in a deadlock over how to resolve that quandary, and that's when it shifted out of, well, we'll just look at different things within each individual species, and so I will say that quandary still exists, and it's probably gotten worse, and that's why I think, when we get into this next amendment, it's going to be tough, and so it could be good for people to sort of see what was in the vision, and how far it actually went, and, you know, that could be a good discussion for the meeting in March.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Let me go to Kerry and then back to Andy. Okay. Back to Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, John, you just stated why I want to bring it back, right, and that's the reality, right, and so you framed it nicely. The other thing is the vision, I don't think, includes our goals, and objectives, correct, and those are kind of separate, and so I would add to this to review the vision and the goals and objectives for the snapper grouper fishery.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. That looks like that's up there. Anything else that we want to see come back in the short-term? All right. Kerry, did you have anything else?

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, I just want to make sure -- My computer crashed, and so I don't have access to what's above that, but this is just specifically, right now, in relation to 35, and answering the red snapper problem, or is this where we discuss the other things that we know we wanted to discuss?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Those things are later in the document.

MS. MARHEFKA: That's what I wanted to make sure.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So just hang tight on those things.

MS. MARHEFKA: That's fine. I just want to make sure that these bullet points are in relation to how we're going to now move forward with red snapper, or whatever is happening with 35.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, except for the visioning, the visioning documents, and we might want to modify that, and that does not include the two-for-one and all that, I don't think, is my recollection. Mel, did you have your hand up?

MR. BELL: Sorry, and I actually put it up earlier, and I apologize, and either you all's internet is having issues, or mine is, but I was just catching pieces of things, and then stuff was sort of popping up on the screen, but Andy sort of started out with, which I think has now become the -- Well, kind of going back and looking at the whole snapper grouper fishery sort of holistically, and reviewing what we did back in the visioning and all, and I would totally agree with that, because, you know, we've spent an inordinate amount of time dealing with one species recently, but it's just one species in this overall fishery, and it certainly gets a lot of attention and all, but we do really need to go back and look at this more holistically, as a fishery, and figure out -- You know, as I've said before, we don't really have a red snapper fishery, and we have a snapper grouper fishery that has red snapper in it, and lord knows that that's caused all kinds of issues, and so I'm a little hesitant to say too much here, because I missed what you all were saying, because you kept jumping in and out, but I would --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I'm thinking it's Mel's internet, and so, Mel, we just lost you.

DR. BELCHER: Mel, we can't hear, you if you're still online. He's offline? Okay. Mel, I'm not sure -- Can you verify if you're there now? All right, and so I'm going to suggest moving on, Jessica, to, I guess, Robert. Let's move on.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Robert, did you have your hand up? All right. I'm going to keep moving through the committee report. Sorry. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Before we move off this item, it would be helpful, for us, to get a little more clarification of which of these bullets you're expecting work for March, and what do you want to see, in terms of an aggregate snapper grouper bag limit, and do you want the IPT to come up with options for you? The rotating closures for some areas, I'm not sure exactly what you were hoping to get with that, or is this just sort of a list of items that you intend to give us more direction for the future?

MS. MCCAWLEY: The Crosson and Shertzer paper I thought Andy said that he was wanting that to come back, that discussion to come back, to March. What else do we want to see in March? If you want to talk about the aggregate snapper grouper bag limit, I could provide some ideas for this from the EFP that FWC submitted, if that's something that we want to see in March, because I know that we haven't done an analysis on that, and so I could provide the information that we have. What else? Okay. I'm seeing heads nodding yes, but what else? The temporary closures for some areas, and rotating closures, was that something that folks wanted to see back at the March meeting? Are we just bringing back -- Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Well, I think, you know, it will be good to have that report from the LEAP, because they may say that you people have lost your minds, you know, and that will be good to groundtruth it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: So that I know what to request from the LEAP, are you wanting rotating closures by state, and are we talking about simply seasons, rotating seasons, or are we talking areas as well?

MR. WOODWARD: Well, that's why I think I brought up, earlier, that we're not at the level of specificity yet, and it's more, conceptually, what kind of problems are you going to run into if you have a place that's -- Think about it in an MPA context, and, okay, it's an MPA this year, and it's not next year, you know, and is that -- Are we getting ourselves in situations with -- Because, as we all know, there is a learning curve, and, you know, you can only affect change so frequently, without getting into problems with people just not understanding, and so that's kind of what I was thinking, is just more of a broad, conceptual input.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I saw hands going up. It looked like Tim, Laurilee, Judy, Andy. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Yes, and I agree with Spud. I was thinking more conceptually, you know, just to get your arms around it, because, you know, if you move -- After you get your arms around it conceptually, then you're going to have start looking at heatmaps, and things like that, to see where these hotspots are, because, I mean, if you're going to do a rotating, or a rolling, closure, you've just got to roll up the hotspots, right, and so, yes, I think exactly what Spud said.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I agree.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Judy.

MS. HELMEY: I just wanted to say that I agree with what Spud said.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I'm not really sure the law enforcement panel is the right place to start on this, right, and we don't even have anything before us, other than a statement that we may want to look at it, and no data and information presented, and I feel like we're putting the cart before the horse, and so I would caution putting something out there for input, because this might not even be something we want to push forward and consider.

You mentioned, Jessica, your EFP proposal, and I don't know the timing yet, in terms of when those grant proposals will be finalized, and if selections will be announced, but certainly, to the extent that we could come back and share that with the council, if that's available, I would like to do that, and then the other -- I don't remember the author, and I don't know if it's Juan Agar, or someone from the Science Center, but there's also a paper comparing the economic benefits, tradeoffs, between the snapper grouper fishery in the South Atlantic versus the Gulf of Mexico.

You know, people don't want to present it, but the facts are the facts, right, and so that's the reality, and so, if we don't want to have those conversations, then fine, but we have data, and information, out there that I think is important to discuss.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Is that the paper -- So I think that that paper might be listed a little bit later in the document about the profitability between the Gulf and South Atlantic for commercial, and is that -- It's listed under the commercial permit discussion that's coming up, and is that the paper that you're talking about? Okay. Kerry and then Tim.

MS. MARHEFKA: It has been presented, and it's been presented to the SSC, and to our AP, and the AP, which is the body I would look to as sort of the voice of the fishery, has not shown any interest in pursuing that topic further, and, quite frankly, neither did the SSC, and so I think it is -
- The topic of that paper is not something that should come from the top down, and it need to come from the bottom up, and they have seen it, and they're not interested, and so that's sort of my stance on that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Tim.

MR. GRINER: I agree with Kerry, and I -- You know, we have seen that, and, you know, quite frankly, the two fisheries are so vastly different that I don't even think that it makes sense to even muddy the water with it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. John Walter.

DR. WALTER: Those comments are a little concerning, in the sense that this body is not going to evaluate that. I mean, the answers in that paper, and the facts in that paper, are concerning, and I think it should be of concern as to whether we are achieving optimum yield from the fisheries, and I think that's a question that needs to be explored, and evaluated, and not summarily dismissed as we don't want to go there, and I think that, if there's a decision that we're going to -- About managing fisheries differently, then that's perfectly within the purview of this council, but I think you need the facts, and I think that's what that paper does, and those kind of analyses, and decisions, should be part of the conversation, and the paper -- The lead author on that one, I believe, is Christopher Liese, and the second author is Scott Crosson, and they're both economists that work out of our social sciences research group, and so thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion on these bullet points and what we want to see in March? Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Sorry to keep coming back to this, but this second-to-last bullet, reporting requirements for catch and discard data, I'm not sure what you were looking for with that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't remember either, and so I don't know that I can help. Robert. He says his mic is restricted. Robert, if you can hear, it looks like you're self-muted. Okay. It looks like you're self-muted, and we can come back to you if we can get this figured out. Okay. I'm going to -- There is lots of side discussions happening here, and I'm going to keep moving through the committee report, because we still have some more discussions to go.

All right, and so the committee then got a best fishing practices outreach update, and this was on the best fishing practices campaign, including the video project, What It Means to Me, the Best Fishing Practices Master Volunteer Program, and the Sea Grant Reef Fish Fellowship, and then we went back to the AP recommendations that were on topics that were not on the AP's agenda.

Bob Lorenz, our AP chair, gave us those topics, and the committee then kind of generated three topics that they wanted to continue discussing, and we need a little bit more information on what to bring back on these topics, and then I guess we can talk about when when we get into the workplan.

The first topic is commercial permits, and you can see the bullets there, analysis to consider an optimal number of snapper grouper commercial permits, consider a paper comparing the commercial profitability between Gulf and South Atlantic, which was just discussed, and invite Kevin McIntosh, from SERO, to address permit questions. It's not detailed here, but I thought that we were talking about looking at the two-for-one and the 225, and I don't see bullets on that, and I guess the question is what is the vehicle that's coming back? Is it a white paper, or is it some type of analysis, or what is it that we are asking to come back, and by when, if we have an idea of when we want to see that? Andy and then Tim.

MR. STRELCHECK: My remembrance, from the committee discussion, was we have a two-for-one paper that didn't consider the 225 permit, and that there would be an integrated description, analysis, discussion in that document.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that's my recollection as well. Tim.

MR. GRINER: I thought we just had this discussion to remove that second bullet point to consider the paper comparing commercial profitability between the Gulf and the South Atlantic, because I don't think it's appropriate, and I don't think it's -- I think the two fisheries are so vastly different that that's not helpful at all.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. It was stricken, and then some direction to staff there. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, I disagree with Tim, and so I think we need to have a conversation, if we're going to remove it, and let's vote on that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. More discussion on this? John.

DR. WALTER: I'm looking for the record, and I believe that the SSC actually was more favorable, on that paper, than it was portrayed, and I think that we probably have a record on how the SSC - - On what they considered, and I think they thought that it was actually quite important for understanding the differences, and how those differences play out, and what the economic realities of those differences, and the different management regimes, and so I don't know -- I think we might want to clear the record on what the SSC felt about that, and I don't know if we have our SSC chair here on that. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: My recollection is different, but that doesn't matter, and I will retract the SSC portion. The point remains that it was before the advisory panel, and the advisory panel was not interested in discussing it further, and they had no sort of -- They don't do motions, but they had no consensus statements or anything revolving around that, and this has come up -- I'm not going to debate the points of what are in the paper, but I will say this, that the concept of what is in that paper 100 percent absolutely has to be bottom-up, and there is no one, right now, from industry, no one, asking for this information.

They've seen the information, and, you know, council members, who are in the industry, have read the paper, and know the information, and this is not an uninformed decision, and this is the kind of thing that has to be very, very carefully -- If the AP comes to us and says we want to talk about this again, that is a very different point of view than it coming from people outside of industry, or outside of the fishery.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. What do we want to do here, as a committee, and so we're just typing these points on the screen, and is somebody wanting to make a motion about whether or not it comes back, and then we vote on the motion? Is that what you're suggesting, Andy?

MR. STRELCHECK: We don't have to vote on it, but I just don't want something stricken if we have opposing viewpoints, and so, if the majority of the people around this table don't feel like this should be brought back, then we don't need to bring it back, and I want to be clear, right, and I think the paper -- The concerns about the paper, the fact that we're comparing an IFQ fishery to a non-IFQ fishery, I am not pushing it from that standpoint.

I am pushing it from the standpoint of it shows the comparable differences in similar species that are being harvested in two different areas of our geographic region, right, and I think that is valuable information. If the council doesn't want it brought back, fine. I mean, I think, you know, to me, I will continue to use it as informative information for decisions, going forward.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Tim.

MR. GRINER: I appreciate that, Andy, and I'm glad that you kind of clarified that, but, even though the species may be similar, the ABCs in the fisheries are extremely different, and so I don't think that that's really a fair comparison whatsoever. I mean, if you wanted to -- If we wanted for someone to bring us a paper with just showing us the commercial profitability in the South Atlantic, without anything to do with the Gulf, that's fine, and I think that could be helpful, but you can't -- You can't compare commercial profitability, even if it's the same species, when one of them has 60,000 pounds of quota and the other one has six-million.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I will rescind my objection to striking this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. I think we can stop that discussion. All right, and so then look at the direction to staff there that Myra has captured to update the commercial two-for-one paper with information with the 225 permits. Is that what we want? Is anything missing here from this? Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Would you want to see that in March?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I will look to the committee to tell us whether they would like to see this at the next meeting or not, and, of course, we're going to have to go look at the workplan, but is it your intent -- So here's another way to ask this. If you scroll down a little bit, Myra, you can see that we have three items to discuss, and the next one is for-hire limited entry, and then the other one is explore optimal effort yield, via MSE, and test management procedures that can achieve that, and so, in the discussion earlier in the week, I think I heard some people say that they wanted the for-hire limited entry to come before talking about the commercial two-for-one, and so maybe you guys can have a little bit of discussion on what comes before what, what you would like to see, you know, one thing before the other, et cetera, or you want to see them at the same time, and that's up to you guys. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: We had this discussion, and I talked to Tom, and, I mean, in a perfect world, they both come back, the two-for-one and the for-hire limited entry, and, if we saw it in March, then I assume the AP would sort of see where we were heading in April, but realizing that we have limited resources, and, in my mind, if a decision has to be made, in order of priority, the for-hire limited entry is of higher priority than the commercial two-for-one, but it would still be important, for me, to know -- Again, we'll, I think, flesh that out a little bit later in the workplan, but I think let's make sure that the AP now knows that we've picked up these issues, that they have brought to us at this meeting, and it may not be going as fast as they want, but we are carrying them forward.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thoughts from other committee members? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I mean, I'm willing to offer a motion here, if you'll entertain it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead.

MR. ROLLER: **I move that we direct staff to begin the creation of an amendment to create limited entry for all three permitted South Atlantic for-hire fisheries.** If I have a second, I will add some rationale.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. It's seconded by Kerry. We're getting the motion there on the board, just to make sure this is your motion.

MR. ROLLER: I am open to any needed rewording.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. **It looks like the motion is direct staff to initiate an amendment to establish limited entry for the for-hire components of the snapper grouper, CMP, and dolphin wahoo fisheries, and is that good?**

MR. ROLLER: Absolutely.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Would you like to discuss your motion, Tom?

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Jessica. For me, this begins for compliance with the SEFHIER program. You know, when the process of the for-hire logbook began, myself, and many others, figured that the South Atlantic's approach would simply not create a program that would drive

compliance with good data collection, and the former Regional Administrator, Roy Crabtree, was very candid in his view at that time, and I would be happy to look up some of those previous comments.

You know, as evidenced by the SERO SEFHIER presentation at this meeting, which we have discussed at-length, this is clearly the case. Extremely low compliance, and questionable data submissions, are creating a program that is not meeting the expectations of those of us who are invested in this industry and are desperate for data collection. You know, as a fulltime for-hire fisherman, I can provide a lot of stories, and anecdotes, regarding how people are either deliberately illegally fishing without permits or simply just not providing adequate reporting.

I would also remind the council that usable, validated data is not just about catch and discards. You know, our coastal communities are growing, and the ocean is a changing place that is rapidly getting smaller. There is a greater need for economic data, and spatial data, whether it's mitigating impacts of wind turbine construction on industry or coping with storm damage or a fisheries disaster, or simply better understanding how the industry uses shoreside infrastructure, the for-hire industry greatly needs this data.

You know, for myself, in looking at the past work of this council, I think that we can start with that previous amendment, and I believe it's 47, and a lot of ideas were hashed out in this, right, and I want to preface here that we have an opportunity to do something very creative, and to make a different kind of permit that can look at a lot of issues that have been raised, whether it's making sure that we have an ability for new fishermen to enter the fishery, through a greenhorn pool, and look at interesting ways of transfers and other things, and I believe there's a lot of opportunities to be collaborative and to be really creative.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We have a motion that's under discussion. Others? Judy, did you want to speak on this?

MS. HELMEY: I just wanted to say that Tom and I had talked about this, and I agree with him fully. If we can get people in compliance -- That's our problem, or one problem we're dealing with, and so maybe this will help.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I support the motion, and I certainly appreciate Tom's rationale. I think compliance is certainly one of the key factors here, and I love his idea of thinking kind of outside the box, with regard to, as this develops, how do we deal with new entrants, and maybe not -- Or avoid some of the problems we've had with limited entry systems elsewhere. I think the other thing, just to be very clear, and, I mean, this would help to address overcapitalization in our fishery, and that's not just for-hire, and it's throughout the entire snapper grouper, mackerel, and dolphin wahoo fisheries, and so limited entry, obviously, is a step in helping to do that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Andy. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. Thank you for those comments, Andy. You know, I look towards the Gulf program, which has much higher compliance than we do, right, and I think one of the bases for this is, when you have a permit that you can lose, whether it's a valuable commodity or

it's just something that you can't get back, it is going to drive people to comply with this at a much better rate, right, and that's kind of the basis for a lot of my rationale here.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Would anyone else like to discuss this motion before we vote? I'm just looking around the table. All right. **Let me see a show of hands of those in favor of this motion, ten in favor; any opposed.** I would like to abstain from the vote. Is Mel back online, or Robert?

MR. BELL: Yes, and I had my hand up initially.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Did you want to talk, or did you have your hand up to vote?

MR. BELL: No, and I was voting. When you said in favor, I stuck my hand up.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right. Got it. We'll add you to the in favor. Robert, it doesn't look like you're on there. Okay. Robert, I believe that they just emailed you, or just sent you, an audio PIN. All right. **We're going to record that vote as eleven in favor and one abstention. The motion passes.**

All right, and so then I think, somewhere on the board there, after Myra records that, it said to put this for-hire in front of the commercial, and is that up there? Okay. Yes. A higher priority than commercial information, and so then I'm going to ask these same questions again, and is it the intent that the for-hire information comes back to March, and when are you wanting the commercial white paper to come back? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I think we probably need to talk about that with the holistic workplan coming up, and I think we can wait on that. I do have another motion, related to limited entry.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sounds good, and so just heads were nodding yes on bringing that up during the workplan, and so back to you, Andy, for your other motion.

MR. STRELCHECK: I emailed Myra, and it's easier, I think, just to cut-and-paste the motion. As she's getting the motion, the motion pertains to a control date, and so, given that we discussed, obviously, limited entry on Tuesday, I'm concerned about speculative entry into the program, and, obviously, we just passed Tom's motion, and so, although we have a control date that was established in 2016, it's been seven years, and so this would essentially be establishing an additional control date and not substitute for that previous control date.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Just stand by. Myra is looking for the motion. All right. We're getting the motion passed on the board there, and do you want to read it, Andy?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes. **My motion is, to prevent speculative entry, establish an additional control date of December 8, 2023 that the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council may use if it decides to create restrictions limiting participation in the Exclusive Economic Zone for the federal charter vessel/headboat (for-hire) component of the recreational sectors of the coastal migratory pelagics fishery in the Atlantic, dolphin and wahoo fishery in the Atlantic, and snapper grouper fishery in the South Atlantic. Anyone obtaining a federal for-hire permit for these recreational sectors after the control date will not be assured of future**

access should a management regime that limits participation in the sector be prepared and implemented. Additionally, federal permit holders that have not reported snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, and/or dolphin and wahoo landings from the South Atlantic to the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting Program on or prior to December 5, 2023 will not be assured of future access should a management regime that limits participation in the sector be prepared and implemented. If I have a second, I will --

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's seconded by Tom. Back to you, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: So one thing I do want to point out is I did -- So the language, in pretty much the first seven or eight lines, is almost verbatim from what we did in 2016. The additional language starts kind of on the fifth row up, with regard to the landings, and I feel like it's really important that we be thinking now, right, about -- For people that may have just been speculative, in terms of obtaining a limited entry permit, that never intended to fish it, and may be in other regions, and so this doesn't, obviously, obligate us to use this, but it does set a marker. Then the other thing that I will note is that the date for the landing requirement is intentionally different than the date of the control date, and so I put December 5 because that's the reporting day for weekly reporting, which was Tuesday, December 5.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I had a question for you. Can you explain what you meant by -- So you're adding a second control date, and so the other control date stays on the books, and how does that work moving forward, as the council makes decisions, with two control dates out there?

MR. STRELCHECK: So certainly Shep and Monica may need to help me here, but, when we issued the initial control date of 2016, that was essentially the first notice to for-hire permit holders. We could, as a council, now that we've done way back then, use that as a basis for limited entry and say that anyone that entered after that date would not, you know, qualify. We may not want to do that. We may want to look at now December 8, 2023, and so it gives us, I think, some flexibility to have some options, or we may not use either of these, right, and so that's the intent.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thank you. That helped. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would just say -- I mean, keep in mind that you're not bound by the control date, and you just put that out there, and I've worked in the Gulf, and I think you were there as well, where we had multiple control dates, and we go with the most recent one, in that context, but you're not bound to use any of them. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Shep. Okay. More discussion? John and then Tom and then Tim.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Just a question on one word here, where it says, in the latter phrase, "landings", and should that be "catch", or is it intended to be landings?

MR. STRELCHECK: **I'm fine with the change to "catch".**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks for that. Tom and then Tim.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. You know, I'm supportive of this motion, particularly since it is in addition of another control date, and I think it gives us, as a council, a lot of flexibility to look at this, and I mentioned, earlier, that my vision for this is to do something very creative, and I think that this gives us some more flexibility in that. In addition, I support it, just to reduce -- What was the term that was used? Speculative behavior, based off of permits, and I would add that I think the agency has done a great job at trying to keep the word out, to the for-hire industry, that this not only was coming, but is in existence, and so this industry should already be well aware.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, and I just kind of wanted a little bit of clarification, just along what Tom was just saying, and I wasn't sure whether this second portion, about the December 5 date of reporting -- Does that not make it more restrictive? I mean, I understand that it says "may", but, I mean, is that trying to capture that there could be a difference, that you could have been in the fishery, but you failed to report, and so now you get kicked out? I also wanted to make sure that this doesn't hem you into the flexibility, or, as Tom said, he wants to think outside the box and build the ability, say for a commercial captain that has been landing, and reporting, under his system, that now he wants to transition into a for-hire role, as he ages out, and does this -- Because he never participated, or he did not report to SEFHIER, and are we saying that we're not going to build in a mechanism for him to enter?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy, to respond to that?

MR. STRELCHECK: Ultimately, it's going to be up to this council to decide, Tim, whether we use, you know, a landing requirement as part of the provision to qualify for limited entry. You know, my point here is this is a requirement of the permit, as it exists today, and they've been given two years to comply, or almost two years to comply, with the program. We recognize there is some non-compliance, but I'm not setting a landings threshold, and I'm not, you know, getting into details with regard to, you know, how we might go about using this, and, as I said, we're not obligated to use it in the long-term, if we decide not to.

MR. GRINER: Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry, and then back to Tom.

MS. MARHEFKA: Sort of along that same line, that was -- Instead of saying "dolphin and wahoo catch from the South Atlantic", like say someone -- Does SEFHIER have a no-fishing requirement, a no-fishing report, and so, in my mind, maybe we say that they've reported, and not necessarily that they've had to have catch, and so, like in Tim's situation, if it's a commercial guy, and he's compliant with saying no fishing, no fishing, no fishing, and that might give us a little more leeway, but also understanding that we can be less restrictive, I believe, but we don't want to penalize someone, in my -- Maybe I'm wrong, but who has been reporting legally if they're just -- If their reports are no fishing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy, do you want to respond to that?

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, I hear what you're saying, Kerry, and I guess my question would be to you though, and, I mean, are they then reliant on the fishery, and is this important for them to receive a limited-entry permit, if they're not reporting landings and not fishing it?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: It's sort of along those lines, and I think that, as we look at this, it's going to require analyses of current permits, and landings, and where people are from, and, you know, I look at this, and I still think this gives us the flexibility to draw a lot of different conclusions based off of what the data tells us.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Other points, or discussion, before we vote on this? Anything else? Okay. I assume we're ready to vote. Okay. **Can I see a show of hands of those in favor of this motion, nine in favor; any opposed, same sign; abstentions, one abstention.** Mel.

MR. BELL: I was in favor.

MS. MCCAWLEY: **Okay, and so it's ten in favor, one abstention.** Is Robert online? Okay. Apparently we lost him. **All right, and so that vote was ten in favor and one abstention. The motion passes.**

All right, and so there is some yellow language there that says that the limited entry is a higher priority than the commercial information, but I guess maybe we want to look at that in the workplan, and try to figure out when those items are coming back, and I'm going to continue through the committee report, and so we've had good discussion on both of those items, but there's one more item that came out of that discussion, following the AP other business, that says to explore optimal effort/yield, via the management strategy evaluation, and test management procedures that can achieve that. Need to get to initial set of effort estimates for fishery components, and I don't remember all the specifics of this, and so, whoever brought this up, could they speak to this issue? Okay, and I don't see any hands on this, and I don't remember what this discussion is. John Walter.

DR. WALTER: We're sort of like communally trying to dig back in our brains as to what happened.

MS. MARHEFKA: That was two days ago.

DR. WALTER: It seemed like longer than that.

MS. MARHEFKA: Jessica and I had -- Or I said, and I'm sorry, and I don't mean to include you, but you agreed, where we were saying sort of like how the MSE is just recreational, and how do we get to the commercial stuff, and Chip said that is eventually the plan, but it's such a huge thing that we need to start with the recreational, and then you said you can't really just look at one component of the fishery, and you have to include something commercially-related, but probably the minimum we would do, right now, is this effort yield, just so that you can sort of -- I'm hoping that, at some point, you're going to pick up, because I'm not sounding very smart here.

MS. MCCAWLEY: John.

DR. WALTER: All right, and so now it's coming back to me, and so it is, I think -- Well, as I mentioned, it's critical that you've got to include all sectors, because any management is a package deal, and I think I talked to Chip about how that could be done in the most expedient fashion, without it necessarily being like the full suite of commercial management options, but more of we could abstract a lot of the commercial fishery objectives.

There are already objectives in the MSE, and I think what we would need is some estimates of effort, and I think, to be able to say, okay -- Because, at some point, when you have too many vessels, you're not going to achieve very much profitability, and so I think that's something that is going to need to come out of it, particularly if the MSE includes some economics, which I think was a suggestion, that it eventually do consider that, and so, here, I'm just trying to see if there is some other action, other than maybe ensure that the MSE adequately accounts for commercial effort.

DR. COLLIER: We're going to work on the commercial side the way we're can, and what we're following is what was done in the Mid-Atlantic for summer flounder, where they did really just focus on that recreational fishery, and they tried to address the problems in there, and I feel like we have guidance, from the council, on how we divvy up the recreational and commercial sectors, and we have typical allocations that have been -- Typical processes to develop allocations, and so we can make sure that we're giving the allocations to the commercial fishery like we need to, and we have control rules that have been set up, setting the catch levels at FMSY, or dropping down from there, based on the P^* , and so those are the typical processes that we would go through in order to account for that, but John is absolutely right that we can use this tool, in the future, to really investigate commercial fisheries, but we need to have clear objectives, and I feel like, if we're trying to get the commercial objectives into the recreational objectives, we -- The voice of the recreational fishery might not be heard as well as what we're hoping that they're going to be heard right now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so it looks like we added some language up there to clarify this, and I'm hoping that that helps us, since we were a little bit confused about the discussion, and I think that that helps. John, did you have anything else to add here?

DR. WALTER: Just a slight concern that the -- When commercial objectives would be considered as part of the process, because I think they need to be considered, well, at the same time recreational are, and I know that one is maybe harder to grasp, and it's more diverse in the recreational fishery, but I think, if you don't get both of them into it -- Because one action on one end affects another.

If you're discarding a lot of fish in a recreational fishery, it's affecting the fish that the commercial fishery could catch, and, if you take an action that puts more fish -- That kills fewer of them, then there are more fish in the water, which means that everybody benefits, and so I think that's one of the reasons that it's -- Because it's a shared resource, it's a package deal, and why it's really important to get all of those objectives on the table. Timing-wise, maybe that's a challenge, but I think it will not achieve its full realization of the opportunity that the MSE provides without getting those objectives considered, and so I would like to see that be part of the process.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that that's enough discussion here to clarify what we're talking about, and I don't see any additional hands, and I'm going to try to keep moving through this committee

report. All right. We had an item, under Other Business, that we were not able to complete, where we postponed a discussion of the golden tilefish recreational overage until Full Council. Does the committee want to discuss that? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I brought it up, and I'm not suggesting that we do anything, or take any action, or start anything right now, and I realize that we have this FES issue, and I suspect, with this golden tilefish, that like -- I mean, I don't understand enough about the numbers, and maybe it's just an extrapolation situation, and I just don't know, and I just wanted to make sure that, somewhere on the record, attention was called to, you know, the fact that, on paper, it's been exceeded for three years, make sure someone is keeping an eye on it, and someone smarter than me is sort of paying attention to whether that's a real situation, and, if it is, then hope that, if it is, we will deal with it, when it's acknowledged that that's a problem.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Andy and then Myra.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Kerry, and we are paying attention, and it's just really challenging to monitor these really low catch limits, especially with the variability in the recreational statistics, and so, as everyone knows, we implemented new catch limits for golden tilefish that went into effect this week, and that catch limit went up slightly, but it also resulted in an adjustment from the Coastal Household Telephone Survey to the Effort Survey.

We had projected and closed the fishery on July 17. At that time, the overage, relative to the past catch limit, was -- There was an overage, by the time we got the landings for Wave 4, but it was considerably less than what we're now showing, based on the new catch estimates. Based on the accountability measures that we have, we will have -- Like we normally do, we'll project the season length based on what we saw in terms of landings for this year, as well as previous seasons, and announce that, likely early next year, given the exceedance of the catch limit, but I just wanted to acknowledge that, obviously, we're well aware of it, and part of this is a kind of transitioning to FES, and we were monitoring with the Coastal Household Telephone Survey earlier in the year.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would just remind you that there is a performance standard in National Standard 1 that, if catch exceeds the ACL for a given stock, or stock complex, more than once in the last four years, the system of ACLs and AMs should be reevaluated and modified, if necessary, to improve its performance and effectiveness. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: When it comes to golden tilefish, just to be sure, when we did the adjustment from CHTS to FES, it resulted in a considerable decrease in recreational quota, and am I correct there?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: So the value actually goes up slightly, but, because FES generates higher estimates of catch, then, yes, it's a net reduction.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Are we good? I see heads nodding that we're good. Can we look at the timing and tasks motion there? Ultimately, we need somebody to make this motion, but I guess let's give folks a chance to look at it and see if anything is missing. I don't see the Amendment 46 items, other than continue development for review, but I believe that some of the pieces are going to the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel before the March meeting. On the red snapper tasks, Myra, do you want to put "see direction", or something? There is two questions there about timing, and we said we wanted to talk about the timing during the workplan discussion, and can we delete that? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Just a question. Since we passed a motion regarding for-hire limited entry, are we still asking for a summary document?

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's being fixed. This isn't actually the timing and tasks motion, and this is just direct staff, and so I'm kind of confused, and can you help explain, Myra?

MS. BROUWER: I'm trying to understand it. I think -- So what I believe is happening is there's another timing and tasks motion that was associated specifically with wreckfish items, and that was part of that subcommittee report, and so that's why Motion 12 is more general to snapper grouper, other snapper grouper, amendments.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so then I think I understand that, and so then we have one motion that just directs staff to do some things, and then we have a separate timing and tasks motion? Okay, and Myra is going to combine these. Stand by. All right, and I think we're good here. Does someone want to make this motion? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: **I move that we direct staff to do the following: continue to develop Snapper Grouper Amendment 48 and convene the next meeting of the Wreckfish Subcommittee, via webinar, prior to the March 2024 council meeting; continue development of Amendment 46 for review at the March 2024 council meeting; scoping for Regulatory Amendment 36, including communication with black sea bass pot endorsement holders; draft a letter on behalf of the council regarding what the council would like included in future stock status letters; some red snapper tasks, which are noted above, spelled out above; prepare an updated information paper describing the snapper grouper commercial two-for-one permit policy and the SG 2 permits. Is that everything? That's my motion.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Do I have a second? It's seconded by Carolyn. Any more discussion on this? This is kind of a summary of the bunch of the other items in this report. **Any objection to this motion?** All right. **That motion carries.** Is there any other business to come before the Snapper Grouper Committee? All right. I'm going to turn it back to Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, and thank you, everybody. I know this is very in-depth, but I'm glad we've had the conversations that we've needed to have on it. Wrapping up, we have the council workplan, which is with John Hadley.

MR. HADLEY: All right. What I'm going to bring up is a revised version of the workplan, and it is posted to the meeting webpage, and so, if you want to follow along, it is there. All right, and so what we have here is the revised version of the workplan. As I mentioned, this has been updated with some of the discussions this week, and I will kind of start at the top, and move towards the

bottom, and there is some -- I think, when we get to the other council activities, there's some discussion there for the March meeting.

Generally speaking, you know, moving through the top, the black sea bass assessment response amendment was moved back just a meeting, just for the assessment report, and that may be moved back a meeting, and just a notice on that. The permitting, private recreational permitting, and education amendment was moved back to reflect the council's discussion of that, and so that timeline was essentially extended, and then, moving down, there is the note on Dolphin Wahoo Reg Amendment 3. Even though the dolphin MSE is progressing through, is going to continue to work, that is on the council's agenda to come back in December of 2024, and that reflects the council's motion on that during the Dolphin Wahoo Committee timing and tasks.

Then, as we keep going down, we get into the -- We wrap up with CMP 13, that amendment, and then some of the planned amendments underway, and notably the mackerel port meetings, which are planned for really a good chunk of next year, and so you would be seeing sort of a larger Spanish-mackerel-related amendment sometime in early to mid-2025, and so that's where that schedule -- That's sort of the larger-picture item that was discussed during the Mackerel Committee.

Then, moving down, there are the other council planned activities, and so, really, this column here is the column to focus on, and we have a pretty full agenda, probably an overly-full agenda, for the March meeting, and I highlighted a few items here, and we have the commercial permit discussion, the for-hire limited entry amendment, the two coral items, and so Coral HAPC and Coral Amendment 10, and, really, the Snapper Grouper 35-related discussions that you just went over during the Snapper Grouper Committee, and so those items were the items that are sort of -- You know, we need to discuss some of the timing, and I will start up here.

The snapper grouper commercial permit discussion, or for-hire limited-entry discussion, the suggestion was to really pick one of those for March, and then maybe move the other one back, and it sounds like maybe the limited-entry discussion would happen in March, and then the commercial permit discussion could happen at a later meeting, perhaps, or, if you wanted to move something else back, we could do that as well.

With the coral discussion, you said that you wanted to prioritize the discussion of Coral Amendment 10 over the HAPC discussion, and so, in regard to that, there's kind of the IPT report on Coral Amendment 10 coming back to you in March, and the HAPC discussion tentatively coming back to you in June.

The last two items that I just wanted to note on there, and not really a decision point to make on those, but there's an allocation review that is scheduled for later in the year, and so in September, and that's in regard to the allocation review guidelines that you just finalized, and so those will be finalized, and there is some allocation reviews that will be coming to you that are -- Essentially, the time trigger has been triggered, and so that's when we put that on the calendar, for later in the year, and then one other item.

You know, the council has discussed this quite a bit in the past, and I didn't want to take it off without, you know, just making sure that it's okay with everyone on the council, but there was a snapper grouper discard white paper, and that's kind of been hanging on there, on the council's

agenda, and I think, at this point, we could probably take it off, just because it's going to be -- It's really wrapped into that Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 35, but, you know, I just wanted to point that out and make sure that's okay to go ahead and strike that last one at the bottom.

Then, moving down, you can see some of the stock-assessment-related fishery management plan amendments for snapper grouper, and some of the other amendments that are sort of hanging down here, and sort of the timeline is a little bit fluid, and to be determined, but I just wanted to mention that those are down there as well, and so, with that, really, you know, I welcome any input, and I want to kind of triage that one point, as far as it seems like perhaps we could discuss the limited-entry topic in March, and maybe the snapper grouper commercial permit discussion in June, or we could do vice versa, but I welcome any input.

DR. BELCHER: So I'm going to direct this to Chip, because of the timing of the SEDAR Steering Committee, and do we need the SEDAR Committee to meet in March?

DR. COLLIER: (Dr. Collier's comment is not audible on the recording.)

DR. BELCHER: Okay. I just wanted to make sure, because I just knew they were meeting after we were. Kerry and Jessica.

MS. MARHEFKA: Right now, we have, for underway FMP workload subtotal, the vermilion snapper interim assessment, or the commercial trip limit adjustment, and I forget what "AR" is in March.

MR. HADLEY: So that's an assessment response, and thank you for bringing that up. I meant to highlight that, and so that was sort of set aside for a vermilion snapper interim assessment response, and you will -- I believe you're still scheduled to get that assessment response in March, or report rather, assessment report, and, you know, whether or not an amendment will come out of that, I don't know, but one item that the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel brought up was potentially increasing the commercial trip limit for vermilion snapper, to help utilize the existing commercial ACL, and so that's sort of a placeholder in there, assuming that the council would want to move forward with that very targeted vermilion-snapper-related commercial amendment.

DR. BELCHER: Kerry, to that, and then I still have Jessica.

MS. MARHEFKA: Sorry. Well, to that, I think that -- To my understanding, I know we'll get a report, but, from what we've heard, they're going to say that the interim assessment was not appropriate for management advice, and I think, at this time, the priority -- If we wiggle around, I think we could put two-for-one, and not have to make a choice, and that would be more important than looking at vermilion snapper right now, and so I'm just going to put that out there.

DR. BELCHER: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: In trying to suggest kind of one for March, and so I agree with Kerry about vermilion, and I think we can remove the discard white paper, and I don't think we need to talk about Coral 10, and the HAPCs, and I don't think that that needs to be done for March. I do think -- So we said that we want to talk about Amendment 35, the discussions coming from that, and so

I'm wondering -- Do we have to select between the 35-related discussions and like for-hire limited entry, or can we do both? I will just put that out there for folks to consider.

MR. HADLEY: You know, going down the list of items that you just mentioned, I think, if we move the coral-related discussions back, that adds a little bit of wiggle room there to put the for-hire limited entry and potentially the snapper grouper two-for-one permit discussion in there.

DR. BELCHER: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I don't want to rock the boat too much, but I am still concerned about the timing of the Spanish mackerel framework amendment, given that it's going on with all the concerns raised, that it's going on during port meetings, and the fact that we will likely be seeing a new, larger amendment, right, in 2025, and so I'm just curious if anybody else shares my concerns with this regarding the current timing.

DR. BELCHER: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, I share those concerns, and I am okay with pushing it back, but, yes, I do, and that would free up some time here.

DR. BELCHER: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I agree, and I've already expressed my concerns.

DR. BELCHER: Gary.

MR. BORLAND: I agree with Jessica, Tom, and Spud on the concerns on that.

DR. BELCHER: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I guess I'm starting to get confused as to what are we moving, because there's a lot of things that we're moving, and so I guess maybe -- You know, my understanding is snapper grouper discards -- I floated that white paper, and I think it's been consumed by other circumstances, and so we can get rid of that. With Coral 10, maybe we move that to June, because that would allow for the shrimp fishery to participate at the Daytona meeting, as well as anyone in that area from the coral community.

The one that I wanted to ask about was Amendment 55, and so we did add management measures, and so, from a timing standpoint, it may be hard to get to public hearings by March, and I don't know if we'll get there or not, but I just wanted to acknowledge that that could potentially push that back a meeting or skip -- We may have to skip the March meeting, depending on the amount of analysis.

DR. BELCHER: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I was actually -- I wonder if we could do both, just looking at your scores and stuff, and we could move both the coral HAPC and the Coral 10 report to June, because that will

-- That will make it, what, nine there, but then we can figure that out in June, and so -- But, since both of those really impact the Florida area, that probably is a good thing to do.

DR. BELCHER: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Just to clarify, I don't know what we're doing between the for-hire limited entry and then the commercial permit discussion. Since we're moving stuff all around, I can't tell if both of those and 35-related discussions are all coming to March, or just two of those three, or one of those three, and sorry, and I was just trying to seek clarification on that.

MR. HADLEY: I'm kind of taking notes up here, and I believe the plan would have all three of those coming back in March, given the other things that have been pushed back. I did want to mention -- You know, Andy brought up a good point on 55. You know, if you wanted to move consideration of public hearings on that back to June, you could get -- One, you could flesh out some of the actions related to the management measures, and also get some AP feedback on that as well, and so --

DR. BELCHER: John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think, in some ways, when you get in 35 -- You know, we've talked about you've put a lot of things on the table, and there's a lot of water under the bridge already, and bringing back that, and bringing back the visioning report, and just trying to get a catch-up of where everything is, and I think the same could probably hold true for two-for-one and for-hire limited entry, and these topics have been talked about for a long, long time, you know, and I think the March meeting could also be on those, just kind of a bring everyone up-to-speed on where we are, so you feel like you can, you know, build on that discussion, as opposed to like jumping in and pretending like it's all new and starting fresh.

Given that, I feel like, you know, there's not a lot of new creation for staff to bring these to you, and I think we can, you know, kind of rein the discussion in, in more of a, you know, scoping, what do you want to do, what further questions do you have situation, and we can probably make time for it on the agenda, because we wouldn't be getting down into the nitty-gritty details. When we do that, we may have to spread some of these things out.

DR. BELCHER: Other comments on scheduling? John.

MR. HADLEY: I guess one thing, going back to CMP 13, and just to get a little bit of clear guidance on the intended timing of that, and so it sounded like you wanted to move it back and not look at it in March, and is that correct? When would the council want to look at it again?

MS. MCCAWLEY: After the port meetings. I mean, I don't want to speak for everybody, but I would just -- I would push it back, but that's just me.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and that's what I was thinking. I mean, I think, once you start pushing it back, you're really bumping back up to the port meetings, and the reason you were doing this was because it was a slight increase in the catch levels, and the idea was to try to put that in there, and do it relatively quickly, and then go look at all the other issues that you have within the fishery, after the port meetings, but, you know, it seems like things just make their way into an amendment,

and now it's got other stuff that it's looking at, which I kind of think, yes, don't really fit in with the Reg Amendment 35, and its original purpose and need for doing it, and so, you know, those more complex things really do deserve the input from the port meetings, and so it seems like maybe you just halt on this and we shift back to the next amendment that was planned, or this becomes the next amendment that's planned.

DR. BELCHER: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I am agreeing with that conversation, because I think part of it was we started this framework based off the catch levels, and we really didn't have the analysis of what that would look like, particularly as it pertained to the recreational sector. As we started to see that data presented, I saw a lot more concern, from the committee members and the council at large, and so that's why I look at this, and, you know, even moving with it in March, I was concerned how it was butting up against port meetings. Now, as we, you know, look at the workplan, and other priorities, I'm starting to question whether or not we should wait until after port meetings to even address these catch level concerns.

DR. BELCHER: Thoughts from other folks on this? Gary.

MR. BORLAND: I echo Tom's concerns.

DR. BELCHER: Anybody have any exception to the idea of pushing it back? I think it makes sense as well. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I was just going to say that it does make sense, and I guess I'm struggling with it because we were trying to get more fish on the table quicker, but, yes, you're right that we didn't have the analysis at the time, and I know that ASMFC is also interested in what happens, and so, yes, I guess that I agree. I mean, that was really the push, was to get more fish on the table, but, after that analysis, I think it does change the picture a little bit, because, originally, I was like, well, why don't we wait until after the port meetings for everything, and so I guess I reluctantly agree that that's probably the best thing to do.

DR. BELCHER: Sonny, I'm going to go to you. Any thoughts from your stance on that?

MR. GWIN: (Mr. Gwin's comment is not audible on the recording.)

DR. BELCHER: All right. So does anybody else have comments on that? All right, and so delay until after the port meetings.

MR. HADLEY: Yes, and we'll take that as direction, and I think, you know, given the movement of items here, I think that kind of -- I think that frees up that roadblock in March, and it also alleviates some time in June that we were kind of butting up against that. Then, if you look, I mean, you do have the next -- Essentially, for what is known over the next two years, and that's sort of laid out, and you do have, you know, some room later on in the year next year, and so, you know, I think the council discussed several items that may create amendments that fill that, but there is some wiggle room in there, and so I just wanted to point that out, particularly at the September and December meeting next year, and then into the following year, and so I think --

The point being I think the blocks, so to speak, have been moved around, to where, you know, everything works out, from a timing perspective.

DR. BELCHER: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I'm going to take some of the wiggle room away, because I don't see the SEFHIER improvements on here, and so we need to add that to the list.

DR. BELCHER: John.

MR. HADLEY: To that point, I guess a little bit of guidance from the council at this point, and do you want that folded into the for-hire limited-entry discussion, or do you kind of want those to be two separate topics, because they're different, but they are somewhat related, because you did mention SEFHIER compliance.

DR. BELCHER: Thoughts? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: My initial reaction would be to keep them separate, and separate primarily because the Gulf Council is also working on SEFHIER improvements, but not on the limited-entry piece to it, and so aligning that effort with the Gulf would be beneficial.

DR. BELCHER: Other comments from the group on that? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I would concur with that. I mean, I could go either way on it, but they are two -- They are related, very closely related, particularly in the rationale that I provided, but I do think they would need to be separate, because there's other things that are going to need to be talked about, in terms of getting compliance from SEFHIER.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks for those comments. John Hadley, anything else we can do for you?

MR. HADLEY: No, and I appreciate the input, and, like I said, I think that helps, you know, free up some of the roadblocks for the next couple of meetings, and so thank you.

DR. BELCHER: All right. Thanks. Next is John with the upcoming meetings.

MR. CARMICHAEL: In the interest of time, I'm not going to say too much, and it's already 12:30. You have the list. We tried to expand it out and give you a broader look into what the meeting weeks are for 2025, and we're working on places for 2024, and into 2025, now, and so it's early in the year, and it will fill out more. As you can see, we have a lot already scheduled for February, and we expect another busy year, based on the workplan we just looked at. Any questions on any of the things that are on there?

DR. BELCHER: Okay, and so the last item on the agenda is Other Business. Does anybody have any other business? Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I was wondering if we could ask staff to clarify the FOIA request to the Coast Guard, because I didn't -- I looked at their response, that we talked about earlier in the week, and it was kind of a non-response, and so I'm wondering if there's a way that staff could try to clarify

that, so that we could actually get the information that we requested in the FOIA. I think that there's some ways to clarify.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and it did sort of read that. You know, if you knew what you needed, and could tell us, we could go find it, but, since we're basically saying we would like to know if you have any reports there, they're saying not enough detail, but Laurilee sent us an example of something they send around, where they provide the notices of closures that we've talked about, and so, yes, based on her sending that, what we'll do is try to re-craft that, to at least get information on those closures, as a step, and maybe that will give us some more insight, so that we can find out what they know about the junk, but we're suspecting that maybe they don't really have anything about the junk, I guess unless somebody runs into it and wrecks their boat, and then they have an accident report.

DR. BELCHER: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: One more thing that I forgot on the timing and tasks in Snapper Grouper, and we were talking about writing a letter, and I think that John and Carolyn were going to write a letter to the Regional Office about the letters that come out of there on overfished and undergoing overfishing stock status, and I just forgot to put that on the timing and tasks, and I apologize.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and we've got that.

DR. BELCHER: Yes, and I remember seeing it.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and it's on the list somewhere.

DR. BELCHER: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Taking us in an entirely different direction, I would like to make a request, if possible, for this screen maybe to be parallel with the tables, for those of us that are sitting right at the tail-end, and, obviously, Michael can't even see the screen, and it's really hard for me or Monica, and so I spend a lot of time staring at my computer, which looks like I'm not paying attention, but, in reality, I have to have the webinar up, and so just a recommendation, and I think it would also be a little more friendly for those in the audience, because you won't have this big barrier up in front of the table.

MR. CARMICHAEL: A question on that, and does this screen do anybody much good? It's sort of facing that way to be available for the audience, and it's way, way far away for the audience, and so we could potentially move this screen, or an audience-facing screen, back there, and try to angle something in the middle, and maybe have three in the middle. So you need one facing right, one facing left, one facing front, and one facing back.

MR. STRELCHECK: It's just a suggestion. It's just a suggestion.

DR. BELCHER: All right, and so any other -- You're not free until I adjourn, you know, and so I was trying to close it out. Is there any other business to come here? Okay. Seeing none, then we are now adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on December 8, 2023.)

- - -

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
February 2, 2024

Dec. 6, 2023
Comments From
Janet Coit, NOAA

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147

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Not applicable for staff

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Dec. 7, 2023
Council Session 11

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Dec. 7, 2023
Council Session 11

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Attendee Report: SAFMC December 2023 Council Meeting (12/4/23 - 12/8/23)

Report Generated:

12/07/2023 04:58 PM EST

Webinar ID

379-228-259

Actual Start Date/Time

12/07/2023 07:12 AM EST

Duration

9 hours 41 minutes

Registered

227

Attended

131

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Attended

Yes

Interest Rating

Not applicable for staff

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Dec. 8, 2023
Council Session II

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2023 - 2024 COUNCIL MEMBERS continued

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Dec. 8, 2023
Council Session 11
CLOSED

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Dec. 8, 2023
Council Session 11

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OPEN

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Dec. 8, 2023
Council Session II

OPEN

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Attendee Report: SAFMC December 2023 Council Meeting (12/4/23 - 12/8/23)

Report Generated:

12/11/2023 06:50 AM EST

Webinar ID

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12/08/2023 07:23 AM EST

Duration

5 hours 10 minutes

Registered

234

Attended

87

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Interest Rating

Not applicable for staff

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