

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

COUNCIL SESSION I

**Radisson Resort at the Port
Cape Canaveral, Florida**

June 9-10, 2025

Transcript

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Observers and Participants

Other observers and participants attached.

The Council Session I of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Radisson Resort at the Port, Cape Canaveral, Florida, on Monday, June 9, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Trish Murphey.

MS. MURPHEY: All right, everybody. Thanks for getting back on time. We're running about thirty minutes late, and so we'll see if we can kind of cruise through open council here, and don't forget that we are going to reconvene the Commercial Subcommittee, and so if you guys could help, be helpful for me, and, when we make comments, maybe just keep them a little more short and sweet, and that would be real helpful.

All right, and so, at this point, I guess we need to adopt the agenda. Is everybody good with this agenda? No objections to this agenda? Okay. I see none. The agenda is approved. The minutes, I would like to have approval of the minutes. Again, any substantive changes? If there's no substantive changes -- Any minor changes, just get with staff, but any substantive changes? Is everybody -- I don't see anything, and so the minutes are approved. Is everybody good? Okay, and so we're going to go ahead and move into reports, and our first -- I'm sorry. Litigation. Monica, would you -- Are you online, and do you want to talk about any litigation?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Hi. I think I've been pretty garbled. I don't really have an update. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Monica, and so we'll go ahead and move into reports. First, we've got the Office of Law Enforcement reports, and so we've got Matt online, who is going to give us those reports. Matt, are you there?

MR. THOMAS: Were you asking for me?

MS. MURPHEY: For Matt with OLE.

MS. WALIA: I was muted. Can you hear me okay?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, sir, we can.

MR. WALIA: Thank you. I wanted to provide a report. I'll wait for it, and the council should have it to pull up there. I've got a couple slides, because I know we last talked to you in December, and so I want to give you a snapshot of some recent efforts we've been up to, some cases, and take any questions, if needed there, and so I'll just wait for that to come up, but, while that's coming up, I did put an attachment in the briefing book. This is in there, with some meeting links to check out in the brief, and our report as well, and so, if anyone has questions, or wants previous council reports, let me know, and I can get that over your way.

MS. MURPHEY: I think we're trying to find your presentation. Hang on just a sec.

MR. WALIA: No problem. That's the report, but there should be a couple of slides in a PDF that I sent over to Myra.

MS. MURPHEY: We're still looking. Hang on. All right, Matt, and there we are.

MR. WALIA: Thank you. I appreciate it. All right. Well, I'll get rolling here, get you guys going here, and so I'm the Compliance Liaison, Matt Walia, with the Southeast Division Office of Law Enforcement, and what I want to -- Like I said, we last talked to you in December, and so I wanted to give you a snapshot kind of what we've been up to.

We have had a priority shift in our effort of what we can do, and where we're going, since all the recent actions and HR stuff going on, since the beginning of the new year. Optimally, we have twenty enforcement officers and fifteen special agents. Unfortunately, through everything going on, whether probationary and early retirement, we've lost close to 22 percent of our staff in the field, and so a combination of eight enforcement officers, or special agents, and we lost two field supervisors, as well as some support staff have left, and so that has hindered what we can do, where we can go.

We have to kind of shift what we can focus on, but what I want to highlight here -- You see circled in both these graphs, and the one on the left is our patrol efforts overall throughout the whole region since January. We've had an uptick in international trade. We're still able to get out a lot too, and so we've had over 500 patrols, and we're doing an increase in international trade. That goes along with the executive orders, and protecting domestic seafood, and I'll get into that in a little bit, but we are inspecting a lot of seafood commerce coming in at the ports around the area, and so that's been an uptick in our priorities.

The other one I want to note is on the right, and those are all open incidents, this past quarter, January to March in the South Atlantic, and you'll see it's actually at 51 percent. A little over 50 percent of everything that we have opened in our case management system has been without a violation, and so that is compliance assistance. That's our folks stomping the docks, working with fishermen, doing inspections, and so, overall, we're seeing really good compliance across the fleet.

Going along with the work we can do, and, of course, we won't be able to do it without our partners. We have a lot of state and federal law enforcement partners across the region. This past quarter, what you can see on the graphic here is the location of where we got referrals from our enforcement partners.

Specifically to the South Atlantic Council, we got twenty-eight referrals from FWC, and two from Georgia. FWC was a mix of different Magnuson violations, and stuff in the sanctuary. In Georgia, we actually had some Atlantic large whale take reduction violations, and some undersized snapper that they were able to get over our way too, and so that work has definitely been appreciative and helping us with the cause here.

This is what I wanted to mention just briefly about IUU, and our efforts, and where we've changed a lot of stuff. If you go in the briefing book, and actually click on that link of the field DNA testing, it's a pretty neat article we have out. You can go to our main website as well. We have a lot of news stories, recent ones, out there. We've been working with FIU, down in Florida here, and we have a pretty neat DNA testing, using PCR, to do on-the-site sampling and identification of what seafood it is.

When it's coming in, big containers from overseas, we're doing a sub-sample of those containers, to figure out, hey, is this seafood coming in properly, and do they have the right paperwork, and is this legally allowed to come in, and we work with Fish and Wildlife, through CITES, FDA,

Customs and Border Patrol, all this. You know, we all work together to test this out, and so we've been doing a lot of that.

Just to give you an idea, we had a recent, a couple months ago -- Working with our authorities in Brazil, we caught over twelve tons of Caribbean red snapper trying to come into the market here illegally, and we stopped forty tons of Caribbean snapper in Brazil, before it even came into the U.S., and so it's that type of work. We had a recent case with illegal tuna getting brought in, and sold as well, in some domestic seafood markets, and so all that is getting taken care of here, and that's where our presence is.

The picture on the right, we just had IUU Day. For those of you that don't know, that was on June 5th, and so we highlighted it with some efforts. That picture is actually a snapshot on the Texas-Mexico border, but it shows we do all ports of entry. Our folks on the east coast are in, you know, Savannah, Fort Lauderdale, Miami, and even West Palm now, and Jacksonville, are becoming higher areas of ports of seafood coming in that we're working with our partners, and looking at seafood, and so some good awareness there, and you can see what we're up to.

A couple of recent cases that I thought were noteworthy to highlight to you since last time we talked to you. Some of you may be familiar, and we had one case that we worked with our partners at the Department of Justice, and it went criminal, and this is a false statements case. This was up in South Carolina. There was a commercial fisherman and dealer that he ignored the trip reports, ignored daily quotas. What he was doing was having his one boat go out, exceed that limit, come back in, transfer some of that catch onto another boat that wasn't even fishing, and he falsified records.

The tip actually initiated with South Carolina DNR, and then it started our way in the investigation. We ended up doing interviews with the subject. He lied to us, and so it went to trial. It was a three-day trial, you see on there, and he was convicted of three felony convictions. We even had -- There was a SERO staff member that was integral in providing testimony, and so that was definitely appreciative too, giving background in the biology of the fish, but he ended up catching three-times the limit of grouper and one-and-a half-times the limit of tilefish. Currently, we're awaiting sentencing, to get the final outcome of that, but that one is definitely protecting everything you do, the fishery quotas and management, and so that was one to bring to highlight.

The one below involves stolen gear. There was a commercial buoy sword fisherman off the east coast of Florida, and his gear was taken. He went out, and, you know, had it drifting, had it soaking, and he came back out, and it was gone. He couldn't figure out where it was going. He actually posted messages on his own, on some social media, and it came across that there was someone in the Bahamas that had the gear, and you can see the picture there. It was almost used as decoration in front of the house, but we were able to locate the gear.

We worked with him. He ended up pressing charges on that, and it was found in the Bahamas, and returned, and there was a \$1,000 NOVA, Notice of Violation, that was issued to the person who took the gear, knowingly, thinking it wasn't allowed where it was supposed to be, and took the gear and brought it back, and so that was a little unusual. A different case, but, you know, we're supporting the fishermen, when we can, when we get cases of stolen gear.

On here, on the upper-right picture, you see all the snapper. That is a commercial trip off the east coast of Florida. We ended up doing a boarding, and came across there that the commercial trip limit was exceeded. There was a couple of fish hidden in a cooler that weren't accounted for when we came in. We offered to bring the fish over and get a certified weight. The fisherman declined it, and so we ended up seizing the catch, you know, and, when we do that, we go to the three highest bidders.

That money goes back into the Treasury after that, but there was a couple other violations on top of the trip limit, the fish hidden, and there was J-hooks used on the gear. They didn't have turtle mitigation, and you add all that up, and that ended up being a \$12,700 NOVA that was issued to this commercial fisherman, and so that was on the east coast of Florida.

The bottom one is more just lumping together and showing where our effort -- We talked earlier about our priorities and focus, where we can go, and so definitely protected areas, sanctuary resources, whether it's Gray's Reef, Monitor, down in the Keys, you know, and we're trying to get out there. That picture on the left is actually there was a commercial fisherman in Edisto, the Edisto area. He was fishing with expired permits, and so that was a little over a \$5,000 violation that he received.

In the Keys, we have a slew of illegal fishing all the time we come across. Just to give an example, there was a recreational boat in one of the SPAs, and it was actually Sombrero, that was tied up. They were anchored. There was buoys everywhere, but they were anchored anyways, and they were fishing inside. This is just one boat, with four people, and they had over thirty-three fish total, and so they had twenty-three yellowtails, and most of them were undersized. They had mangroves, and they had grunts. They got a \$7,500 fine on that Notice of Violation.

The ATBAs, the areas to be avoided, that's the graphic on the right, and it may be a little hard to see on there, but those red dots are actually a vessel track of big merchant vessels, container vessels, and so that area is closed off to protect the corals. When large vessels come into that area, we're going to pursue those, to try to keep the coral safe. In this case, those red dots -- This boat came all the way down south, and they ended up going close to 150 nautical miles, in the closure area the whole time, and that ended up being the \$7,500 NOVA as well, and so that's where a lot of our resources go, is to protect the sanctuaries, just overall, to give you a snapshot of that.

Rock shrimpers, I just wanted to put something in here, since I know it's been talked about, and this will be brought up later this week, and so just giving you an idea of what we see on our side. Those two snapshots on their left -- That green shade area is Oculina. That's a vessel track of a rock shrimp, and so what our folks, our VMS techs, are monitoring when they're here looking at it, and we're trying to see if they're transiting or if they're fishing in the area.

There's been talk about them fishing on the line or not. We can see where they are. All the colors denote different speed, and so, in some cases where you see them going east to west across the closed area, that's a transit. We can see that pretty easily. It's quick across the point, but, once you get into those red icons, that's the vessel slowing down, and so are they trawling? Are they configuring their doors, or maybe doing something else? That's when we try to get eyes on the scene.

That picture on the right is we actually work with the Coast Guard, and FWC at times as well, and we'll do flyovers and get verification of fishing activity in the area, and so it is harder on the area you close it. The more narrow it is, as far as enforceability goes, it's hard for us to verify what is going on, if that boat is fishing right on the line, but this is a way that we can go out there and do it, and so we kind of have to use a combination of both of that.

I know, if the Oculina area does get expanded, the shrimp area -- Right now, it's at five-minute pings when they transit, and, since this will still be in the closed area, I just wanted to make you aware that that reporting will stay, and so just keep an eye out. I don't know if vendors will adjust that, with their payment plans, or how that's handled, but that pinging will continue to be in there if that amendment moves forward.

A couple of reminders I wanted to put up, just with the summer fishing catching on here. I know the region just put out a notice, and you'll be talking later, and the recreational red snapper season just got announced. That'll be a two-day season, that you see there.

A couple other closures are coming up here soon, and I wanted to put this as a reminder, because I know South Carolina recently enacted some new legislation that they have different bag limits, and allowances, but just to note that that is in state waters only. That does not apply to federal waters, and so for tilefish, and for gag, just be aware of what your bag and allotments are, and as well as Bahamas. With the fishing activity kicking up in the summertime, just a reminder, and we get a lot of folks that will zoom out for the day and come back, especially down in Florida.

Just to be clear, you can do it online, through the Click2Clear system, but you do have to declare them with the Bohemians, before you start fishing, and follow their bag limits, and follow our bag limits.

On the way back, you can come back with fillets. You have to make sure the skin stays on, so we can identify what it is, and how many, but you can't stop along the way. It's just a straight transit back into port, and so just a general awareness. Know your boundaries, and have your descender device. That still continues to be one of the main violations that we come across in the recreational side up and down the South Atlantic. There are folks not having a descender device rigged and ready to use, and undersized possession, and so just know what you're doing before you go out fishing.

Next slide, and I think there's one more. I put our hotline, and we always get this one up here, and so we always welcome any tips, and this can be anonymous, and just to show any examples, so you can see it, because we always put it up, to see that we do take these and run with it.

There was a recent case we had up in North Carolina, where there was a dolphin stranding, and someone reported it to us as -- You know, through the Marine Mammal Stranding Network. When our folks got out there, we found out that head was actually cut off, decapitated off, and so we were trying to figure out who did that. We used our hotline. We put out a reward, and it was a \$20,000 reward for that. We put flyers out, and so that's how we use our hotline, if you see that, to kind of spread the word between folks and industry.

You know, essentially, if you see something, say something, and we will run down what we can, and respond back to you. It is a voicemail system, but we do get back to you, the duty agent that's

on there, and so I just wanted to still make sure everyone knows that we have that number, and I believe that's it, and so I don't know if there's time, or, if there are any questions, I'm happy to take them, and I'll be online virtually for the majority of the time throughout the week too, and so please hit me up offline too as well if you need something. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Matt. Does anybody have any questions for Matt? Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Matt. Just one question, going back to the rock shrimp slide. You didn't have any violations to report, did you? There was no violations that you could tell us about?

MR. WALIA: No, and not in those. Like I said, we can see activity, and maybe it looks questionable. Like I said, in these slides, I wanted to show you what we see, right, and so there can be a boat fishing up and down the line, and as they cut across, but, until we get eyes on the scene, on the water, it's really hard for us to be 100 percent and pursue that, and so, in these cases, no, there were no violations. I can't speak if we had some in the past, and I would have to look it up in our case system and see, but these two were not violations, no.

MR. HULL: Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Matt, did I hear you say that, right now, it's sort of among your highest priorities to be doing like SIMP enforcement, and other importing enforcement?

MR. WALIA: Related to IUU imports, yes. Yes, that's definitely been a big focus.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other questions for Matt?

MS. IVERSON: I just wanted to let the council know, and thank you, Matt, for that interesting report, that we now have printed brochures on bringing fish back from the Bahamas, working directly with FWC, and this brochure is available online, but we also have hard copies, and we are working with law enforcement, both at the state and federal level, to distribute these to fishermen, when they do boardings, et cetera. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I appreciate that shoutout, and we actually have folks taking them to the Bahamas, and handing them out to HOAs there as well, and so we had a whole box go down there recently.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. That's great news to hear. Well, thank you, Matt. Next up is Lt. Pease with the Coast Guard report, and so Lieutenant.

LT. PEASE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good afternoon, everyone. It's good to be back. Thank you for having me back. I missed the March meeting, for some reason. I didn't -- I don't know how that fell off my calendar, and so I do apologize, and so this enforcement brief will be for the last six months, since December. Again, for those of you who don't know me, Lt. Tom Pease, from Coast Guard District 7 in Miami, from the enforcement branch, and I'm the LMR officer for D7.

All right, and so there have been no EEZ incursions in the last six months. We attribute this to increased presence in our various threat vectors across the area of responsibility, both Coast Guard and allied forces.

Here's the total breakdown for the last six months for total fishing vessel boardings across D7, and then our six individual sectors, and so, since December, we've performed 194 domestic fisheries boardings, resulting in three significant violation fishery cases, mainly safety, and nothing having to do with overfishing, or illegal catch or anything like that, but mainly safety terminations, and, in particular, we did have three 75/25 manning violations. We had a few recently, in the last couple of weeks, out of the St. Petersburg AOR. I know it doesn't necessarily apply to this council. However, we had three in two days in the Sector St. Pete AOR.

Sector Key West continues to lead the charge with our marine protected resources, assisting the Turtle Hospital a total of fourteen times in the last sixteen months, with either distressed turtles or, you know, that have been injured somehow, most likely by being struck by other vessels and/or being entangled, and so Sector Key West continues to lead that charge for us.

Then, since I've taken over this position this past October, I did provide four goals that I wanted to see happen in the 7th Coast Guard District. They are there in front of you. I am going touch on some milestones, or progress, thus far. So, currently D7 is on pace to surpass the number of enforcement boardings performed in 2024. There were a total of 363 fisheries boardings across the district. The current pace in FY25 is thirty-one boardings per month, on average.

D7 units only need to perform an average of twenty-eight boardings per month, for the rest of the fiscal year, to exceed this number, which I do foresee, especially in the Key West AOR. They are killing it down there, and Sector Jacksonville is right on their heels for this fiscal year, and so that's good to see, and this is all within our missile metrics and numbers.

Our commercial fishing vessel safety decal program, this is something I did when I was a LMR boarding officer up in the 1st Coast Guard District. For about ten years, I performed that mission, and this was really big. It really helped us with reducing the amount of safety violations that we saw across the district, and it's something that I wanted our six sectors to promote in D7. They have been, and, while there's still a fair amount of safety violations being noted each month across D7, the numbers are down compared to that of FY24, and so that's some good progress that our folks are making across the AOR.

We wanted to increase pulse operations across all sectors. This year, Sectors Charleston, Jacksonville, San Juan, and St. Pete have all performed pulse operations, within the last six months, resulting in increased boarding numbers and significant violations noted, and, lastly, increase the throughput at our regional fisheries training centers.

Being in D7, our team in D7 attends both the Southeast Regional Fisheries Training Center in Charleston and the Gulf Regional Fisheries Training Center in New Orleans, and I'm happy to report that each LMR boarding officer class at SRFTC and GRFTC have been full this fiscal year. It does come down to the wire, admittedly. I do get an email from the CO, or XO, asking, hey, can you solicit, and we have, you know, eight spots left, and those eight spots get filled within about a twenty-four to thirty-six-hour period after we solicit for folks to attend those classes.

SRFTC is holding a pilot course. We have an LMR mission manager course that is being introduced to the Coast Guard. SRFTC is hosting that pilot course this week. On Wednesday and Thursday, I will be in attendance virtually, and so I am heading back to Miami tomorrow, to prep for that on Wednesday and Thursday, and so I'll be happy to report how that class was, and how - You know, the delivery of that course, and the future of that course, at September's meeting, and the last slide, and that is my email, and contact information, for any questions or concerns throughout the year.

Email is the most preferred method of getting ahold of me. However, I will answer my cell phone after I am done working for the day. I do work in a secure space in Miami, and all the electronics go in a box outside the door, and they get retrieved on my way out the door, and so, if I'm not picking up, and it's between the hours of seven and three, or seven and four, that's most likely the reason why, and so email is always the best way to get ahold of me, and so, with that, I'll take any questions that the council may have.

MS. MURPHEY: Does anybody have any questions for Lieutenant Pease? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I just want to add that I was boarded in the EEZ, just a few days ago and the boarding officers were wonderful, and it was a really good inspection.

LT. PEASE: I'm happy to hear that. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Anything else for the Lieutenant? All right. Well, thank you so much, Lieutenant. We'll move on to our liaisons, and I did neglect to introduce them at the beginning, and so I apologize for that, but we have Sonny Gwin here for the Mid-Atlantic, and we have C.J. Sweetman here for the Gulf, and so thank you guys for being here, and I'm sorry I didn't introduce y'all at the very beginning, but I'll go ahead, and let's turn it over to C.J. to tell us about the happenings at the Gulf Council.

DR. SWEETMAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. As she mentioned, I'm C.J. Sweetman. In my day job, I work for Florida Fish and Wildlife. We've had a couple of council meetings, actually, since we last reported back to you all, and so I'll hit on -- I'll do a little off-the-cuff here relative to this liaison report. We had a meeting just last week.

First, I'll talk about some final action items. The Gulf Council went final on Spanish mackerel, modifying catch limits and accountability measures, based on the most recent stock assessment, ultimately choosing to reduce the catch limit to about 9.6 million pounds landed weight and modifying the accountability measures, by allowing the Regional Administrator closure authority for commercial and recreational fishing if the stock ACLs exceeded in the previous fishing year and the stock is being reached, or projected to be reached, in that current year, and so that framework amendment is being transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce as soon as possible.

Shallow-water grouper, and so, in the Gulf, the shallow-water grouper complex consists of scamp, yellowmouth, black, and yellowfin grouper. We had a stock assessment on scamp and yellowmouth. It's not overfished, and not undergoing overfishing, but stocks -- The catch levels are declining across all the sectors, and so, ultimately, based on the SSC's recommendation, we reduced catch limits by about 54 percent, for both sectors, and implemented a recreational fishing

season from July 1 to the end of December, and that is also being transmitted over to the Secretary for consideration and implementation.

The council is actively simultaneously working on a broader amendment for shallow-water grouper that would potentially considering splitting out the complex a bit, putting more -- Different regulations associated with each of those species right now.

We got an announcement -- Another final action took place, in our April meeting, on lane snapper. Over the last several years, we've exceeded our catch limits in both the commercial and recreational sectors, resulting in early season closures, and, ultimately, it was decided to analyze that a simple minimum size limit increase, from eight to ten inches, would stop these closures, and so the council ultimately moved forward with that one, and so that is also being passed over to the Secretary for review and implementation.

We did get an update on the 2025 recreational gag grouper fishing season. Last year, it was only about fifteen days, and we did have a small quota overage this year, about 88,000 pounds, and so the accountability measure of that fishery is you reduce it from the following season's quota, and, based on projections that were given, we're looking at a fourteen or a twenty-day season in the 2025 year.

We had a very healthy discussion about President Trump's executive orders on Unleashing Prosperity Through Deregulation and Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness, and so I know you guys will be talking about that later on, and I'm happy to give my insight from what was talked about at the Gulf Council. We are ultimately going to pass that on to our advisory panels, for their consideration, and they're going to report back to the council for our August meeting, before that letter is going to be sent to the Secretary at the end of September.

We had deepwater grouper, and just a couple more topics for me here. Deepwater grouper, and so this consists of in the Gulf, and it's another complex, warsaw, snowy, yellowedge and speckled hind. We got a stock assessment on yellowedge grouper, and it ultimately determined that it's not overfished, but it is experiencing overfishing, and so, therefore, based on the SSC's recommendations, we reduced the catch limit by about 50 percent.

This has historically been a commercial fishery. About 96 percent of that harvest goes to them, with a de facto allocation over to the recreational side, but, given that there was actually no allocation set-aside for the recreational, now that we're implementing these new catch limits, we ultimately had to set some recreational allocation there, and the council chose to allocate about 10 percent, a little more than 10 percent, to the recreational sector, and about 90 percent towards the commercial sector. We're going to hold three in-person workshops, and one virtual hearing, before ultimately trying to take final action on this item in August.

The last item I'll talk about was for red grouper. There was an emergency rule that was requested, at the April council meeting, based on results from a positive stock assessment that would significantly increase the catch limits for subsequent fishing years, but, based on this positive assessment, the council requested that these catch limits be implemented in 2025, so the public can start to harvest some of that allowable catch.

We got an update, from our NOAA Fisheries colleagues, basically saying that they are actively working on that, and hoping to implement that as soon as possible, and they do not project a seasonal closure to occur, which is all good news there. Then the council will, obviously, be working on a broader amendment, as it relates to that particular topic, based on that stock assessment. I'm happy to take any questions, Madam Chair.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, C.J. Does anybody have any questions for C.J.? All right. Seeing none, but I think, C.J., you're here all week, and so, you know, be checking in with him, if you got anything to ask about the Gulf, and so I'll turn it over to Sonny.

MR. GWIN: Thank you, Madam Chair, and it's good to see everybody. The Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council met in April, April 8 through 10. Some of the highlights was, in April, we approved several changes to the recreational fisheries management programs for summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish, through the recreational measure setting process framework addendum joint action with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the ISFMP Policy Board.

We also reviewed scoping comments received on the recreational sector separation and data collection amendment and agreed to address the issue of sector separation and data collection separately, in a joint action with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission ISFMP policy board, also.

We reviewed the 2025 Mid-Atlantic State of the Ecosystems Report and the 2025 EAFM Risk Assessment Summary report. We completed a required five-year review of the essential fish habitat provisions for all fishery management plans, received an update on development of the Joint Mid-Atlantic New England omnibus alternative gear marking framework adjustment, and we presented the Ricks E. Savage award to Captain Adam Nowalsky, and, if anybody knows Adam Nowalsky, he will truly be missed on the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council.

All the presentations, brief materials, motions, and recordings are available on our April 2025 meeting page, and, also, we met last week, which I have a few things for that also. We met June 3 through 5, in Virginia Beach, Virginia, and we discussed the spiny dogfish accountability measures modification framework, meeting number one.

We also set specifications for blueline tilefish, and golden tilefish, and we also updated on the -- We were updated on the Northeast Fisheries Science Center cost survey for commercial fishing businesses. We had a review and report on unmanaged commercial landings, and we had a presentation of the 2025 Modular Ocean Model, the MOM. I don't know if anybody has seen that, but it's pretty interesting.

Also, we set the -- Let's see. We reviewed progress and provided guidance to the SSC subgroup on the next steps on the white paper for separation of OFLs and ABCs for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass in the commercial and rec sectors. We had a presentation for the offshore wind monitoring standards from NOAA. We set the 2026 chub mackerel specifications, adopted 2025 butterfish specifications, set 2025 longfin squid specifications, and we also set the Atlantic surf clam and ocean quahog specifications, and that's all I have.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Sonny. Anybody have any questions for Sonny? All right. No questions for Sonny, and thank you guys. Sonny is here all week as well, right, Sonny, and so we can always hit you up. Okay. Thanks. Next is our staff report by John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: All right. Thank you, Trish. I've got a few things I've highlighted on here to bring your attention to. It's a pretty long report. You can read, and so I won't read it to you. We did have the CMOD meetings, and remember that's council member training, held in April, the first of May, and it went pretty well. The folks that were there I think got a lot out of it, a lot of positive feedback. It's good to see how many other councils are sharing similar issues, and also to get some interaction with other council members.

Best fishing practices operation is busy as ever. I will highlight a few things. I'm really excited to see that I think the program is making real progress, when you start getting invitations from organizations and groups that say, hey, come, and we want your program, and we want you to share the training with us, or share the information, and they were invited to have a booth in the Next Generation Angler Zone at the new event, the Florida Saltwater Expo, in Daytona, and so another opportunity to reach out to the youngest of anglers and share important messaging about handling fish, and they continue to conduct shows all over the place, up and down the coast. Of course, we're looking forward to ICAST, which is a big event for the operation.

148 new BFP MVPs, and that's pretty exciting. That's a lot of people learning this, and, you know, we always view this as snowballing, and so that's 148 people that are going to talk to other people and spread the word about the importance of good fishing practices, and another invitation, and they're going to have a workshop planned with the U.S. Coast Guard at the training center in Charleston, to start sharing the message there, and so this continues to spread those tendrils and reach out all kinds of places.

The Sea Grant Reef Fish Fellowship continues to also be a great program that we have. Recently, we had two articles published by our fellow, addressing fishing practices, release issues, that sort of thing, and it's really great opportunities for that, and they're underway now with the South Atlantic Release Rodeo, which is a Sea Grant operation to try and, again, spread the word about releases. They're giving out some prizes to people who submit information on released fish, just to drive up the interest, and so that program has been off to a great start, with a lot of participation, which has been really nice.

We often do media trips, which is a good way to get the word out and, again, spread it, talk to the people who talk to people. We had a recent trip there on June 9, with a number of pros and media-type people, and that went really well.

I do want to raise, as a question for you guys, because we've had the Sea Grant intern for a couple of years. We've had a couple of different folks in there, and they keep finding great folks to do this job, but we're wondering if the council would support sending a letter to the National Sea Grant Office and the South Atlantic Sea Grant directors, all four of them, expressing how valuable the Reef Fish Fellowship collaboration has been for the council, and so, if you support that, Christina would probably spearhead this and be interested in, you know, some of your personal observations that she could factor into the letter, and she may reach out to some of you, to find out what you think about it, and so I'll just pause here and see if this is something the council supports.

MS. MURPHEY: I think I'm already seeing heads shaking, but go ahead, Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm glad you brought that up, because I was going to ask you, and is this sort of in response to sort of the danger the Sea Grant budget is in, and sort of saying how it helps us, or is this just you would have done it anyway? Either way, I think it's a good idea. I was just curious.

MS. MURPHEY: Christina is coming up to answer that.

MS. WEIGAND: I would say, with the current budget situation, it certainly doesn't hurt, but I think we would have posed this question to the council anyway. The sort of fellowship structure with Sea Grant and the councils was meant to be a pilot study, with the hope that, other times Sea Grant and council priorities align, that we could do a similar sort of fellowship structure, and so, if the council has found it valuable, it's helpful to sort of have that formally on the record.

MS. MURPHEY: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I agree. I think it's valuable, and maybe part of our letter is talking about how we hope it's not just a pilot anymore, and we hope that it's going to be a long-term commitment.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other comments? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I just want to agree with everything that's been said.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. I think the answer is, yes, let's write a letter, and I just want to -- While I've got the mic, I just wanted to say that the South Atlantic guys all came down to North Carolina, or up to North Carolina, and actually did their training for our port agents, and I think I heard a lot of positive feedback. They all enjoyed it, and, again, that's that snowball effect, and, granted these guys are -- These guys are seeing people out in, you know, their jobs every day, and so I would like to suggest, if other states are interested, I think that's another good source of training for your port agents in your state. Amy.

MS. DUKES: They did it for us in South Carolina as well, and so I'm not sure about other states, but I would also strongly encourage it, and then the letter is just another testimony of the great success between Ashley and David and Greyson, and how all that's come together, and really highlighting all of their efforts as well, and so thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and, I mean, we love them in North Carolina. We love you guys in North Carolina. We've got a great relationship with this crew here with North Carolina, and so, yes, we want to keep them coming.

MR. CARMICHAEL: All right. Thanks. Appreciate that, and I'll carry on. BFP Evaluation Workshop, trying to see how the program is going, and look for a report at our next meeting. The fourth in the series of What it Means to e has recently been completed with Council Member Tim Griner, and so the plan here is to show you that. Are you ready, Tim? Where is he? There he is, and so pardon your indulgence.

(The What it Means to Me video with Tim Griner was shown, but not transcribed.)

MR. CARMICHAEL: It is Tim's last meeting here, and so we truly enjoyed his time on the council, and so I think it was great to be able to show that video today, and get that done, and it just shows you how great this video series is that staff is putting together. I'm blown away by the work they do every time I see these. It's a great series of videos, and they've got plans to keep doing it, and, you know, I think it really helps get our story across.

It will be really helpful things as we go into the 50th anniversary of Magnuson, you know, and I see things like this as being really the foundation of the message that we try to give about our fisheries, and so thank you, Tim, for letting us show that.

All right, and so I will move on. The website always underway, and it's a never-ending battle to keep it up-to-date, and fresh, and all the information that's created on there, but Nick does a great job, and, as always, there's a number of things that are being added, being updated, being revised, and we've always got new ideas for things going on the website, and it just becomes a better and better resource all the time.

Looking ahead, the Lines of Communication: Conversations with the Council, remember that's our effort to go out and meet with fishermen, to really get, you know, feedback from them on what their issues are. Staff has been working very hard to put it together, practicing with the APs, getting a lot of feedback on the approach.

I just want to point out the first meetings will be in Georgia, the first week in November, and then the first week of February 2026 in North Carolina, and so, you all from Georgia and North Carolina, we'll be reaching out about setting up some practice runs, and real hands-on training, for you guys later in the year, so that you know what you're going to be expected to do, and how to do it with great success, and we're certainly looking forward to this opportunity to meet with all our fishermen.

The Marine Resources Education Program training is going to have workshops this year, November 17 through 2, and so a great opportunity for folks to get involved. Then the Citizen Science Program, as always, has a lot going on. The 2024 annual report is available. It's a great way to look at that and see what the program has been up to.

I'm really excited though to highlight that citizen science data was presented at the red snapper SEDAR, SEDAR 90, and has been recommended for use in the assessment. That is an incredible milestone, because, when we set out on this path, the goal was to get data that's collected well enough, with a good enough design, that it can be accepted to be used in stock assessment, and so this is a major success, to have this information being considered within the stock assessment.

It's what we've been working for, and it's really good, and, you know, not just for the program, but to be able to provide information on discarded fish, because there's no other way to get that. We don't have the observers in our region, and are unlikely to get them in the future, but fishermen are seeing the fish they throw back. If we get the information from them, we can fill in that critical hole in our assessments. It's well-deserved, and it has taken a lot of work, and a long time coming and so it's just spectacular.

I'll point out that, you know, I mentioned BFP, and the next Generation Angler CitSci was there as well, and there's collaboration between these two teams on a practically every outreach thing that we do. They do kind of go hand-in-hand, and it's really great to continue that.

FISHstory, as I mentioned, goes on, and lots of red snapper measurements, and king mackerel measurements, have been coming in from that program, and so really getting great information out of that historical information.

The SMILE project continues, but another really big highlight, and I know quite a few of you are aware the ASMFC gives out Awards of Excellence every year, and, this spring, the SciFish team was given an Award of Excellence, recognizing the work that they've done, and so SciFish is a -- It's a program for developing citizen science apps.

It's very flexible, and modular, and it really is reducing a lot of the development time, and the cost, and these guys have been working for more years than I care to remember, since the idea first popped up about doing this, and it's been a true collaborative through ACCSP, and you see all the folks, both our staff, NC DMF staff, Georgia staff, Rhode Island, NOAA Fisheries, and ACCSP folks, all working on that, and it's really a who's-who that have got their fingers in making data together better across the region, and so it's really great to have those guys recognized and get the Award of Excellence this year, and so I think another round of applause for our staff, as all of your agency staff as well who are involved in that. That brings me to the end of the staff report.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, John. Any questions for John? Then I think, Mike, you're going to talk about your evaluation, right? Okay, and so I'm going to turn it over to Mike for that.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I just wanted to give a brief reminder, and all of you received an email, and, in that email, there was a link to a survey that we're using to facilitate the discussion later on this week about the snapper grouper fishery management unit.

We have seventeen species that we're going through, ten evaluation criteria for each species, and we're trying to get through it in a matter of two hours, and so we're trying to grease the wheels for this discussion, and be able to really hit the important parts, the ones that people may have some disagreements about, and also be able to identify those that are pretty unanimous among the group of what you all think needs to be included in an amendment for consideration of changing how it is in the management plan, and so can you please take a look at that email, if you have not already done so, and complete that survey. If you have any questions about how to do it, or the information that's in there, feel free to email me, or grab me during a break, and I would be happy to answer any questions that you have.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank, you Mike. I think everybody did get that yesterday, and so okay. What's next? The CCC meeting. John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Me again, yes, and so the Council Coordination Committee met recently, a few weeks ago, up in New England, May 13 through 15, and it was hosted by the New England Council. All the briefing materials are available at the council's website, fisherycouncils.org. If you're not aware of that, check it out. It's got information from all the past CCC meetings, as well

as various other pieces of information of national interest, and also a calendar that shows all the council meetings and such that are occurring over the course of a year.

If I sum up this meeting in one word, it is right there, change. Change is coming to our way of doing business, and the NMFS leadership at the CCC really didn't pull any punches, in terms of conveying to us, the CCC, what was coming and what we are going to have to do as councils and as the CCC.

It was exciting that the new Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries was announced, and he was there at the meeting, Eugenio Pinero Soler from Puerto Rico. Some of you guys may know him. He served nine years, I think, as the Caribbean Fishery Management Council chair, and he was around -- I got to know him in the early days of doing SEDAR down there. He was council chair at that time.

He thoroughly expressed strong support for the councils, and one of the things he said I think was really relevant, and important, is the councils are where science meets reality, and I think that sums up his impression of what the councils do, and the important role that they play, and I think, as we go through this, and think about some of the changes that are coming, I think those words are as important as they've ever been, but I certainly feel like you guys feel, that you are where reality comes to roost, and that's for sure.

One of the things we did as a new item at the council, at the CCC meeting, was round-robin updates. Each of the eight councils gave a brief presentation of the things going on in their region. We talked about successes, challenges, and priorities, and there was some common themes. I would definitely encourage you to take a chance -- To take some time and go look at those presentations.

They're very interesting, and you can learn a lot about our nation's fisheries, and about each region, just by looking at them. Everyone struggles with science and analysis. Everyone struggles with the processes, with procedural flexibility, trying to respond timely. There's concerns nationwide about declining fisheries and fishing communities, changes in ecosystems, and certainly just a recent development, although it's been there a little bit, but I would say definitely getting a much sharper point, is declining outlook for future science and analysis.

I thought it was a really strong point made by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, and I think most of you all are probably pretty aware of the vast amount of data that they have, the incredible observer coverage, the thoroughness of their independent surveys, catch reporting, et cetera, and David Witherell, the executive director, made the comment that they believe their management success is directly linked to the agency investment in science and management within their region, and I thought that was very, very appropriate comment to be coming from there, and it really puts things into perspective.

We talked about the Executive Order 14276, the Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness. The order listed 180 days for the councils to submit a response to the agency, and, when the agency provided the councils that letter, they had actually shortened that deadline a little bit, into August, and so the councils requested -- September 1 is when they had given the deadline, but that was shorting a good six weeks. Now, five councils meet between the end of August and the end of September, and so the councils said, you know, please give us longer, so that we have the

opportunity to talk about this at multiple meetings, because our plan was that we're going to talk about it at this meeting, introduce it, and we want to finalize our comments in September.

That September 1 deadline wouldn't allow us to do that, and so the CCC made that request, and NMFS came through and has given us till October 1, and so that will give the councils all a chance to talk about this twice, and so I thought that was a useful accommodation the agency gave the councils in response to the request.

Cisco Warner has retired, and Evan Howell provided the update, and is serving in Cisco's role as sort of the overall science representative, and a lot of you all know Evan from coming over and working in the MRIP program the last few years.

I'll go through a couple of topics that were highlighted. You know, we had asked for information on what happens with the council research priorities, and Evan advised that they should be considered dynamic. We update those as needed, and we do ours every two years, and we'll look at it at this meeting. They should align with core responsibilities and really highlight and focus on must-do research and information that's needed, and that's reflecting the changing directions we're dealing with.

A lot of support for cooperative research continues. We discussed the MRIP-FES evaluation. It is on track to meet the schedule that's been laid out. The personnel and resources continue, and the latest update I saw said to expect the new FES process to be rolled out in 2026, as expected, and they hope to have some progress on getting the information completed from the pilot study in a few weeks, and certainly by this fall. There will be a peer review, and then we can anticipate having the new findings probably early in 2026, and so progress is continuing, and so fingers are crossed that they won't lose more personnel, and slow that down, because certainly, in our region, that's critically important.

One thing they did say is they're not going to transition to publishing monthly estimates. As you know, now they're in waves that are two-month periods, but, because of all the other issues going on, and the resources, they're not going to move to publishing the monthly values.

This was the final slide that Evan presented, and I added the word "change", for focus, because this was getting into some of the big changes that we're facing, and it was really how is NOAA Fisheries science going to align with management to get things done. I think it was -- You know, certainly folks appreciated Evan's straight talk here, and the reality that's coming before us, and I think there that first bullet is very important.

You can't plan for sustained current science and management of the numerous stocks and complexes we have, because things are going to have to change. We're going to have to change how we manage our fisheries, and it's going to have impacts to our staff, fisheries, and fish communities. We want to balance national consistency, science and management, and engagement with councils is critical, and we certainly appreciate that.

Change in how they develop new science and management framework is going to require some balance of various requirements, but there was a quite a bit of discussion on the final bullet here at the CCC meeting, where it says "increased uncertainty should (can) not automatically equal decreases in harvest", and the council representatives pointed out that, based on the guidelines that

we've operated under, in most cases, councils have created ABC control rules that actually do just that, so that, when there's greater uncertainty, it does result in decreases in harvest.

It was pointed out that's going to require some change in thinking, some change in approaches, if we're going to actually successfully get there, and so, you know, one step is the councils and the agency saying this, and another step is going to be getting scientific recommendations that are true to this principle, and I don't think the agency has fully figured out how we get there, but I think it does tell us the direction we're heading, when we get a comment like this at a meeting like the CCC.

We received a budget update, and it really hasn't changed since then. They didn't have the final allotment for the councils for fiscal year 2025. The budget processes are delayed for 2026 and 2027, and there was no word then on when we would get further funding. Just in the last week, there has been some progress, with some funding starting to trickle through. We're optimistic that funding is coming our way soon, through our regional grants office, and so it won't be complete funding for 2025, but we are expecting maybe another 25 or 30 percent, based on some of the money that has come through for other councils, and so that's certainly encouraging.

Kelly Denit provided a presentation on aligning priorities. We were talking about -- One of the topics here was how do the councils and NMFS basically keep on the same page, in terms of things that we're working on, and it seemed to be pretty timely, given the things that are developing within the agency.

This is another place where the highlight is change, and, again, this is Kelly's slide of topics that were presented there. We cannot continue to manage 500-plus stocks and complexes we have in FMPs. I think that's a pretty strong dose of medicine there, to come right out and tell us that we just can't manage all those stocks.

There's going to be impacts to their staff, fisheries, and communities, changing how we manage fisheries. We have to balance the natural consistency and operability with regional flexibility, similar to what we heard from Evan. They too are looking to continue engagement with the councils, and then the final bullet there really brings it home.

We are likely going to need to take increased risk, and strategically choose where we take that increased risk, and so this was the NMFS leadership telling us, as councils, you may have to accept higher risk to have our seafood competitiveness high, like it's desired, and deal with the realities of agency resources that are coming.

I would say that Kelly's presentation, and Evan's presentation, generated a lot of discussion, and it was some of the best discussion I've seen at a CCC meeting in a while, and I think everyone appreciated the straight talk.

Kelly presented this, about a way of prioritizing stocks and complexes for science and management, and it was incredibly timely, considering that that's a topic that we're going to talk about here today, or at least this week, and probably not today, but, you know, this week, and she presented this idea of trying to categorize your stocks, where you have -- You know, relative to their risk, and their value, and you've got high risk and high value, low risk and low value, and

how you approach risk, and management, and, you know, even what is expected as far as science could vary for each one of these different quadrants of this figure.

That's something that we, as councils, need to get into, and probably work with our advisors and our SSC's, to say how does this work for our stocks, and where do our stocks rank within this, and so it was good to see that a lot of things we're talking about were coming up through the CCC meeting and the agency leadership.

I'll go on with just some of the regular business then. The Science Coordination Subcommittee, the meeting of all the councils' SSCs, they actually delayed that until 2027, due to the funding outlook. We had hoped to meet in 2026, but the theme will be strategies for robust and efficient fisheries science and management.

Now, they came up with this thing before we got those couple of presentations at the CCC meeting, and so you can see that, in a lot of places, people are already thinking about those topics, and how are we doing more, and how are we going to be more efficient. They want to prioritize high-value data analyses of limited resources. I was impressed to see that on there, given they didn't see those other presentations before they prepared this.

Bridging the gap between science and the realities of fishing sounds a lot like the science -- You know, the councils being where science meets reality, and so, again, I think a lot of our scientists are thinking in the same way, and, of course, social and economic data always is -- It's often lacking, and we need that information, I think maybe more than ever, as we try to understand how we're going to do some of these other things with less traditional fisheries data.

On a highlight, the MSA 50th anniversary is coming up in 2026, and there's a communications group of the CCC. They're working on a plan for what we're going to do to roll that out, both as individual councils and then from a national perspective, and so looking at a potential competition to design a logo, working on a communications plan of different products and how we'll get the word out, and there will be an anniversary website on the fisherycouncils.org.

Each council will develop a 50th anniversary website, as an opportunity to share information that it is doing, and what it has done over its fifty years, and looking at various print products and information we can make available to outreach events and things like that during the year.

Looking ahead at next meetings, the executive directors, last fall, agreed that we would hold one meeting -- We always held two CCC meetings a year, and we're going to do the second meeting be a webinar for the foreseeable future. We'll continue to do the major meeting in the spring, hosted by a council, and the second meeting had been in D.C., and we're going to move that to webinar. It's really seen as a cost savings, and efficiency measure, and so that will be October 15 through 16, via webinar, and it will be in the afternoons, because of the wide time zone differences across our great country.

Then, in 2026 the North Pacific is going to host. The spring meeting will be the week of May 19th, and I think that's supposed to be May 19th through 21st, and not 2021. It's 2026, in Homer, Alaska, and so definitely getting to one of the ends of our country, for sure, and then, again, we're expecting the fall meeting via webinar.

We host in 2027, and so step up and pay attention. This is a big thing. It's hard to believe that we're coming around to eight years since we hosted last. I will be looking to set a date for this meeting, probably by the fall, and so, by October 15th or 16th of this year, we will need to have a date, to let the others know when we're going to do this meeting, and, in all likelihood, expect it to be in downtown Charleston, and so it's a big thing for us, and it will be a big thing for our chair at the time, to be the host and get to run the meeting, and so, Madam Chairman, that ends my CCC report, if you would like to take any questions.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John. Anybody got questions for John? Okay. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Not a question, but can you go back to slide 10, briefly? John, great job summarizing this CCC meeting.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Which one was 10?

MR. STRELCHECK: This one is 10, and so I wanted to just share with you that both Clay and I stepped up to participate in the internal NMFS working group to flesh this concept out further, and that's been happening over the course of the last month, with Kelly Denit and team, and colleagues across the country.

We've tried to put a little bit more refinement to assessing value and risk, as well as, for each one of those quadrants, really trying to kind of lay out what that means, with regard to both science and management, and give more directionality to this. The west coast region has stepped in to do a pilot test, and kind of first step, in terms of seeing how this will work. This is not just intended to be a regional planning matrix, but actually a national planning matrix, and so I just wanted to let you know that there's a lot of positive things ongoing, and Clay and I are very engaged in this.

Then, related to, obviously, what we'll be talking about with snapper grouper this week, I appreciate the council's steps already being taken to whittle down the list of species we are managing, right, and an added layer to that will be, going forward, also what we can support from a scientific standpoint, right, and so not only is it in need of federal management, but also can we support the science that underpins, obviously, the management for those species, and so I look forward to further conversations, and our goal, I think, is to bring back a lot more details and information to the fall CCC meeting.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, Thank you, Andy. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, John, and so my question is going back to funding, and is there a simple answer as to why the councils aren't being funded fully?

MR. CARMICHAEL: The answer that we were given at the meeting was that, when they did the continuing resolution, they gave the agency, or I think it was actually NOAA, just what they call the top item number, the four-point-whatever billion dollars that NOAA gets, and there wasn't guidance, as there would often be, about how that gets spread out across all the different missions and organizations and entities within NOAA, because, you know, the continuing resolution falls back on the prior year, 2024, and none of the language on how you suspend that money that was put forth for the 2025 budget was relevant any longer, and so they were basically starting with just that number, and it sounded like less detail than would often be the case.

Brian said that they've been working it through the funding spend plan process at the agency, and trying to get all the money spread out in the proper ways, and it's just been taking a really long time. What we understand is they have been monitoring the various council funding pots, to make sure that nobody runs out of money, and that's why they've been doling it out a little bit slowly, and they've been, you know, also not doling out the whole amount, because they're not concerned what -- They still don't know what the actual final line item amount for the councils and commissions, which is how it is in the federal budget, will be, and so they've been hesitant, I guess, to over commit. They've come up short there, and so they've been trying to give us money on what they've seen as an as-needed basis, and they've been good about communicating.

Like they did reach out to us, and I don't know, and maybe it was April, or late April, and checked with all the councils, to just say, you know, are you good on funding through say the end of May, that sort of thing, and they were, you know, trying to at least keep tabs on us, and so my impression is they're doing everything they can, in good faith with the folks that we're working with, like Brian Pollack and everybody down in the grants people, to just go through this kind of unprecedented process, and, you know, just not have clear guidance, like they normally would.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, John. Anything else? Okay. I'm going to turn it over to Chip, who is going to go over the resilient fisheries projects.

DR. COLLIER: All right. Unfortunately, I'm just presenting for other folks, that did a job putting this together, and so you guys are stuck with me, but you get to see the great results of their work. At a previous council meeting, and I can't remember which one it was, we had talked about some of these resilient fisheries projects that we have going on.

We have four of them going on, and you all had requested more detailed information be included on the website, and so these four different pages are going to be describing the projects that we have proposed or ongoing right now, and so we'll start off with the first one, or let me start off asking you all a question to think about as we're going through this.

If you see anything that you feel like is missing from these, please let us know, and we can potentially incorporate it into these webpages before they go live. If you all are happy with them, we'll try to make them go live by Friday. That way, it's -- Everything is ready to go, but I wanted you all to look at them before we put them up on the webpage.

Starting off with updating fish distributions and essential fish habitat, we haven't really done a deep dive into our essential fish habitat for quite some time, and so this is one of our projects looking for resilient fisheries, and what we're going to be doing is a spatiotemporal model modeling the distribution of some of the snapper grouper species, as well as some of the more pelagic fish, the king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, dolphin, and wahoo.

You can see the timeline, over on the right side, and then the objectives of the project, and then we also have who is going to be doing the work, and so the project oversight team, the main contractors, are Jie Cao for this, with NC State, and Janet Nye with UNC. Any questions on the distribution project? Not seeing any, and so we'll go on to the next one.

This is looking at the stakeholder driven AIM workshop for the wreckfish fishery, and this will be basically updating some of the stock assessment that was done back in 2013, or 2014, for wreckfish, with data through 2012, and this will also kind of do a stakeholder-driven process, looking at what they would like to see the fishery look like, and so you can see we've initiated the project in 2024, and we have formed the project oversight team, and we have selected a contractor.

You can see the objectives for it. The contractor is Lynker, but they have teamed up with Josh Nowlis, who is kind of the person that runs AIM, but then he also has a stock assessment specialist, with Jeremy Collie, and then, also, a social scientist, with Mateja Nenadovic, and then you'll see the remainder of the project oversight team.

You so we have another project on improving communication and outreach, and this one has not been initiated yet. We're still working on the final details on this, but hopefully we're going to get it out the door soon, and start working on the request for proposals, and so I'm going to skip over the remainder of the details from that one.

Then, finally, I'll get into the program review, and this project was just recently approved, and you probably noticed, on the website, we do have two different requests for proposals for this one, and so we're hoping to have a contractor signed up, later on either this month or next month, and that is it, as far as our resilient fisheries projects. Any questions?

MS. MURPHEY: Anybody got any questions for Chip? Not seeing any, and thank you very much, Chip. I'll go ahead and turn it over, and we've got updates from National Marine Fisheries Service, and so that will be Andy and Clay, and so, Andy, if you would like to update us, that would be great.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and the link to the briefing book brings you to our protected resources summary. The one thing I'll highlight, and I'll let you read the updates in more depth, but we're working on reinitiation of a Section 7 consultation for the Southeast shrimp fishery. We presented some data, and information, along with the Science Center, at the Gulf Council's SSC related to population viability analyses for smalltooth sawfish, as well as manta ray interactions.

We plan to come back to both the Gulf Council and South Atlantic Council, at meetings later this year, to discuss the information and data before us, next steps, and just the overall, you know, Section 7 consultation that we are working on, and so I just wanted to share that.

More broadly, in terms of updates from the Southeast Region, the big thing I guess I'll note is you've, obviously, heard of the many staffing changes that are happening in the region, and so, since the last council meeting, we had early retirements offered to our employees, and we lost another eleven employees to early retirement, and so, since the beginning of the year, my staff is down twenty employees.

The reduction has not hit all of our divisions equally. The Protected Resources division is down the most. Our Fisheries division has only lost one employee in recent months, to a retirement, but where -- One of the areas we've been challenged is supporting the economic and social science work for the fishery management councils. At one time, we had six employees in that branch, in the Sustainable Fisheries division, and we're down to three, with one on paternity leave, and only working part-time right now, and so, in order to shore that up, thanks to Clay and Matt MacPherson

and the Science Center, we're going to have some of the Science Center personnel help to transition over and fill in for some of those gaps in economic work that we're experiencing.

The other thing, that I spent some time talking with John Carmichael and Trish and Jessica about last week, is we're starting to go to a planning tool that plans both our rulemaking work as well as our council work across all three fishery management councils. That's been one of the challenges that we've faced, and some of the bottlenecks that we often experience working with three fishery management councils, and so our goal is to not only talk to you, at the end of each council meeting about your priorities, but where it fits into our capacity, like you guys do, with regard to level of effort, and ensure that we can support the ongoing work of the councils.

Then we also had some robust conversations, which we'll get into I think in a few minutes, about the executive orders and just how we align the administration's priorities with deregulation, with seafood competitiveness, with the work that's going on with the council, and so I'll stop there, and I think Clay has a few things that he wanted to mention, and I'm happy to entertain any questions from anyone.

MS. MURPHEY: Any questions for Andy, real quick? Okay. Go ahead, Clay.

DR. PORCH: Andy said a lot of what I was going to say. In the case of the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, our staffing plan for 2025 had us up at 252 employees, but all of -- Because the hiring freeze, there's seventeen or so that we weren't allowed to hire, and we also -- Given the firing of the probationary employees, and the early retirement offers, we ended up losing fifty-eight staff, and so we're down from a planned 252 to 175.

That is scattered across all our divisions, and, in some cases, some fairly key positions, and so we're still working with Headquarters to kind of triage the situation, and we're looking at how various of the science centers can back each other up on some issues, and so I'm not prepared to go into all the details of what the impacts might be.

However, we certainly have lost some port sampling agents, and it's going to make it a little more difficult for us to collect commercial bio samples, and bio samples for the for-hire survey, the Southeast Regional Survey. We lost some assessment folks, and we've lost some folks in our surveys, and, of course, I think we rolled out to you before, or John did, that most of our ecosystem scientists that we had hired are no longer with us, and so it will be difficult for us to support some of the various council initiatives.

Like I said, we're going to continue to look at where we're going to have major impacts, see if we can mitigate them in various ways, maybe get some help from the other science centers, and the regional offices, but suffice it to say what you saw in Kelly's presentation will be the case. There's going to be substantial impacts, and we're going to start needing to do some things very differently.

The only other thing I was going to mention is I think you all are aware that we lost a building in our Beaufort facility, and that was condemned, and I thank the council for writing a letter supporting getting a new building. Right now, that's on hold. The disaster supplemental funding is still being reviewed, and so I don't have any new news there, but, in the interim, we are working on getting some temporary housing, and so I expect, at least for the next year or so, we'll at least still have a footprint there in Beaufort. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Clay. Any questions for Clay? Tim.

MR. GRINER: A question. When they condemned the building, I mean, was that the building that contained like lab equipment and all of your -- So what is the status of all that? I mean, you haven't lost -- Have you lost all that, like otoliths and, you know, data?

DR. PORCH: No, and we moved that out. We have the data, and we still have the samples. We were able to get it out of there. Where we've been hit is in terms of the people who can process it. You know, one of them was a probationary employee, and then there's a couple of folks that were contractors, and so there's been some challenges there that have slowed us down.

DR. COLLIER: John, this is Chip. I'm going to unmute you, if you can test your voice. There you go. We see you're unmuted.

MR. HADLEY: John, sorry. We're working on some technical difficulties on our side, really quickly.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. We're going to take a couple-minute break, to get this technical issue done. All right, guys, and it looks like this is going to be your break, and so take advantage of it, but be back at 3:40.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MURPHEY: All right, everyone. I think we are close to getting started back.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Well, let's go ahead and get underway, and so, on the webinar today, we have Jon Reynolds, who is the chair of the Dolphin Wahoo Advisory Panel, and I'm going to hand it over to Jon to go through some of the summary points that the AP discussed about at their spring meeting. Without further ado, Jon, take it away.

MR. REYNOLDS: All right. Thanks, John, and thank you, everyone, for making this possible. Sorry I couldn't make it in-person. I know it takes more accommodation to do this online, and so thank you very much. I don't know if we have slides, John, or if that's going to --

MR. HADLEY: The slides are -- It might be paused on the webinar. Hang on one second. All right. They should be showing on the webinar.

MR. REYNOLDS: Okay. Excellent. Thank you. Okay, and so the AP met in Charleston in late April. We covered different topics, the citizen science program, council amendment development, dolphin wahoo management efforts, and some stuff from the MSE, which I'm also a part of a couple of these other groups, and it's an honor to be. They're very helpful, and we're collecting a lot of different data, and different opinions, from all different areas of the fishery.

We provided a feedback on Regulatory Amendment 3 and a few other items, and concerns were also, in Other Business about some spearfishing, a minimum size limit for wahoo, and some different measures that regard the commercial dolphin wahoo fishery.

General comments, and there's not a whole lot of good news for dolphin. I guess the good news is I would like to thank all the hard work from science. I don't know if all the council members have had a chance to watch the seminar series, but it was very strong, and so we finally get a good picture of what's going on, and the data is reflective of what the AP has been stating for a number of years, which are there are some issues with the dolphin fishery that need addressing.

Overall, there's some comments that we need to take much more serious action, and there were some AP members that felt different things, that a high release mortality associated with dolphin, that slightly undersized fish could possibly be kept from bailing, and then there was some different data, within the seminar series, that were pointed out, and that was strong, and it had a big -- It played a big -- A large role in the way the AP looked at the overall stock and performance of the fishery, and so I would encourage all the council members to check out the seminar series, and thank you, everyone, for putting that together.

Okay, and so the AP did have some motions, and this one was unanimously supported by the AP. We definitely -- I can tell you, from my whole time on the AP, we had more unity and alike thinking than we ever had before regarding the dolphin wahoo fishery. We came together on a lot more things.

This draft action, with alternatives, basically, we would like to see a minimum size limit of twenty inches all the way up the coast, but, because of release mortality, and measuring fish, then there could be an allotment, basically like a slot limit, and not less than eighteen, but, between eighteen and twenty inches, some fish that could be kept. Three aboard charter vessels, and that would be completely in the total vessel limit aggregate, and one on recreational vessels, and that would be intended to be part of the total vessel aggregate, and, again, this was approved unanimously by the AP.

We discussed bag limits for dolphin. This was definitely a point of contention amongst different regions, particularly in North Carolina. The charter fishermen, overall, said that bag limits were likely unfavorable for marketing. Lower limits could -- You know, it could cause some problems in the charter fishery, and there was more support amongst lower bag limits amongst the recreational members, and so there was not a full consensus, but there was more in favor of reducing the bag limit than not.

Okay, and then we discussed a recreational vessel limit for dolphin. Okay, and so, even though the bag limits were not supported quite as well, the recreational limits came through some ideas of bag limits, and it was it was in greater support that recreational vessels could possibly have a recreational vessel limit that was lower than charter vessels, due to higher marketing of trips to some clients.

There was also discussion about recreational limits versus charter limits, and how we could use adaptive management for that, possibly through modifying captain and crew, you know, bag limits, and so these were more important if the total vessel limits were close to a little more streamlined, and then charter vessels could still keep their captain and crew limits, which would increase the total vessel limit, not to exceed a certain amount, and still achieve some sustainability that we're looking for.

Okay, and that basically is what we show here in the next draft action, and so a vessel limit of thirty fish for private vessels, and thirty-six for charter vessels, which would lower the total vessel limit, and then, if the captain and crew still had their limit, then there would be a total of forty-eight fish possible on charter vessels, which would decrease the overall vessel limit, and we could still see some good sustainability out of out of these measures, and that's overall what the AP is looking for. We're all in agreement that there definitely needs to be more action, and so this was a unanimous -- It was unanimously approved as well by the AP.

Limited entry, there was a lot of concern over this, and not many were in favor of this. There was some discussion that permits would become a little too expensive, to make sure that new entrants could enter the fishery, and the next generation, and, you know, some young kids. I know, from my own personal experience, this would have been extremely hard for me, and I probably wouldn't have had the finances to be able to enter the fishery if there would have been a higher price cost to a permit back when I was entering the fishery, and so that was the consideration of most of the negative side of this, and there was some talk about professionalizing the fishery.

There were AP members that stated that, in their own professions, there was a series of requirements that could be implemented, such as continuing some sort of education or something like that, that could professionalize this without actually implementing limited entry into the dolphin wahoo fishery.

We discussed the trends in the number of for-hire vessels participating. Definitely, from my experience, and I'm a fisherman out of the Florida Keys, and there definitely is increased participation of charter-for-hire. It was noted that many of these for-hire vessels are not federally permitted in south Florida. There's a decreased participation in full-time charter vessels in the Outer Banks, and we've seen an increase in what everyone was calling the dot-com charter boats, and part-time participants, that undermine pricing for charter trips. The AP also noted that up-to-date permit information is vital for more information for the council.

Research and monitoring, we went over a lot of this. We personally, on my vessel, do a lot of tagging, and we find it very useful to data, and so we would like -- We've seen a lot of usefulness to this data, obviously, throughout the fishery, and so we definitely would like to incentivize dolphin tagging and incorporate tagging data into the management strategy evaluation.

Monitor for dolphin spawning areas, it was pointed out that there are previously-published papers that show hotspots of dolphin spawning areas, and how pulse fishing and larger vessel limits and commercial limits in these areas could cause localized depletion, or even affect the stock and the biomass, to larger degrees, in these particular areas.

Range shifts for dolphin, improve recreational data, potentially through recreational reporting, and possibly even the idea of some sort of permit, or requirement, that all landings in tournaments could be reported, and this could give us a more robust dataset.

In Other Business, there were a couple of issues brought up. There was definitely growing concern over increasing spearfishing effort directed towards wahoo in the Florida Keys. I know I see this firsthand, and so the larger specimens, that usually aggregate around wrecks -- It's a very unique fishery down here. The wahoo come into very shallow water. The water is really clean, and there's

much more access to spearfishing. Some of these fish are shot, and even -- There's more mortality even when a fish gets away.

One potential recommendation was to allow the use of pole spears only when spearfishing for wahoo. The AP, in the past, has recommended a minimum size limit of twenty-four inches for wahoo, and that was again recommended by the entire AP, and that was unanimously recommended by the AP.

Another concern amongst AP members was an amendment that was began a few years back that would match the HMS regulations in the pelagic longline fishery for dolphin, and it was recommended that the council consider matching these regulations and make regulations consistent between HMS and non-HMS-permitted vessels. This has definitely been a concern of AP members, through the time that I've served, and there was comments amongst both sectors in wondering why this has not moved forward.

Some AP members noted that a year-round commercial trip limit should be considered for dolphin, to support sustainability of the stock and avoid localized depletion, and then another AP member noted that a very low trip limit had the potential to make or break the profitability of a trip.

Just some data on this, and how this has changed through the years, through a time series from 1995 to 2004, versus 2019 to 2023, there has been about a 75 percent decrease in overall commercial landings, and, as the historical data shows the difference between the two different targeted efforts in the commercial sector, from 1994 to 1997, versus 2013 to 2016, there's been a 250 percent increase in pelagic longline landings, as opposed to a 300 percent decrease in hook-and-line landings, and I think that's all we have, and I'll take any questions, if anyone has any questions for me. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Jon. I appreciate that. Anybody got any questions for Jon? Well, Jon, you must have did a bang-up job, because there's no questions, and so thank you very much.

MR. REYNOLDS: Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Jessica has got her hand up. It's not necessarily for you, Jon, but just some questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and, for Hadley, I guess I was wondering, and when is this document coming back to us? I can't remember the timeline for the MSE, and it seems like what the AP is saying is, hey, we want the council to move faster, and get in front of the MSE, and is that kind of what they're saying? I'm just trying to make sure I understand, and then make sure I understand our timeline.

MR. HADLEY: Yes, and so, regarding the MSE, the -- I'm trying to think off the top of my head, and so there's going to be some review at the council's September meeting, with the Science Center and the MSE team, and then I believe there's also review it from the SSC, and so you would likely be seeing results from the MSE, in relation to the actions in Regulatory Amendment 3, at your March meeting, I believe.

Then, based on the guidance at the council's March 2025 meeting, the way it ended up on the workplan was that the council would bring up Regulatory Amendment 3 when you have those MSE results, and so that that's all to say that likely this would be coming back -- The amendment would be coming back to the council in March of 2026.

I think you saw, through the AP's motions, that they did feel that there was a need for action, but that's -- The way the way it stands on the council's workplan is that I believe the amendment would come back to the council in March of 2026.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John. Go ahead, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So then but the AP is saying we still have concerns, and we think you should move forward, even though you have this MSE that's occurring, and so they're suggesting get out in front of the MSE, and like that they feel so strongly to get out in front of the MSE, and one of the reasons I was asking is I reviewed those two papers, and maybe there was a webinar about at least one of them, that it seems like there's some additional research coming out that there might be some cause for concern, and were those papers discussed with the AP? Is that why they were having these concerns?

MR. HADLEY: So, yes, and it was brought up by the AP, at the beginning of the discussion, and Jon may be able to weigh-in as well, but it was brought up by the AP, at the beginning of the discussion, that there were the recent -- Kind of the sort of concept, conceptual question, was is there additional information that you wanted to bring before the council, because this hadn't been discussed by the council in a few years, and the AP had discussed it, and that was --

Those were a couple of the items that they brought up, that there were -- In the meantime, since the council last discussed this, and the AP last discussed it, there were these studies that have occurred that had indicated a decline in dolphin on the U.S. east coast, and so that was brought up at the AP level, and then, after the AP met, we had the seminar series, the council seminar series, where two of those authors presented their results.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. I've got Tom.

MR. ROLLER: John, refresh my memory, and what was the attendance like at that meeting? It's hard to -- I listened to it virtually, obviously, and it's hard to gauge.

MR. HADLEY: At the spring meeting?

MR. ROLLER: Yes.

MR. HADLEY: It was good. It was good. Good attendance from Virginia -- Representatives from Virginia all the way down to the Keys.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I was just trying to figure out kind of how to be responsive to what the AP is bringing forward, how to be responsive to these papers, and this newer information, and, I mean, it sounds like that we're going to get maybe an update, at the September council meeting, and can

we also maybe get a couple updates on those two papers that were out, that the AP received, and I know that there was a seminar series about it, but could you bring forward some of that information to the September meeting, too?

MR. HADLEY: Yes. Absolutely. We could bring the summarized information, along with the MSE results, to go along with it. If I could, just for clarification, I -- Again, I would have to go back and look at the exact timeline, but just -- I think, at the September meeting there was going to be some -- It wasn't necessarily a here are the model results, and use them, and it's kind of getting feedback from the council, use that, and go to the SSC, and then it would come back to the council after it has SSC review, and so just to give you an idea of kind of order of operations, but there is a -- There is, tentatively, discussion planned in September, and we can bring those summarized papers, and those results, as well to the council.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, John. I guess, in the interest of time, we'll move on to the discussion of the executive order and review those. I guess review what we did last time, and I'll go ahead and hand it over to John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Thank you, and so there was a recent executive order, 14276, addressing seafood competitiveness, restoring American seafood competitiveness, and it's very similar to a prior executive order, 13921 from 2020, in terms of regulations and changes the councils would like to make, and we're anticipating a very similar response process. At that time, there was a spreadsheet provided, and entries were put in there to go to the agency, and something similar is expected this time, and we'll probably get that fairly soon.

What we provided for you, as far as documentation, is the executive orders themselves, as well as the response from 2020. Some of those things are underway, and some of them, you know, such as the addressing the changes in the shrimping area around Oculina, for example, are something the council has been working on.

When we first put this briefing book together, as you see, we were anticipating a deadline of September 1 to respond, and so there was definitely a much more dire need, if that were the deadline, to get your input at this meeting. When we first received the executive order, the thought was we will introduce this here, and let you see what's there, and give you a chance to mull it over, and then revisit it in September and finalize.

Well, as I mentioned in the CCC report, the deadline has been extended, and so it takes some of the burden off of this meeting, to get all of your ideas on paper here. I certainly would be interested in hearing ideas for things that people have during the week, and we could take some time now, Trish, obviously, if we wanted to brainstorm this a little bit, or we can, you know, do this later on, if we feel like we have time, just recognizing that we're quite a bit -- You know, we're about an hour behind schedule at this point, and so I'm open to how we want to handle it.

I'll also say that we have talked about how we should get our advisory panels engaged in this as well, and I think the Mackerel AP was planning on meeting during the summer, through webinar, and so we'll get input from them, and then what we intend to do is set up a sort of a scoping-style process, have a presentation on the executive order available on the website, invite all of the AP members, from all of our APs, to take a look at that, and then have a scoping-style meeting, where

we try to get all the AP members to log-in, and then we take their comments, and try to do that by early August, so that we can then have feedback from the APs to report out to you in September.

So, I mean, I think, if folks have some ideas in mind right away, I would love to hear them, you know, if we can get a few things on the table quickly, and, Trish, whatever sort of you feel like we have, in terms of the time, and then I know Andy -- There's some other executive orders that Andy may wish to talk about as well, about deregulatory and such.

MS. MURPHEY: Well we can do a real quick brainstorm. I think that we're going to get the best - We're going to hear more when we scope it out with the APs, I think, and then that's going to give us better discussion points at our next meeting, but, if we want to do a real quick brainstorm right now, let's go ahead and do it, because, if people have already got some ideas, let's hear them, and so I have Jessica, Robert, and then Carolyn, and Andy.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So a couple of things, and so I feel like we could put some things on here that we're already working on, like some of the two-for-one things, and maybe the options -- Some of the options that the commercial subcommittee is working on. I also think something removing some of the species from the fishery management unit, and I think that would help, too.

One thing that I wanted to bring up, and I'm curious to hear what the APs say, and what other council members think about it, and so, in the last reauthorization, stone crab was managed by the councils, and instead it was put over to FWC to manage, and so management was given to the FWC, the whole system, and we had a debate, at the time, about spiny lobster, and whether or not that should be given to the state of Florida.

I know that Roy Crabtree felt really strongly, because there was a nationwide import size limit, and that was why he wanted to keep spiny lobster with the federal management, and we also have like these sixty coral zones, where you don't allow lobster traps, but I would love to have a discussion, and it doesn't need to be at this meeting, but, you know, at a meeting about whether or not this is a good idea, and do we still need that nationwide import size limit, and those types of things.

I would love for us to put our some of our concerns on here about things like shark depredation, and that was on our list before, but I would also encourage us to go back through that list before and see if we want to bring some of those things forward, and I'll stop there.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you. Okay. Robert, I think you were next.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Sure, and so, looking at the executive order itself, it actually talks about expanding on exempted fishing permits, to provide access, and I can't help but think that was put there specifically related to our red snapper issue, and I think we should really talk about whether or not, you know, this executive order is giving us the opportunity to fast-track and fisheries change, and that could allow us to expand that EFP program, address the red snapper discard issue, and deal with what I see coming on black sea bass.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Robert. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I'm going to piggyback pretty much on what Jessica was saying. I thought one thing that might be helpful, because the first question that came to my mind, when I went back and looked at 2020, was Oculina was on there, and I know we hit her hurdle, and a bump, but I didn't know how does that -- Do you get a second bite at the apple, or do they get kind of like grumpy with you, because now it's like, well, you didn't handle it in 2020, and so why is it coming back up, and so maybe the thought of going through the list that's there, and what has our progress been, and where are we at, and then, that way, just in case it comes up of, if you've offered it before, why we're offering it again.

MS. MURPHEY: That makes sense, and that's -- Me personally, I kind of went through that list, and pick my own things too, and so Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Two things I'll share is the list of ideas that the Gulf Council came up with last week, and so there may be some things on that list that are relevant to the South Atlantic Council, and the other aspect of the seafood competitiveness that we've been talking about internally, the agency, is, overall, we've lost about a billion pounds of production in the last five years, and so we were, I think, harvesting over nine-billion pounds, and it dropped to about eight-billion pounds.

Some of that is non-regulatory, right, and that's economic conditions, trade, seafood imports, and so, if there are fishery issues, or things that may be affecting your fisheries, for example, and shrimp is a good example. Even if it's not necessarily a regulatory action, but it is something of concern though, are you -- If you have ideas in terms of helping that industry, I certainly suggest that the council kind of offer up those ideas.

Another example, although that you don't regulate sharks, was comments by the Gulf Council last week about the shark fin ban, right, and how that has, obviously, impacted the shark market, and so just keep that in mind, and think kind of more expansively, and not just on deregulatory actions, but things that can help our seafood industry as a whole.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: On just a different topic, the State of Florida is working on pushing forward what we're calling the coastal corridor program, and there should be significant funding for habitat, across various different habitat structures, and so shoreline stuff, you know, shallow-water, hardbottom, deepwater reefs and so another part of the discussion, I think, is just habitat in general, and what can this council do to help promote and create, you know, more habitat, which would drive better fish stocks.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thanks, Robert. Anybody else going to add to the brainstorm?

MR. CARMICHAEL: We've mentioned looking at the earlier responses, and would you like to just get the highlights of that? Okay, so and just -- This is Attachment 2c. The first item was addressing improving fishery-independent monitoring and fishery-dependent monitoring and resources, requesting action from the agency.

The other was requesting SAFE reports, as required under National Standard 2 Guidelines. As you know, Chip has made a real effort to try and provide more of that information to you during

this time. Shark depredation was an issue, and continues to be an issue, and so I think that would be one that probably comes forward. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Just as you're going down the list, I was thinking more of like how far did we get with it, because, I mean, it's -- We requested that NMFS take appropriate actions, and did they? I mean what was the response back, I think is kind of what I was thinking, just so that we have that idea. Did we make any progress on it, and we just have what that implementation is, and so I was just thinking more information on did we actually have an outcome, and like we know where we got to with Oculina, but did we actually get some resolution or not on that, to know whether or not to carry it forward.

MR. CARMICHAEL: You sort of see the nature of the first few of these, and I think you guys know, from sitting around the table, the actions that we've seen, you know, and certainly the agency has been working to try and increase data. We've seen the SADL survey, and a few little things like that, but, you know, we're also falling backwards a little bit some here in the recent months, and so it's kind of hard to say, but we certainly don't have a real comprehensive official view of the progress that we've made, at least on these things that are requiring NMFS action. I think the ones that are council action are a little more clear to us.

Like, you know, the next one was evaluating National Standard Guidelines, and I don't think much has happened there. There was some progress on some guidelines, but, to my knowledge, really not much there. Improving MRIP estimates, and so we know efforts have been underway to sort of constantly improve that, and we've got the FES survey evaluation, and so potentially some progress there, but probably still work to be done in that regard.

Funding the for-hire reporting program, well, we know that that didn't happen, at least not in the South Atlantic. There was funding dedicated to the Gulf. Regional climate change response efforts, and so that was basically the scenario planning, and really is something that the councils did, and there was some NMFS support for doing this, and then, as we know, there was the whole CEFI initiative that had come along really, you know, late last year, and a number of people hired, and many of them now fired, and kind of a change in focus in that program, in a lot of ways, and so I think there was some progress that got ramped up, and probably slowed down a little bit, quite honestly, particularly as it's focused on climate. Disaster relief funding, I feel like that's something that the states worked with NMFS quite a bit on, and I'm not sure of progress. I feel like maybe there was some progress on getting this done.

Now we're getting to some things that are a little more direct on the council, and so the wreckfish ITQ program, which I think the council completed its part, prepared the amendment, and it has submitted it, and we're waiting on it to be approved.

The Oculina area modifications, we know we submitted that, and got it rejected, and we're working on it again. Commercial electronic logbooks, the council completed its amendment, and submitted it, and we're waiting now on it to be approved. The snapper grouper two-for-one, that's something that you said you wanted to get rid of, and we talked about that this morning, at the commercial group, and it's something on the list to hopefully get an amendment that gets that moving along.

Optimum yield in the king mackerel fishery, we did have revised ACLs, I think that went in in this time, and, you know, looking at king mackerel, and so we've made some progress there. Jessica,

I think you mentioned spiny lobster, and I'm not sure that a whole lot was done, in terms of actual stock determination criteria, but I think there's maybe a need to dust off what gets done for spiny lobster, and it might be an opportunity to continue some more spiny lobster stuff here.

Looking at the seasonal closures in the commercial sector of Spanish mackerel, and so we've spent a lot of time, in this period, talking about Spanish mackerel, and trying to get a stock assessment, and conducting port meetings, to try to get a handle on what's going on, working with ASMFC, who manages the state waters, and we're still working on an amendment, and so it's hard to say that we're making, you know, real substantive management progress there, but I think we have a much better handle on what the fishermen at least would like to see out of Spanish mackerel.

Those are the items that we put forth last time, and I think the council has done a reasonable job of progressing on the issues that it has control of, at least within the various other priorities that we've had, and the mini curveballs that have been thrown at us, such as the FES change, you know, and certainly that's been a big issue, with a species like Spanish, which has such a recreational component.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, John, and so -- Tim.

MR. GRINER: Just one quick question, and maybe this is Rick, and I don't know, but what is the actual status of the electronic commercial logbook?

MR. DEVICTOR: We're going to talk about that tomorrow, when you go over the status of that, but we have that with us, and, of course, that was submitted to us, and we're -- We have a good version of the proposed rule, and we'll work on a Notice of Availability. We working on that, and it's going through internal review, and then we'll publish that, and there will be comment periods.

John Walter gave a presentation, and I think was back in December, updating the steps that needed to occur on that, and what the Science Center had to do, and, at that time, we thought we would probably be looking more like at 2026, putting this in the place, due to the delays, and late 2025 or 2026 is what we reported back in December.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Rick.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, and so it sounds like we had some brainstorming, really quickly, and all it came out well, and I would think, when we go through the process of the APs and everything, we can let them know that's sort of what we're thinking now, and can I throw an idea out, real quick?

MR. CARMICHAEL: You can do whatever you want.

MS. MURPHEY: So one thing, and I was looking at this EO, the iii in it, and the Secretary shall pursue additional direct public engagement to ensure executive departments and agencies are focusing -- Wait a minute. That's the wrong one. I'm sorry. It's ii, and not iii, and so, basically, it's asking to solicit comments from industry members, technology experts, marine scientists, and so I wanted to throw the idea out, and I know this is probably an extra workload, but I would love to hear what our council staff may have thoughts of.

I view them as marine scientists, and I see them working in this every day, and very close to what the needs are, and I'll leave that up to you, John, but I would love to hear if they've got, you know, some innovative ideas as well, but you -- I don't want to burden them, but I think I can see some really good stuff coming out of them.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, Trish, and we can definitely do that. That would be my expectation, when we come around to September, would be including various staff ideas, along with the advisory panels, and any other ideas that you have along the way, that you want to pass toward us as well, and we'll be glad to tally them up.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Are we done with this subject until we -- We will hit it hard on September, in our September meeting. All right. Well, thank you guys, for you all that gave us some brainstorming, and it gives us something to work on, and so I guess we will now move on to the research and monitoring plan, and I think that's Chip.

DR. COLLIER: All right. Thank you, Trish, and so what we're going to be looking at is Attachments A3a through A3c, and, if you don't mind, I'm going to actually start about this backwards. Quite often, we hear about the research and the information that we have it here in the South Atlantic as being data limited, but I also want to highlight we actually have a ton of work that goes on by the states and the federal agencies, and so I'm going to start off with the states.

We have Attachment 3c that starts off looking at some of the information that's collected by North Carolina. I tried to group this into categories that were originally listed in the 2023 to 2027 research and monitoring plans, and so, in North Carolina, you can see that they collect data for assessments, and they also have a fishery-dependent data collection program, which works with the state trip ticket. They also have the headboat observer program, and that's going to be coming up, and then they also work with MRIP, in order to collect recreational data. They're doing an additional project in North Carolina, where they're going to be working on a discard catch card project, to hopefully collect data potentially on some council-managed species.

South Carolina has a long list of things that they're doing to collect information for council-managed species. They work on several of the topics needed in the short-term research topics, and, mostly, those short-term research topics are focused on issues that have come up for stock assessments, and so they've investigated some of the life history trends for red porgy, and they've been working to address some of the life history data gaps for species like blueline tilefish.

They run the SADL program, and so that's collecting some information on the deepwater species. SADL is the South Atlantic Deepwater Longline survey, and that's a cooperative survey done from Key West all the way up through I think Delaware now, and so it's a consistent survey along the coast, collecting some information on deepwater species, including blueline tilefish, tilefish, and snowy grouper, as well as some other species that you might be surprised. They actually catch a fair number of mutton snapper out there, too.

Continuing on with some of the research that they collect, they collect data on range shifts of different species, because they are long-term survey, and they've been collecting data since the 1970s, and some of this research is still going on today. They do provide information for king and

Spanish mackerel, based on the coastal trawl survey. That's used in the stock assessment to collect juvenile fish.

Getting into black sea bass, they've been investigating the range shift of black sea bass, and that's potentially going to be talked about quite a bit at this meeting. They gave a seminar series, at our last -- Earlier this year, talking about some of the changes in black sea bass. They also conduct research in managed areas, through the SERFS program, but they've also been involved with the spawning special management zones. They're key analysts for that, and they're also on a steering group for that.

Then, finally -- Or they also provide annual reports. They work on the SERFS program, which is the Southeast Reef Fish Survey. They collect data for that, and they provide presentations not only to our Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel, but they also provide it to the SSC, and they're going to be providing it in September, I believe, to the council, so you all get an update on the trends reports. Once again, they also collect fishery-dependent data, and I think that's a highlight of all the states, that they collect fishery-dependent data. One additional thing that I do want to point out, that they're starting to do, is collect information on Wave 1 in the MRIP program, and so that's collecting data in January and February.

Georgia, once again, they collect fishery-dependent data as well. They are going to be part of this discard catch project, and they're also going to be working on the headboat observer project. South Carolina, Georgia, and North Carolina are all going to be working on that observer project.

Some of the fishery-independent projects, they have some state receivers out that could potentially collect information on red snapper, as they move up and down the coast, and then they're also initiating some long-term continuous monitoring of the age structure and age validations.

Another species with a lot of work going on is Florida. They do several of the stock assessments, including the stock assessment for hogfish, which is going to be starting fairly soon, and so they've been collecting information for that. Some of the assessment priorities they've been working on is red snapper, and they have several different projects that have been addressing some of the red snapper issues, and improving some of the data for that.

Let's see. Going into some of the management research needs, they've been developing -- Or collecting information to characterize usage and evaluate compliance with best fishing practices. They've developed updated annual trap and video indices in SEAMAP for all managed species. They monitor habitat, specifically looking at some of the things that they do within their FACT receivers, and so the Florida Acoustic -- I'm forgetting the acronym for that. Sorry about that. Then they're also collecting some of the information for citizen science priorities, collecting maturity data, where they were collecting data from Gulf of Mexico cobia, and then they too have fishery-dependent programs.

This is one that differs a little bit from the others. In addition to the state trip ticket program, they also have their for-hire observer program, where they have year-round coverage in headboats and charter boats. They monitor the red snapper mini-season, and it's called the Red Snapper Recreational Survey. That's been going on since 2012, and that's how we get estimates of catch during that shortened season for the recreational fishery.

They do have a validation survey going on for MRIP, trying to identify potential sources and bias and evaluate the survey, and then, finally, they have the State Reef Fish Survey that's going on in order to collect better information on recreationally-caught fish, and so, with that, that is a quick highlight of all the state projects going on. Any questions related to those? I'm sure some of the council members around the table are better suited to answer them than I am, but this is an opportunity to ask about some of these state projects that have been going on to address research needs and monitoring needs in the Southeast.

MS. MURPHEY: Anybody have any questions about the state surveys? I'm not seeing any, and so we can hit the next one.

DR. COLLIER: All right. Taking a bit more of a quantitative approach to this, the Southeast Fisheries Science Center also keeps tabs of everything that they've been doing. If I speak out of line, either Clay can correct me, or John Walter can correct me, but they've done a lot of work. You can see here what's been highlighted as completed, delayed not planned, and then ongoing, and you can see that they're addressing a lot of the short-term needs, getting almost 70 percent of those addressed.

Some of the long-term needs, they have not had an opportunity, or have not had funding, to complete, with only 27 percent of those going on, but those are also long-term needs, and so it's not expected that they would be addressed in the short-term.

As far as some of the other projects that are going on, the spawning special management zones, there is ongoing research there, and there is ongoing research in the MPA monitoring, and then long-term -- Some of the additional long-term items listed under 5, and this should be implemented in the next year, and several of those have been going on, 92 percent. Habitat, 100 percent of that is being addressed, and some of the specific monitoring, and then, providing annual requests, those are also being completed.

That's a very short overview. If you would like to see, in greater detail, exactly what's been accomplished, you can click over to the master tab, and that provides some of the items that have been completed, and you can see exactly what has been worked on under those issues, and so, with that, I will leave that to the council, if there's any questions.

MS. MURPHEY: Does anybody have any questions? Seeing none, all right, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: I feel like I'm catching you back up. All right. Then the final one, which is Attachment 3a, which is the new and revised research and monitoring plan for the South Atlantic, and, in the past, we had given kind of a streamlined research and monitoring plan, in order to get the high profile things accomplished.

In talking among staff, and hearing some other comments, we felt like it was better to fully develop our research and monitoring plan, to accomplish, or to address, several of the issues that the council is now facing, and so we developed research and -- Basically, a research and monitoring plan for each of the FMPs, and then also tried to get information together for some of the habitat and socioeconomic data that's needed for management.

If you go into these, we have different chapters for each FMP, in order to get things addressed, but I think the most important thing for the council to consider is highlighting some of the most important issues in research and monitoring that you think needs to be accomplished, and what I would like to do is come back to you all in September, and hopefully you can provide me with a list of research and monitoring, maybe by FMP, your highest priorities, in order to accomplish what you need to accomplish.

I think John highlighted, in his talk earlier during the CCC, which recognizes that we can't accomplish everything, and I think it's very important that we strategize on what can be accomplished, what's most important for management, in order to get everything that's needed to be done.

One way that this could be accomplished is the chairs of each of the committees, and they're essentially for each of the FMPs, and if they really think about their section, and just write three or four things down, that this is absolutely what we need, but it doesn't just have to be the chairs. I'm just trying to spread the work, so a few individuals aren't doing that, and, with that, I will pass it back to the chair. I don't want to read the whole plan, because it's seventy or eighty pages now.

MS. MURPHEY: All right so, and so we are supposed to be providing recommendations on high priorities and considering approval for 2025 to 2029, and have people had a chance to look at it, or are interested in --

DR. COLLIER: I know I wrote that a couple of weeks ago, but this is the new Chip, and he's recanting what that person said. I think it would be better -- I think it would be better, just because I know you've had a ton of things on your plate, and I got this research and monitoring plan to you way too late for you all to evaluate it thoroughly, and I think it would be better to come back in September, with some ideas written out, and we can better flesh out exactly what's going to be in that research and monitoring plan, specifically the high-priority pieces.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you. That will be very helpful, and so is everybody good, and we'll just hit this at our next meeting? Okay. Good, and so all right. Well, we will hit it on our next meeting, and I want everybody to read everything here. Okay, and so -- No, and I'm joking. All right, and so I guess we are done for this afternoon, or evening, and we've got to go back, and so we're going to go back to the subcommittee, because we did not finish up the subcommittee, and so we'll take a break, and get resituated, but we're going to start the subcommittee back up again, since we didn't finish that. Everybody come back in ten minutes.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on June 9, 2025.)

JUNE 10, 2025

TUESDAY MORNING SESSION

The Council Session I of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the Radisson Resort at the Port, Cape Canaveral, Florida, on Tuesday, June 10, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Trish Murphey.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Good morning, everybody. We're going to open Council Session I back up this morning, and we're going to turn it over to John Hadley and Myra to discuss the For-Hire Reporting Improvement Amendment, and so go ahead, guys.

MS. BROUWER: Good morning, everyone. Thank you, Trish, and so I'll go over the decision document that we've put together for this amendment, which is Attachment -- Okay. There it is. Recall that this is the amendment that would make amendments to the SEFHIER program, the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting program, and possibly, as well, include changes to the headboat survey.

I'm not going to go over all the background. I do want to point out that the Gulf Council is also working on an amendment, and you already know that. They selected preferred alternatives at their April meeting, and the amendment is tentatively scheduled to be approved that -- Well, it was supposed to be June, but now I think it's going to be November, and I see C.J. nodding over there, and so that's been pushed back a little bit.

Also, you heard from the HMS Division. They are also moving forward with changes to their reporting program, and you received a presentation in December on that. We conducted scoping hearings for this amendment from April 24 to May 8, and the way we did that was -- I guess I would call it passive scoping. We did not have a live webinar. We posted a presentation, and a document, online, and we received one comment, which is linked in your document, and I will mention that person's comment when we go through action-by-action.

For this meeting, we would review the feedback from the advisory panels. All three of the finfish advisory panels met in the spring and provided recommendations and comments on the proposed range of actions and alternatives. We'll review the timing for this amendment, review the updated purpose and need, and then the list of actions and alternatives.

If we are going to continue to move forward with this, we need to have a list of actions, and a range of alternatives for every action that you would like us to work on, and so, if all goes well, we would conduct public hearings in the winter, and then review those comments in March, with a tentative approval date at the June meeting of 2026. Any questions or comments so far?

MS. MURPHEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Trish, I just wanted to ask, and, just because of where things are with executive orders, and the difficulties that we're having with some of our amendments, whether it's funding or personnel, is it worth it for us to discuss whether or not we want to move forward with all of our amendments? Is it worth talking about?

Andy, I don't know, you know, if you guys have gotten more guidance on what the expectations are. I just feel like, if we're starting to focus on ten-for-one, and I know, obviously, it's a bigger issue for you, because of the region part of it, but I feel the South Atlantic can at least focus on what it needs to do for a ten-for-one in its situation, but I just would like to see what other people's

thoughts are on that, because I would hate to see us spend a ton of time on things, and get an amendment out, and then find out there's not support for it, and it seems like, with the other things that we have on the agenda that we could move into -- I would just like to hear what others think about that.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Carolyn. Those are very good points to bring up. Does anybody have any thoughts? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I was curious if we could get any clarification to why the Gulf is pushing it back a meeting. I don't mean to put C.J. on the spot, but I was just looking for some feedback on that.

MS. MURPHEY: Can I let -- I'll go ahead and let C.J., and then I'll let Andy talk. Go ahead, C.J., please.

DR. SWEETMAN: Yes, and so we had a modified meeting, this last council meeting in June. It was a two-day hybrid meeting, due to lack of funds to hold a full meeting, and so, just based on the timing of all that, Tom, that's kind of why it got punted down the road. We had some other higher-priority items that we needed to address.

MS. MURPHEY: Andy, please.

MR STRELCHECK: Thanks, Carolyn, for bringing this up, and so a couple of things. First, to Tom, not only the hybrid meeting, the shortened meeting, but we are prioritizing amendments based on staffing capacity as well, and trying to front load, obviously, those that are either mandated actions or responsive to stock assessments, right, and so that automatically shifts some of those other amendments, like SEFHIER to later dates.

The question that Carolyn asked, I think it would be really helpful for the council to talk about the amendments from a priority standpoint, and so I would say that we don't necessarily have 100 percent guidance with regard to council actions, and it's helpful for me to hear kind of where each of the amendments falls, especially for discretionary actions like SEFHIER, in the council's priority list, so that we can talk about that with our Assistant Administrator, the NOAA political team, and others.

As I mentioned yesterday, the executive orders talk about deregulation, but they also talk about data modernization, right, and they talk about unleashing the seafood competitiveness, right, which data can go hand-in-hand with that, right, and so I think it really depends on kind of your viewpoints as to how this can assist in better managing fisheries, what it may gain us, the costs that are involved in that, and all of that will have to be taken into account by the administration, by the Fisheries Service, if this moves forward, but I think getting an idea of kind of where this falls in your priority list would be helpful, and whether or not you would want to continue working on it, stop working on it, and get additional guidance from the administration, would be helpful.

The other aspect, and Carolyn mentioned the deregulatory executive order, the ten-for-one. To be clear, the ten-for-one only applies to what are considered significant rulemakings, and so significant rulemakings have a specific definition, but the main criteria is the rule costs \$100 million or more.

We have very few fisheries rulemakings that fall into that significant rulemaking category, and, often, it's not because of the economic threshold, but it's because they're controversial, or some other aspect of the rulemaking, and so we're not under the requirement then for implementing ten deregulatory actions for every one regulatory action.

What we are under the requirement to address though is, for any regulatory actions that have a cost associated with them, we have to offset those costs fully, and actually have a net negative, or a benefit essentially, to the economic cost of our regulatory work across the country, right, and so that is another thing that we are looking at carefully, as the Fisheries Service, because we're going to have to move forward and prioritize mandated activities, first and foremost, and then discretionary actions, or other things that the councils are considering, will have to be reviewed in light of, obviously, the cost, and how we would offset those from a deregulatory standpoint.

A good example is Amendment 55, scamp and yellowmouth, addressing overfishing or overfished status, and so we have to implement that. There's mandates in Magnuson to do so, and so we're proceeding with implementing that now, through rulemaking, and so I'm happy to answer any questions.

MS. MURPHEY: Does anybody have any other questions for Andy? I guess I've got one question. The permit database, I mean, that's going to be playing a huge role in a lot of our priorities. If we're still -- If you guys are still having to deal with trying to get your data and all that, I'm assuming that is going to -- That also plays into this, and probably some other amendments, correct?

MR. STRELCHECK: It does. I actually stepped out yesterday to take a call with my team, and, the snapshot that I had talked to you about in past meetings, we are at a point where it's very close to where we feel like it's usable for amendment purposes. We're also working on a permit system 2.0, that our goal is to roll that out in August, and so we're carefully tracking that, and trying to address, obviously, these kind of backend database problems, and so my hope is that a lot of the slowdown from the permit data will be behind us come September.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Andy. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Just one quick question, Andy, and so, like with the scamp yellowmouth, how do you put a dollar amount on what that regulatory action costs, and then how do you offset that, and is this public knowledge somewhere, or do you have to report this, or, I mean, how is that actually carried out?

MR. STRELCHECK: So every amendment that we produce, Tim, includes economic analysis, and so it's embedded, obviously, in our amendments, and that ultimately is what's funneled into the regulatory process, to tell us how much a regulation costs, or deregulation will save, and I don't know if there's any public tracking mechanism at this point, but one of the other aspects I didn't mention, with regard to the ten-for-one executive order, is there is an exemption for routine fish and wildlife actions, right, and routine is defined loosely, but it refers to like annual catch limits, in that Q&A for the executive order.

That's the other aspect of this, is that those are neither regulatory or deregulatory, but they're just routine, and so they can move forward and be implemented. We're trying to kind of understand

and navigate all this right now, and some things will be pushed forward, and may ultimately be characterized as something different than what we think they're going to be characterized by the administration, but the whole intent is, obviously, to make sure that we're moving forward a deregulatory agenda as much as we can.

MS. MURPHEY: I guess the question here is do we want to continue with this amendment, based, you know, on the stuff that's going on, and an idea I just kind of want to throw out at you, as we go through these, is I wonder if it might be good to kind of bring in the workplan throughout and help try to prioritize what this council needs to do with, you know, with the EO and budgeting and all that. Would you all like that idea, or would you just like to continue? I've got Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I like the idea of maybe bringing up the workplan throughout the week, or we could dive into it now, you know, however we want to do it. I also think it would be important if maybe council staff could, I don't know, color-code that thing about the things that are required, versus things that would be discretionary, and then we can pick out maybe our top discretionary ones that we want to work on, because it's hard for me to think about -- Without, you know, looking at the workplan in depth, it's hard for me to think about, well, which ones are discretionary, and then, if I had to make a list of, I don't know, a handful of discretionary ones that we would want to get done, which ones would they be, and so it's hard to think about that without seeing that document.

Also, I guess I would just offer -- I have concerns about moving forward with SEFHIER, because the things that I think are on the workplan -- There's some other items in there that I think are probably going to be considered discretionary that I -- Just me, I would put in front of SEFHIER, and so I don't know that this would be at the top of my list of discretionary ones, but, at some point, I would like -- Before we get to Friday, I would like to look at the workplan, I think.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Jessica. I had John walk up, and so I'm going to go ahead and let John speak to this, and then I'll call on everyone. Thanks.

MR. CARMICHAEL: So, yes, and, I mean, I think it would be excellent, in the workplan here, and you can see it there, and I think it's fairly -- To some extent, I think it shows which ones are dealing with statutory things that we have to address. I think it would be really helpful to discuss, at each amendment, maybe kind of a checklist, and I know Carolyn has thought along these lines, you know, about each amendment.

I don't want to get into the weeds of like, every amendment, looking at the workplan and trying to juggle the workplan. I think it's safe to say that the workplan is full. If we're going to make time to talk in more detail about an innovation plan, or we want to move the commercial amendment ahead, because it's consistent with executive orders, or we want to deal with FMU changes sooner, because of that being consistent with agency guidance, we recognize that we need to push some other things back, or just say, which would be my preference, we're not going to work on this, you know, until conditions change in the future, and there's greater likelihood that it will be successful, because things that linger out there in the shadows can often be difficult, particularly because so much will change between now and like five years from now, if you were to pick something back up.

I think, if you go through, at each amendment, and think about it, and is it regulatory or deregulatory, and is it discretionary or statutory, and are there costs associated, that the agency is likely not going to be able to have? Is it a top priority? Is it consistent with executive orders, or some other priority of the council, and sort of go through that at each amendment, and maybe decide for yourself, before you get into the weeds on something, like whichever one is coming up next, and is this something that we really feel like, you know, we need to spend time at this meeting on, or do we feel like it's unlikely to go forward.

I mean, I think SEFHIER, you know, being mentioned is a real challenge, because we didn't get funding for SEFHIER in the South Atlantic before, and it seems really unlikely we're going to get funding for SEFHIER in the South Atlantic in our foreseeable future.

It doesn't mean that SEFHIER is not a good thing. It doesn't mean that we don't need better data, but it does mean that, you know, maybe this is not the realistic way to go forward with it at this time, and it also imposes a whole bunch of new regulations, which are probably going to be looked at rather closely, and so I think, if you guys go through that with each amendment, and if you decide some that you're like, you know what, we're not going to get into the actions and alternatives on this amendment at this meeting, that would be spectacular.

Then staff can update this, and maybe come up with, for later in the meeting, a better look at what it could look like to achieve some of your priorities, because I don't want to get into juggling it with each amendment, because we all know that will be a nightmare, but, if you make some real hard decisions on some amendments, and basically tell us go or no go, and these are the reasons, and we tie them back to the agency's priorities, and the guidance from the CCC and executive orders, I think we would have a pretty strong case, and maybe we come up with a workplan that gives you some time and say, all right, you've got, you know, four, or eight, extra hours per meeting, and what do you want to do with it.

Also though -- I guess I'll say the last thing is, with the things going on in the agency, we want to loop in with like Rick, probably have John and Rick talk about this, and factor in, you know, what can SERO actually do, because our staff is not down like SERO staff. We can pick up some of the slack, but not all of it, and so there probably are going to be some reductions in this workload just to deal with that reality.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Rick.

MR. DEVICTOR: Thanks, John, and, you know, we talked last week, and so SERO has certainly gone through this, because, of course, we deal with three different councils, and we're down economists and all, that Andy spoke about, and so we actually went through, in-house, and sort of ranked them by what we thought, you know, like green, yellow, and then white, and so sort of the one that can be paused, and so, in our mind, it's kind of straightforward, like you're talking about with the statutory ones, you know, certainly 55 and 56, and then the next level there, and there's possibly coral and golden tilefish, Abbreviated 4.

So, yes, at some point, and I talked to John, and, you know, if you want us to talk Thursday, you know, and go through the workplan, and we can give our input. I know they did this last week at the Gulf Council, where SERO said, hey, here's our thoughts, and what do you think, and, like you

said, we definitely factor in rulemaking, because we have four going on there, and we prioritize those also, and so thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: I had Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, you all already are walking down the path I was thinking, that we needed to look at each one of these amendments and decide yes, no, or -- Then have a discussion about it, and so I don't know exactly how you want to do it, if you just want to start at the top of the list and go down, and I don't know the simplest format for doing it, but that's -- I think that's what we've got to do.

MS. MURPHEY: John.

MR. HADLEY: Thank you, and so I'm thinking to meetings in past years, where we used to send out a survey to council members, and then bring that up on Friday, to help rank the collective council prioritization, and so I can try to put that together, send it out to council members, and maybe just list the discretionary amendments, and then we can look at that and just see how the council feels as a whole. I don't know if that would be helpful, but I know, in past years, that seemed to help the council with prioritizing the workload.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, John. I have Amy, and then Jessica, and then Robert.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair. I think I'm struggling a little bit with trying to punt this stuff and talking about it later in the week. I really think that we should take this action on right now. I think we really need to run it down, and, Rick, I appreciate your honesty, that you guys have already done a little bit of this. It would be really helpful to see your input as well, as we're kind of coming down this path, but I don't want to wait until Thursday or Friday to do this.

I would rather cut the head off this beast right now, and figure out what we can and cannot move forward with as a council, make sure that we're understanding what we want to prioritize our efforts and our conversations with, and I don't want to discount the comments that we've already received, and the input we've already received, from the APs, the special ad hoc folks, the comment periods. I don't think we're going to do them any justice if we wait until later in the week to really dive into this.

MS. MURPHEY: John, and then --

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and, Amy, I think if you guys -- If the council feels they're ready, I think that will be good. I think looking at it holistically is the way. I was just trying to avoid, you know, let's not look at this after, or when we go to talk about each amendment over the next three days, but, if we want to do a quick triage of it here, I think that could be really effective.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. I saw Andy's hand go up, I assume to Amy's, and then I'll catch everyone else, but it sounds like we may kind of triage this here.

MR. STRELCHECK: So, just to be clear, this is not, in my view, fully black and white. There are definitely things that are must-dos, right, that are mandated, and there are things that are deregulatory, that are still discretionary, but align with the executive order, and the administration's

priorities, and then there are the kind of remaining items that are discretionary, but might be a priority of the council, right, and, so when we lump kind of that last category as lower priority for the Fisheries Service, it's not saying that it's low priority for us, but it's saying, relative to everything else, it would be prioritized behind those, right, and so that's why I was suggesting that, as you go through these actions, or when we get to the end of the week, it would be good to hear your priorities as a council, because I'm only one of thirteen members on this council, and I'm representing the federal government, but all of you are representing your specific positions, and the council needs to then weigh-in on your overall priorities.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so I agree with Amy. I would love to try to have a discussion now, you know, early in the week, for us to try to figure out where we're coming from, you know, what things people think are important. I'm afraid that we're going to have amnesia, and then we're going to get to the end of the week, and we've been through all these documents, and then go, uh-oh, now we can't do everything, and so I would love to try to triage that a little bit now, and maybe know where other council members are on some of these topics, and so I'm for what Amy was suggesting.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thanks, Jessica. I've got Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: So I'm struggling a little bit with the order. I certainly would like to be able to go through this, and prioritize all of it, but I'll come back to Carolyn's first comment, and just my not fully understanding, and how do we line this up with the current EOs, ten-for-one and all of that, and so we can go do all this, if we want, but, until we have all the information on what exactly the impact of each of these actions would have, in terms of deregulatory or other, I don't know how we pick them.

You know, that just -- I'm kind of making that as a statement. I don't want to go through the process, to then come back with different information, and for us to have to go back through it again, with all new kind of criteria, and so, if we're going to go through this, maybe there's -- From a high level, it's just what do we have to do, what's required, and, that way, we can then give -- From this discussion, we can give staff some direction to come back with.

I don't know if we need scorecards, or how we go through this, but, seriously, we're going to have to start tracking this, and I would suggest that we need to focus on what are the deregulatory decisions and stuff we can push forward to start building a stock, or start building credit, so that we can then start looking at other things we want to do, but I'm -- You know, chicken and the egg, and we had this discussion kind of at the last meeting. We're here now, and we still don't have -- We didn't ask for it, but we don't have this information that we can actually make decisions on, and so I would like John, and staff, to think through how we use this to get you the information you need, so we can come back and make decisions to let work start moving forward.

MS. MURPHEY: So, Robert, I think probably what John had suggested with the like first blush, kind of go through these criteria, like whether it was regulatory or deregulatory, costs, whether it's statutorily mandated, and so I think that will, at least at first blush, get at what you're looking for, and so thanks, Robert. I've got Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Yes, and, just to kind of give you a little bit of, I don't know, sick insight into where my head was the last couple of weeks, but I kind of came up with a list of questions to try to attack these things, and so the front end. You know, if we know that there's -- If the agency hasn't been able to entertain certain things in the past, because of lack of resources, personnel, whatever, now knowing that we're down further -- If we weren't getting it before now, chances of us getting it in the next three years is pretty nil.

I kind of thought, if we were looking at these going forward, ask the questions on the front end, to kind of say, okay, this is putting it back to the back of the queue, because it's not going to get done in three years, and so it's just a matter of, like you say, finding the right questions. Like I'm looking at do you have time critical, and we don't have anything that's under a two-year clock right now, according to that list, and so that one kind of -- We can rub off on that.

Being responsive to the stock assessments puts it in a different queue. Do we have available necessary components to be able to do that? Need for funding, NOAA's plans for fiscal support, positive and negative effect, and that's back to what we were talking about with the executive orders, the ten-for-one, and, obviously, there's a monetary thing to that, and we're lucky that a lot of our, most -- Well, actually most of our regulations don't hit that threshold, thank goodness, but then the other thing is, as we're working towards what's going on with snapper grouper, the subcommittee, is there something we can do to consolidate some of these and get a little bit better approach? That was kind of where my brain was going, and that kind of got me chipping away at the list, when I was thinking about it the last week.

MS. MURPHEY: No, and those are great suggestions, Carolyn, and I think Jessica has been writing this down, and so that's going to help in our discussion. I think -- Tim, did you have your hand up, and, afterwards, I think we might as well just go ahead and dive into this. Tim, and then Andy, and then let's dive into this.

MR. GRINER: Well, it's a very interesting discussion, but, you know, I think the council needs to move forward in prioritizing these as to what's important to this council, regardless of what's happening with the administration, regardless of what the cost to anything is. You don't know what the cost of an amendment is until you've done the amendment, and it's gone for an economic analysis, and that's why I asked Andy the question. ,

So really and truly, I think this council -- You guys going forward need to focus on what's important for these fisheries, and what you're here to do, and not concern yourself with does this cost too much, or are we going to have to -- Does this fall within the ten-for-one, or whatever the regulations are, or whatever's happening with the administration, because that can change with the wind. So, really and truly, I think, when you go through this list, you need to prioritize what's important to the fishermen, to the fishery, and to prosecute what this council is here to do, and not worry about the cost of it. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tim. I think -- Andy, did you have your hand up?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and, I mean, I appreciate where the council is coming from, for wanting to have this conversation right now. I feel like we're going to spin our wheels, and spend a lot of time trying to prioritize, and the Fisheries Service is prepared to work with John, and kind of coordinate on what we already have, and bring that back to the council, and maybe not by the

end of the week, you know, but sometime else, and have a more in-depth conversation, that you're reacting to, rather than us all throwing stuff out on the record and spending the next however long trying to prioritize this list.

I feel like the important aspect of what we were going to get into for SEFHIER was having a conversation around, one, whether you view this as a priority or not, and kind of where it would fall into the priority scheme, but we don't necessarily have to rank that against everything else right now, and then, two, if you were wanting to inform the discussion about whether you even want to have the discussion this morning, well, that's a different story, right, and that's a different question, but my recommendation is we move on from this for now.

Let's come back to this once the staff have had time to coordinate, and just give you some information, see if you're agreeable to that, and then, for the things that especially are discretionary, that might have cost burdens, that might ultimately be regulatory in nature, you decide from there what would be on the prioritization list or not. That's my two-cents.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. I appreciate that input. I'm feeling that, from all the other input, I think a quick triage we can still do. I don't think we'll have to spin our wheels. I think this will just get us heading in a direction and so, if everybody is okay with that, let's just spend, -- It's nine o'clock. Why don't we give ourselves twenty minutes? Let's just give ourselves a timeframe here, twenty minutes, to do a first blush of what we can put to the back of the bus, and so how's that? Is everybody good with that? Go ahead, Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: No, and I'm good with that, Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Is everybody good with that? I see some thumbs-up, and so thumbs-up. Everybody is shaking their heads, and 30 minutes, okay, and I'll call it when we're at 9:30.

MR. CARMICHAEL: So how about this? What's on that list that you say we absolutely have to work on, and I'll just -- Tell you what. I'll call them out, and raise your hands. Long-term red snapper responses, that's something we absolutely have to do. Let's see, and is this something the council says, yes, that's a priority, and that's a go. It seems like it is.

The black sea bass assessment response, I hope I see all hands there, because that is a statutory, and we know we have issues with black sea bass, and so we've got to deal with black sea bass. Private recreational permitting and education, I feel like this one is a tough one. I'm going to skip that one for now, okay, and don't let me forget it, John.

Yellowtail snapper and mutton snapper assessment response, and notice that then I have management changes, and so they're divided. First of all is the assessment response. Is that a go? That's dealing with the assessment, and we need to address it, right, and so YTS assessment is a go. What about the yellowtail and mutton management changes? That's already set to start in December 2025. Is that one we can potentially delay?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't think we need it.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Okay, and so the yellowtail management sounds like -- What I'm hearing is perhaps we don't need it, from the folks in Florida, who would know that best, and so I would

say yellowtail snapper and mutton is a no-go for the time being. That's going to clear you up some space. Obviously, as you can see, not the next couple of meetings.

Golden tilefish assessment response, definitely one that we have to do. It's responding to the assessment. You'll hear more about that, but there's a little bit of issues with landings, that may push it back, but we're hoping not much, if we can get that resolved, but, either way, golden tile is a go.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy, did you have something?

MS. DUKES: Just thinking outside the box here a little bit, and I know we can get into it a little bit more when we get there, but the assessment response for golden tilefish is pretty darn small of a change. Is this idea of -- I know we're going to get into it later, but perhaps is it enough of a change that's going to warrant a statutory decision, or are there things that we can do to maybe not make it statutory? I'm just curious, and I know we can get into it a little bit more, but my brain is going, it's such a small change, and is it really necessary, and I know that they are bounds in Magnuson they say we have to, but is there any wiggle room there?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think, to the fishermen, it's necessary. Everything there matters, and then I think it falls under that just routine management act, and you're adjusting catch levels, and so it's not going to trigger those higher level concerns for the agency, and so I think that one hopefully is something we're able to do through that abbreviated framework, and knock it out without stressing either staffs, and so that one is a good one.

Dolphin recreational measures and MSE modeling, and so that starts a little bit later, I think, as well, because we're working on the MSE going through, and so is that one that sort of stays on there where it is for now?

MS. MURPHEY: I've got Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I thought we were raising our hands.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, we are.

MS. MURPHEY: I'm sorry.

MR. CARMICHAEL: So can we zoom out, Myra? When does the dolphins start, actually, just to let people see? That's what I thought. It's June of 2026, and so we're a year out on that one. I think that we can stay as it is. It's not going to help us in our current crisis time.

Oculina, I would assume that's a go, given that was in our last EO response. Probably a top priority. For-hire limited entry, another one that is probably going to take a little consideration, and I think that's something that we should have maybe some discussion here. Do we think for-hire limited entry is something that we should do now, given all that we know? I'm seeing heads nodding in the negative all around the table, and so I think for-hire limited entry is a no-go for now.

For-hire electronic reporting improvement, which is kind of the one that's on the table for us here this morning, and I think this is another one that maybe has a little bit of further discussion, and so

I think we'll skip that one for now as well, because I've got a couple here coming up that I think are maybe going to be easier, and so Spanish mackerel assessment response.

We have this plan to work on, but there's been discussion of needing to incorporate the new MRIP numbers. Is that correct, and so this one may be delayed, due to reasons outside of our control. The port meetings amendment, and so, Spanish mackerel, do we delay this, or do we continue on it as it is? We keep it going?

MS. MURPHEY: Tom wants to say something.

MR. ROLLER: I mean, I think we can discuss this in the committee, right, and, further, I will say, you know, one of the discussion items is the MRIP estimates for this year are interesting, and so I think that that's something we need to have a conversation with, but, given the AP's response, and there was a huge desire from the AP to not take action now, until we have, you know, new MRIP numbers, et cetera, and so I think it is worth at least talking about pushing that back a little bit.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tom.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Then blueline tilefish assessment response. Deepwater species management items is -- Do we focus on blueline tilefish, and not get into the other stuff? Do we feel we need to do both? What are some thoughts on that one? I think let Kerry speak a little bit, because I'm less clear on this.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and I've got Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I don't have a strong opinion, or I don't know that I understand the implications of the assessment response, and what our options are there, but, as far as deepwater management, in my mind, that would be going into any sort of commercial amendment/innovation plan that we're talking about, and so it wouldn't need to be in there.

MS. MURPHEY: So, for folks online, we're hearing a rocket launch.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Tomorrow morning at eight, if you want to, you know, loiter out there tomorrow morning. So, for blueline, we move ahead with the assessment response, maybe through an abbreviated framework, and we move the others to another mechanism?

MS. MURPHEY: Tom, do you have something?

MR. ROLLER: Yes, and two quick questions. I mean, I'm going to raise my hand on any assessment response, first of all, and I thought that was clear, and the second question I was going to ask is -- I can still hear the rocket in the background, and that's crazy, but my second question is we should be asking what can we do in abbreviated frameworks, and what can we be doing in frameworks to shorten these timeframes up?

MS. MURPHEY: That's a good point.

MR. CARMICHAEL: We can adjust catch levels, and then amendments have various things that you can change within frameworks, like bag limits, size limits, trip limits. Straightforward management actions, you can change. Did you get that?

You can change catch levels and such, and then straightforward management things, and most -- I think they're all specified specifically in the amendment, that, under the framework, you can change the bag limits, size limits, season, trip limits, that sort of stuff. The things that are like simple, straightforward management actions, for the most part, you can do in frameworks.

MR. ROLLER: I think that should be a question that is at forefront of everything we're doing going forward. We should be asking that.

MS. MURPHEY: That's good. Thanks, Tom. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and, in some of these assessment responses, we're changing from CHTS to FES, which could incorporate allocation changes, and that's not part of an abbreviated framework.

MR. CARMICHAEL: That's right. Allocations would trigger a regular amendment.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you for reminding us of that, Chip.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The unassessed catch levels, this is something that's been out there and delayed quite a bit. The idea was to take our stocks that have various catch levels, that aren't assessment-based, and put them into the new ABC control rule. This is heavily influenced by decisions you make on the FMU.

MS. MURPHEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Could that be combined with FMU?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, we think that it could, and that may be a good way, and I think that would make it a very strong contender, because it's in line with many of the agency guidance, and you potentially could be positive, in terms of executive order, on these catch levels, in some cases, and so we think this one should be a priority, the unassessed catch levels and FMU?

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tom. That's good. Go, John, go.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Hogfish assessment response, I think we'll need to do that, but, as you can see, that's not starting until next year, but that remains a priority. The black grouper assessment response is similar. It's also starting next year. Both of these, we will continue to monitor the progress in the assessment, and then adjust the timelines as necessary, depending on how the assessments go, and so I think they're farther off, and not something we need to worry too much about at this meeting.

That brings us up to the snapper grouper commercial fishery amendment, which does sound like it's one that may really align with the various priorities we have right now, and so is there -- Obviously, this is a go. The first question is, yes, this is a go. The second question, is this

something we want to move that timeline up, and maybe talk about it like in September of 2025? Would we be in position to approve that for scoping in September? I see a lot of positive nods.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I think we should talk about moving any action that's going to comply with the EO, and give us credits for additional actions in the future, because I think, when we get to stuff like the hogfish assessment response, if that requires us to do something like further restrict catch, or to change -- We're just not going to have the ability to do anything, and so, while I think that is a ways off, and, Tim, to your last point, things might change, but I don't think for the next three years they're going to, and we need to start, you know, acting in a way that's going to allow us to not just prioritize some of this stuff, but actually make progress and take action and do things, and so I think we need to be thinking with that mindset.

MR. CARMICHAEL: All right, and so we'll expedite that by a meeting, and sunseting of SMZs is something we need to talk about, per our own long-ago plans, and so I think that one stays, and it's September 2026. That does have a deadline, because it is a sunset, and so we'll need to find a way to fit that in, and so that brings us through the main things, the easy ones. Let's go back up and talk about a couple of the ones that may generate some more discussion, and not a simple hand raise, and that would be the -- Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I'm, again, thinking down the road here, and looking out in the future, and I'm just going to raise, again, this idea of the aggregate bag limit for the snapper grouper fishery, and so we just had the secretarial action come out. We've got two days, you know, two days, and I think next year is going to be upon us before we know it, and we're going to be dealing again with trying to set rules for red snapper.

I don't know if we have enough time between now and then, but, just looking at this, and dealing with the executive orders and everything, an aggregate bag limit would free up a lot of space for us, in terms of removing restrictions in a lot of stuff, and I really think we need to take a hard look at that, both -- It would also give this council the ability to deal with rulemaking in other places.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think that's a good case. Jessica, when will we have the MSE results on the aggregate, and so where we feel like we could have some quantitative information on how it's performing?

MS. MCCAWLEY: You mean the EFP? We're in the fourth quarter, and, actually, later this week, we'll talk about, you know, year-two of these EFPs, because we resubmitted them, with some changes, based on public comment, et cetera, but they're fishing through August, I believe, and I'm looking at C.J. Yes, and fishing through August, and so you would need to give us some time, and maybe -- I don't know that we could have anything ready for the briefing book deadlines for September, but we've provided you guys some early results, that's mostly anecdotal.

We need to analyze some data, and so I'm thinking that would probably be October-ish, but I guess I was also going to respond to Robert, in that, you know, this kind of innovation plan, and I think we're going to be talking about that more this week, which is also going to kind of get to a couple things, some of these big-picture ideas that we're hoping we have time to talk about, but, also, I think that it will kind of maybe think about the process that we're using to work on the amendments, like what goes in an abbreviated framework, versus what goes in a plan amendment, and how can

we speed it up, and let's not bog down, you know, everything that we need to do by throwing in extra actions that end up bogging the thing down.

I think that it's partly about the topic, and partly about the process, but, back to the original question, I'm thinking maybe October, or November. If we want to put it on the regular council schedule, we could definitely have it at the December meeting for year-one.

MS. MURPHEY: We are at fifteen minutes, and so do we want to continue?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think we have to.

MS. MURPHEY: We need to go ahead and continue with John. We were going to hit the two reds, and so I said fifteen minutes, and so let's keep going.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Well, the reds are things that you've said that -- Were those the ones we needed to come back to, or are those ones -- No, and those ones we said we're not doing, right? No, and we need to come back to --

MS. MURPHEY: Sorry.

MR. CARMICHAEL: So I think, in December, we need to think, if we're going to make time to talk about that, and potentially innovative actions, you can see that September and December are in the red. That means they're overloaded, and so we do need to free up some time, and, if you notice, the lines that you've put a red line through free up a little bit in September and December, a little bit better in December than September. It's only one block removed for September at this time.

Let's go back up here to the recreational permitting and reporting and think -- Is that something that you are going to continue to put forward? It's scheduled for public hearings at -- Approval for public hearings at this meeting, and I think this one has a lot of issues circling around it, given all this happened in the last few weeks.

MS. MURPHEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Yes, and that's kind of where my brain was going. I mean, the states are in crazy flux, with what's going on. We're being asked by politicians, and some states have made it over a hurdle, and others have kind of made it to the threshold. We've got one that's mandatory reporting, which really isn't hitting federal species, but you don't know where that ask will go, and, as we're trying to build this document, and we're still not all in lockstep on a lot of the moving pieces and parts, I kind of feel like it's not serving us well right now.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other thoughts on that? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Carolyn brings up a good point. I mean, there's been a lot of questions about this. The only thing I'm going to say is one of the primary discussions we have in this council is how fishermen are frustrated with recreational data collection, and how fishermen feel that they are over-regulated by recreational data collection, and so, given the executive orders, and we're trying

to try to expand access to fisheries, expand seafood production, I don't see how we do that, at this council, if we don't improve data collection, particularly from the recreational sector.

Whether it's the recreational permitting and education amendment or the SEFHIER amendment, those are opportunities for us to improve data collection, and so I'm kind of -- I understand those concerns, but I'm kind of stuck there in the middle, because we should be looking for ways in which to make data collection better for our fisheries, so that we can expand access.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Tom. Carolyn, to that.

DR. BELCHER: Yes, and, to that point, I think that's the struggle, right, is that, because we're not all doing things similarly, we're still not guaranteeing that the data collection is not going to be problematic, you know, because Georgia is not going to do things exactly the way Florida did. South Carolina is going to be close to what Georgia is, because we've had conversations, and we've kind of been between the bookends, but North Carolina is not even there yet, and so I think that's part of the problem. If you're trying to do something synthetic for a regional collection, we're not going to have it, and so, until we can kind of get a final framework, I don't -- That's more cohesive, I don't know how we can say it would be an improvement or not, and I'll look down to Andy.

I mean, we've talked about this too, right, with the agency's involvement, and you're still looking at personnel and resources to be able to do all this, and they may not be able to put it forward either, and so -- I would like for Andy to speak to that, but I just know, like I said, where we are in Georgia right now, I just feel like we're kind of -- You know, again, that idea of grandfathering in, and what are we grandfathering in? We don't even know what we have yet.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and, I mean, the challenge I think many of us are facing is just this period of flux and change, right, and I don't want to speak today about how the agency might be operating a year from now, or two years from now, because I don't know what our budget is going to look like. We know, obviously, we're down in personnel, but what does the science enterprise look like? What's the management enterprise look like, and so that's why I've been very careful and thoughtful about how I present to you about your prioritization, right, because I think Tom's points are really spot on.

We've spent decades, around this table, hearing complaints about recreational data collection, and so to abandon that, because of various reasons, to me is somewhat problematic and short-sighted. With that said, I recognize also the states are kind of in a period of transition, and they may be doing some things, but we're not certain exactly what those are going to look like.

My main concern with 46 has largely been about broader buy-in by industry groups, and the recreational sector, and improving MRIP, versus some other improvements. What gives me pause, and gives me great concern, is what Carolyn said about all the states potentially heading down different paths, because that has not been a good model in the Gulf, and I caution against us going down that path in the South Atlantic, and there's opportunities, I think, where we can bring some cohesion to the process, whether it's around this table or better coordination of those state surveys at the state level, but, regardless, I think it's important that we acknowledge that recreational data

collection is a priority for us. Whether or not Amendment 46 falls into that category is up to all of us around the table.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Andy. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and I agree with Tom and Andy. We've heard this for a long time. You know, we need to know what's going on, but, on the other hand, 46, as it is, just may not fit what we -- Possibly may be a path forward is perhaps the council, the states, and the Fisheries Service decide what can be done, that's reasonable, and that will fit the budgets, and the timelines, and maybe that might be a way forward to help us figure out what kind of rules that we need to put in effect, or something like that.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Charlie. John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: You know, Tom is exactly right, and it's been discussed forever, about trying to improve recreational data, and we've tried, you know, SEFHIER, and I think we can't overlook the fact that SEFHIER, as I said, did not receive the funding it needed for the South Atlantic. I think that's a bit of a warning for what happens here.

We do need to coordinate the state efforts on data collection, absolutely, but do we need to do that through Amendment 46, and I've been frustrated with 46, because it includes the permitting, but it doesn't include any sort of survey to really directly tangibly give you, the council, control over laying out how data would be improved. It's relying upon the information being used through the MRIP program.

There's enormous opposition, dissatisfaction, distrust, resistance to the MRIP program. I think, with what we're seeing now, with what I heard in the congressional hearing last week, and what we've seen, I just don't believe that a federal permit for private recreational anglers has much chance of being approved, and I would be frustrated that we spent a lot of time on it, put it forward, and not have it be approved, because -- Is Andy going to be given the money to do it, and, as he said, that's completely out of his hands.

If it were up to the Regional Office, I think SEFHIER in the South Atlantic would have been funded to be done well, but it's not in his hands to do that, and it's higher levels. Yes, the opposition by industry, by anglers, by Congress, by the Congressional Sportsman Caucus, and all of these things, to me, point to the fact that it's highly unlikely that a federal recreational permitting action is going to be approved, and I'll look in my eight ball, and go out on a limb here, I guess, and say that, but I just think right now, in this atmosphere, it's unlikely.

Maybe, rather than pushing this, we commit to like how can we engage in coordinating the states' efforts, which seem to be coming, and there's potential funding I've seen in the bills, to give funding to the states for pilots and all this, and is there anything we can do, because I don't know that this amendment is going to get you there.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thanks. I had Jessica, and then we need to move on, because we've got six more minutes, okay, and so, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I just was -- I'll try to make it quick. I'll just agree with what Charlie and John were saying. I don't know that 46 is going to get us there, because it doesn't have a reporting component. I agree that we've been talking about it forever, but maybe there's a different way on how we can talk about this among the states, to get better state data collection and reporting, and it not go through Amendment 46.

I agree with John that there is some congressional funding out there, and fingers crossed, you know, that we would get that, but, yes, I welcome talking amongst the states about how we can do it. I haven't been shy about I don't know that 46 is the vehicle to get us where the APs and others have been wanting us to get to.

MS. MURPHEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I think some of it too is, even though we're sounding like we're putting an axe to it, I'm of the opinion that you just cycle it out. I mean, I'm looking at these things that we're finishing out supposedly in December of 2025, and I just don't think we're there, and so maybe it goes -- It's a deprioritization, as much as anything. Maybe we revisit it in two to three years. Maybe the climate changes within, but, for right now, my point is that, to say that we're going to finalize this amendment in December, I just don't feel that we're there.

MS. MURPHEY: Can I add, just, you know, from our discussions now, and we talked about, you know, just a first blush on this, you know, of is it mandatory, and is it a top priority, and cost, and the big thing that jumps out at me is we don't even know if we can pay for it, or if it will be paid for, and so I'm kind of with Carolyn.

I don't think we need to strike it, but I would drop it to the back. I would put that one in the back of the bus. We can talk about that more, but, just from what I'm hearing around the room, I -- You know, everybody is in agreement that we need that recreational data, but, at the same time, this may not be the way at this time, and so I had Robert, and then I'll get Tom.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I would just say that I think there is a way to get recreational reporting done. I think it's not in the vehicle we've talked about here. Florida has recreational fishermen reporting right now, and happy to do so, and so that data can be collected, but it's not going to be the way we've talked about, and it might have to go with something else.

I would also suggest we not just deprioritize it, but put it in the box of can we get this data another way, through another program, and maybe through -- I'll be the broken record. We need to look at that aggregate bag limit again. We're going to be out of time here pretty soon.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Robert. I have Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I guess my question was, in the spirit of trying to improve data collection to improve access, do we need to take 46 and look at it as a look at it and -- To change it going forward, right, and like say this is what we have now, and how can we fit this in in the future, and maybe not kill the thing entirely, but use it as a platform somewhere down the line, whether it's a year or two years or whatnot?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Do we need a subcommittee that would maybe focus on coordinating recreational data efforts? I mean, we've seen a lot of high-level political maneuvering that suggests the states may be told state management is coming. We want to coordinate that, and not have the struggles that the Gulf had. We want to learn from what happened in the Gulf, with so many disparate programs and trying to bring them all together through the assessment, through setting the catch levels.

You know, if we can maybe have a subcommittee then, that looks into that, and improving recreational data, and what is the role of the council in coordinating that, if indeed the states do get directed to get more involved, and they do get funding to do that kind of stuff, and maybe that's what 46 becomes for us, for the time being.

MS. MURPHEY: I see Amy, and then Jessica.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, John. I appreciate that suggestion, and I think that's kind of where I'm at. I just don't want this conversation to stop. I don't want us to hear, on the record, that we're just going to put this one to the side, because we have heard, time and time and time, that we need to better identify the anglers, our audience, our universe of fishermen, and, with the states not understanding what is going to be coming down the pipes for them, as long as we keep this conversation going, as long as we keep our lines of communication open, I think that's sort of where my mind is, and I can get behind pushing this down the road a little bit, and let's see what information comes to the table, not only from the administration, but from the individual states, as we learn more. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Amy. I have Jessica, and then Kerry.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm fine with forming a subcommittee of council members to keep talking about it, but I really think that the state agency people need to have some meetings outside the council process, to really dig down into this and try to figure out, within our various legislative systems and everything else, what is actually possible, before, you know, we would get down into the weeds at the subcommittee level here at the council, because there are some things that -- That's part of what kind of hung up 46, is what can states really do, and so I think some work needs to be done, outside the meeting, if we're going to form the subcommittee, to bring it back to the subcommittee, like more of like an iterative process, I guess.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Jessica. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I agree with that approach completely, and I agree with the approach that's being laid out here. The only thing I will ask is that, sometime between now and the next Snapper Grouper AP meeting in the fall, that we take some time to really figure out how to let them know about this approach, because there's a lot of political nuance and things that are going on behind - - Not behind the council scenes, but behind the -- Outside of the council process scene, that we're all privy to, and we understand that AP members might not be, and, as if you all recall, this has been a huge issue for them.

It's something they've asked for for years. It's some of the reason we're having some attrition on the AP, and so I think the messaging, beyond what we're talking about here, and the nuance, is

there's a way we can communicate that to them, so that they know we're not giving up on this. We just have to adjust our approach, based on things that are happening outside of the council process.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Kerry, and so we are at 9:31. I will ask, and do we want to continue this? Do we need to make a decision on the for-hire reporting? Do we --

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think we're too far along to stop. I think we need to continue.

MS. MURPHEY: All right.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I feel like we're really close to settling what we do with sort of the next two amendments.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. If everybody is good, we'll continue on this route, but, again, let's just try to keep it short and first blush, okay, and I had Andy's hand.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I just wanted to go back to the comment about a subcommittee with the council. I think this is far greater than just the council coordinating amongst the states. I think those conversations need to happen, but the Fisheries Service has been, obviously, broad in our communication with regard to recreational surveys and data collection.

MRIP is now a network of surveys, and it's not just your classic MREP survey, and so we are focused on, obviously, how we can transition to some of these other new survey programs. If they're done at the state level, how that coordination happens. It's not just you put together a survey, and you implement it, and we start using it either, right, and so Clay's shop and the states that do stock assessments all have to be involved in that process.

You have to have calibration, and so I just wanted to kind of broaden the conversation, and let people know there's a lot more components to this, and I certainly support having conversation around this table about the state surveys moving forward, but think about it in terms of who else would need to be involved in this conversations.

Then, lastly, with Amendment 46, I agree I think with Carolyn's comment, kind of moving it to the lower portion of the priority list, or strategically pausing it, whatever we want to call it, but let's not let it go away. Let's see how things play out over the course of the next six to nine months, and, if we need to bring it back on the priority list, we do.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Andy. Those are good points. I have Bob.

MR. BEAL: Great. Thanks, Madam Chair. Just real quickly, I was going to make similar comments to what Andy said. There's a whole lot going on with recreational data collection, and through ACCSP's Rec Tech Committee, which has all the states, and services the councils. You know, MRIP is going through a revisioning project along the east coast as well. This council wants to do something, and I think the Mid is working with ASMFC on rec reform data collection.

You've got, you know, Representative Graves that introduced a bill, last Congress, that was sort of what I would call a recreational data reform bill, and he's no longer in Congress, but speculation that I hear is that that bill may come back in a new form, and Congress may re-engage in the rec

data collection, and so I think, you know, a subcommittee of this council makes a lot of sense, and that a smaller group needs to sort of keep tabs on all these different moving parts, and figure out what is the best way for the council to engage and link all these things together, and so I think, you know, a subcommittee sounds like a great idea, and, if there's a role for ASMFC on that subcommittee, or, you know, someone from ACCSP, or whatever, you know, we're happy to put someone on there, if it's helpful.

MS. MURPHEY: Great. Thank you, Bob. What I'm hearing is this is not going to fall off the list, but it will go down to a lower priority. That's what I'm hearing at this point from everyone.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The timeline will be moved to the right, probably, as we work through what's going on right now, and so we wouldn't be looking for approving this for public hearing at this meeting, and, in fact, if we talk about it at all at this meeting, we may follow-up on some of the conversation here, if we want to come up with maybe an action plan for the next couple of meetings, and I think discuss what Jessica said about the states getting together and starting to really dive into their own situations, and what they can do, and I think it would really be useful for the states to really understand what Florida and the other Gulf states went through to get where they are.

I already anticipated some discussion later on in the meeting, in Snapper Grouper Other Business, about the initiatives to hand things over to the states in some ways, and so I think we can talk about all that stuff, and I think that's probably a good plan for this. Then, Trish, that brings you back to does the for-hire reporting improvement amendment fall under this sort of bigger picture process about recreational data we were talking about for the time being? Does the for-hire reporting amendment that's before us for this time slot fall under that larger discussion, or is that going to solely focus on private recreational?

MS. MURPHEY: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think we should postpone work on the SEFHIER amendment, but I'm happy to hear what others have to say, but, based on thinking about deregulatory, the fact that we didn't get funding last time, and I just have some concerns about moving it. It's not that I don't want to move it, but I have a lot of concerns about moving it. I do want to improve data collection, but I'm just not sure that this is going to make it all the way across the finish line, even if we do a ton of work on it.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jessica. Any other thoughts? I am seeing -- Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I totally agree with Jessica. We need to step back, stop, and then see how we can weave this stuff together. It just seems like we've got too many loose paths, and we need to braid them together, so we're all going in the same direction and being more effective.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Charlie. I've got Tom.

MR. ROLLER: So I view 46 and SEFHIER as different. 46 is something that's very new, and SEFHIER is an existing program, and we know why it's not working, and, again, back to my previous comments, if we're going to improve access to our fisheries, we have to do that through

better data collection, and we know where the gaps are here, and that is on the recreational side of things. Now, this is only a component of the recreational fishery, but this is an opportunity for us to take an existing program and try to make it work better.

Now, that being aside, we understand budgetary concerns, and we understand staffing concerns, but, if we don't put this forward as a priority, it's definitely never just going to get funded, and so I would argue that. in the argument of expanding access and seafood production, this is the sort of thing that we have to push forward. Maybe we don't do it on the same timeline we were doing it, but I still think this is something that we should be looking forward, because it's different than 46.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Tom. Other thoughts? I'm kind of getting mixed messages, and so I will let -- John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Given Tom's comments, then maybe you consider some of the individual actions within this bigger context that we're looking at, and are there things in there that aren't invoking as much regulatory cost, or financial cost, that can still improve the data, and in which case it would justify continuing to talk about it here today?

MR. ROLLER: Well, I guess that's the question, right? I mean, does this fall under the ten-for-one?

MS. MURPHEY: Andy, any thoughts?

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, I don't make the call on whether or not it will be significant or not. That's the Office of Management and Budget, but, based on the criteria, it certainly wouldn't hit the economic threshold, and, if they deemed it controversial, or some other aspect, that could raise it to significant, and then, yes, it could be defined as that. I don't expect it would be, right, based on what I've seen.

Regardless, I think, Tom, your points are well taken, right, and so this is separate and distinct from Amendment 46. Also, if the states are going down the path of state surveys -- At least the Gulf model has been private only, right, and it hasn't been including the for-hire. We don't know, at this point what the states are considering, if for-hire are going to get wrapped up in that or not, and so we're going to be under the same challenges if this is an MRIP data collection program, and so do you want to make improvements to SEFHIER?

I will say, if you want to abandon improvements to SEFHIER, then I think the other thing that you would want to consider is, for deregulatory, then eliminating the SEFHIER program, because, as it stands now, it's not functional, and it's not simply not functioning because of a lack of funding. There are certainly fundamental problems just with how we are able to regulate and implement that program.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I don't want it to default back to MRIP, right? I mean, our fishermen don't want that. I mean, we hear, from our for-hire sector, how frustrated they are with the data collection, and this is us responding to our stakeholders. Now, it's going to take some understanding of why we have this, and why it is needed, but I am with Andy. We know the program doesn't work, and

it can't be validated, and that it's likely not going to produce good data going forward, and so, unfortunately, as someone who has been a proponent of for-hire data collection my entire career, if we can't fix this, we should just get rid of it.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tom. That's --

MR. ROLLER: To be clear, I don't want that.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and I don't think anybody -- I think everybody is all in support of getting better data, but we've got to be realistic in trying to achieve that data, and so, Amy, did you want to say something?

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate the conversation very much. I just don't want to necessarily go backwards in time. For the first time in a long time, the SEFHIER data was presented during SEDAR 90, and, in many cases, it was chosen as the preferred data set for red snapper moving forward, and I was encouraged by that.

I want to make sure that we're highlighting these successes, although they might be small, and, if we could gain some of that traction, I think that this program has a lot of utility, and I definitely don't want to go backwards in time and say to eliminate this reporting requirement. I would like to figure out better ways to improve it, maybe through other actions that maybe aren't so specific as this reporting improvement. There are other -- I just think that there's other ways that we can tackle this, other than going down through this amendment, and I feel like pausing it, or at least sort of putting it, from a prioritization list, down a little bit is helpful, but I definitely don't want it to completely go away.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Amy. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess I'm struggling to understand, and we can also talk offline if you don't have an answer, but what does handle it another way look like? I guess, you know, I can see another path for the items in Amendment 46, but it's just -- Just because I can't see a path, it doesn't mean that we don't have an answer, and we just haven't gotten there yet, but I don't know. I just don't know what take another path on this looks like, and are we taking that path with the Gulf, and like just how are we doing this, I guess.

MS. DUKES: I'm not exactly sure, and so 100 percent, and I was like -- I just hadn't thought about it. This conversation just started, and so we'll definitely put some thought into it, and offline conversations sound great. I just don't want this to completely fall off the radar or to go in a backwards direction.

MS. MURPHEY: So, from the conversation around the table, I'm hearing that we don't want to lose this, but this is probably -- This is maybe wants to go drop on our priorities, just with the realities that we're facing with the current SEFHIER program improvements. Again, the Gulf -- I would kind of like to hear how the Gulf moves forward, when they meet again, and so I think this maybe goes the route of the private rec, is let's just drop this down to a lower priority, and not send it to -- Was it public hearing?

MR. CARMICHAEL: This is a discussion that's not going to hearing until December, would be the approval.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, and so, anyway, I just -- That's why I seem to be hearing, and is everybody in agreement? I've got Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and, I mean, I'm hearing the same thing, Trish. I think the caveat that I'll add is the Gulf Council maybe hasn't dropped it to as low of a priority, right, and so, the more misalignment we have, especially if they're wanting to move forward, the more challenging I think that is for the region, to have one portion of the region operating under potentially an improved for-hire program and the other not, and so I do want to go back, and you know, bring this conversation to my leadership, and talk to them, and then I can have a conversation with you and John about kind of perspectives from the agency, on especially recreational data collection improvements.

MS. MURPHEY: Tom and then Carolyn.

MR. ROLLER: I appreciate that clarification, Andy, and the fact that the Gulf really hasn't dropped it in the priority, but I am interested of at least not misaligning it with the Gulf process, right, and so, if we can kind of keep some sort of the same timeline, I think that could be beneficial for us, and I'm going to add that, you know, in the discussion about doing things differently, this isn't exactly reinventing the wheel here. You know, these are pretty basic changes. Now they will be impactful to the program, but this is a pretty well-debated idea of how to make this work, and make it more enforceable, and likely with less resources.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Andy, when is the -- Or, C.J., when is the Gulf planning on having theirs approved for public hearing? C.J.

DR. SWEETMAN: To be determined. We still have some details that we need to iron out within whether we move forward with economic components of it. There's a lot of fine-scale details, and so I would say it's not going to be ready for -- The next time that the Gulf Council addresses it, it's not going to be ready for public hearing after that. I think we probably need to bring it forward for a couple of meetings, if the Gulf Council wanted to set that forward. Now, we haven't had this discussion that you all are having, in light of the current economic climate, and so I will just caveat that as well.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, C.J. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: So just a question, and it's more or less tying it to, as we look at the notes on the workplan as well, you know, timeline depending on availability permit data, and I know Andy has kind of said, working forward, maybe September-ish, and what if -- If his one is kind of on that teeter-totter, we kind of wait, and see what happens with the permit, and maybe it's something we bring back up in December. Then we can revisit there, see what things are looking like, and have that conversation then. That's just a thought, if that's part of -- Again, part of the linchpin is there's pieces and parts that aren't there, and we're not ready to basically retire the jersey as of yet, or, again, move it to the bottom of the queue, and maybe that's a halfway point.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and I think those are good points, Carolyn. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and, I mean, the permit data, obviously, is needed. I don't see that though as the holdup for the amendment, in terms of us proceeding and continue to have conversation around it, if you want to add it to future work plan agendas, right, and so we will keep you updated on progress made with the permits data, and, to the extent that that can get plugged in and helps with amendments, whether it's SEFHIER or anything else, we'll let you know.

MS. MURPHEY: So what is the pleasure of this council? I think I'm hearing that we just need to postpone our discussion. I would like to hear, you know, more how the Gulf moves forward, when they get another opportunity to discuss it, because I'm with Andy. I'm not sure I really -- I'm afraid -- I don't want to, you know, go 180 on each other, and so is the council okay with just postponing this discussion until a later date, be it -- We can determine that later, and I don't know if John has got an idea of what a later date might be. December? How does everyone feel about that? I'm just throwing this out there, from based off the discussion we've had. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: So you're asking us, the conversation that we were about to have this morning, to postpone that to December, just to be clear?

MR. MURPHEY: That's correct. Based off the conversation we've already had, it just seems to make sense, to me, to postpone that, but I ask you guys, and so I've got Charlie, and then Carolyn.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and we definitely -- I think we definitely need postpone it, and then I would like to see, you know, John's new workplan, to make sure that we've got the hours that the staff needs to do what we need to do, and then, if we need to tweak something, or move it around, but, you know, I can't tell what their hours are looking like now, and I think, just for efficiency in John's staff, we really need to see that, too.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Charlie. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Yes, and so, Tom, I was just thinking, you know, because we're looking at our benchmarks, and we're not just talking about the document in December, and we're actually supposed to be looking at public hearing, putting it out for public hearing, and so that was where my thought was. If we just shift everything basically by two time windows, it's just pushing us out a little bit farther for the discussion, if we need to have it, and not protracting it, or doing anything crazy, but just shifting us in the timeline.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Carolyn. John, did you --

MR. CARMICHAEL: So we're just sort of brainstorming logistics a little bit here, and possibly - - Hadley said maybe we need sort of a half-day recreational data session for you guys. I think December makes sense. We've been approached by the MRIP program that they would like to come in December and report out progress of the FES changes and all that stuff that's going on, and the re-envisioning that's been underway, and so we already have that in mind.

I think it would be good then, perhaps, to get a real update on where the Gulf is on their for-hire reporting. I think this is one, in particular, where it's really important that we be as consistent as we can with the Gulf, so that SERO is not trying to put together two programs with -- Even little small wrinkles can throw a real monkey-wrench into how you're doing things, and keep in mind

that there are some stocks that rely on the same data sources that wrap around the State of Florida, and it would really be nice if the data were consistent whether a guy fished on the east side or the west side of US 1.

I think this is one where it's really important that we try to be on the same page with them for the basics, and, considering the challenges the agency is under with resources, it makes it even harder to think they're going to set up two similar, but yet ever so slightly, different things, and have it actually work out, and so how about we spend our time on this topic this morning, on all of this other stuff, and we can say, in December, have a recreational session.

Maybe then we can hear back from, you know, the states, if they have perhaps put their heads together by that time, and can tell us how things are going, you know, even if it's like it's really going to be hard, and it's going to take us a long time, and just kind of get up to speed on these issues, and maybe get some sense of what the council thinks are the most important things.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John. That sounds like a great idea. I have Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Can you add to that list, for that session, the, you know, outcomes, or results, from year-one of Florida's EFP? We should be ready by then. Can you put that in that group?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, ma'am. We can do that.

MR. CARMICHAEL: See, and it's coming together. Just to bring us around, and so I think we've gone through all the topics. We've gotten wonderful guidance here. We've pulled a few things off the list, to help the workload concerns. I was very concerned about three As in December, and I believe we've resolved one of those.

I think we've resolved one of those, with the 46 being pushed back, and I think that will certainly help with the Regional Office workload, because they've got a lot to do after we hit that A, and so this will give now, I think, John and Rick a chance to get in here, and really consider the respective staff resources, and see if we need to do a little more juggling of things like As, or PH's, to make sure that it comes together into a reasonable workload, and then circle back to you at Full Council, at the end of the week, with that.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John. I have Amy, and then Andy, and then we'll wrap-up.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and just -- Not to beat a dead horse, but it would also be helpful for information about how HMS is moving forward with their reporting requirements with for-hire, just so that, again, we're trying to attack that one-stop reporting for the efficiency of our constituents who have to report. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Great, and that's a great idea, because that actually had crossed my mind earlier, was what were they doing. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: One other thing to maybe broadly add to the list right now is we'll be coming back in September and talking about the deregulatory actions related to the executive order, or seafood competitiveness, and we have some of those already kind of embedded in this list, but, to

the extent that there's broader ideas that the council is going to want to pursue, kind of adding that as an amendment, or actions, that are work through the council process as well.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Andy. All right. Well, I think we basically have got it. I think we've got a pretty good first blush on the workplan. We've made a decision to hold off on the for-hire, and we are on time, and I think we are on time, right, and so we will take a break and start at 10:15. Thank you, guys, so much. I know that was kind of a pivot, but I think we got good conversation there, and really hit some stuff that we needed to hit, and so thank you, all.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MURPHEY: All right, everybody. We want to go ahead and get started, if everybody can get back to their seats. Thanks, everybody. We'll go ahead and get back started. We're going to hear about the terms of reference for gag, and then that's going to be followed by the headboat report, and so I'll go ahead and turn it over to Judd for the gag TORs. Thank you.

DR. CURTIS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and so you have Attachment 5, which is the gag terms of reference for the next stock assessment for South Atlantic gag grouper, in your briefing book, and so, if you recall, this document goes to the SSC for comments, and their recommendations, after we have generated the scope of work, to inform these terms of reference that are done in concert with the Science Center.

Then you all have a chance to review the terms of reference before we submit a final request to the Science Center for the next assessment for gag grouper. The SEDAR number has yet to be determined, but that will be filled out, I'm assuming at the next SEDAR Steering Committee meeting, and so here you have the documents.

It's pretty standard language for most of the points. There were a few items that are a little bit new, based on recent changes in procedure at SEDAR, and other things that are being considered, but I'll go through them one at a time, and assuming there's -- Raise your hand, I guess, if you have any questions about each of the terms of reference as we go through them.

Term of Reference Number 1 is pretty standard language for the inclusion of the recent data in the assessment. One thing that we have been kind of going back and forth on is whether to specify these terminal years, as you've seen in past terms of references, or not, and simply make a statement that says include, you know, the most recent available data, and including preliminary or partial data for more recent years that could be used in the stock assessment.

The SSC had a comment here that they preferred to specify a terminal year in this Term of Reference Number 1, and so we could include that. We would likely be specifying a terminal year of 2024 for this assessment then, assuming these terms of reference get submitted to the Science Center and the stock assessment begins next year, which is -- Or at the beginning of next year, which is what it is currently on the SEDAR schedule, and so then we would have a terminal year of 2024, with inclusion of partial or preliminary data of 2025, and so that's one area that I would like some feedback on, if you want to specify a terminal year of 2024 or not.

MS. MURPHEY: Any comments on the whether to specify a terminal year, and I think we were talking about 2024, is what we're talking about. Any feelings?

DR. CURTIS: Correct. It would be a terminal year of 2024. The statements of inclusion of preliminary and partial data would still remain intact. We would just have a terminal year of 2024.

MS. MURPHEY: Chip.

DR. COLLIER: The reason that, for some of these, where we don't want to have a terminal year listed, it's -- Let's say the assessment -- It's projected to start early in the year, but let's say it starts in June. Well, with a terminal year of 2024, they could have included 2025, for landings data and things like that, if they started just a few months later, but we don't dictate when the Science Center starts working on this, and so that's where it gets a little confusing.

Then, when you're talking about indices of abundance, terminal year is very important, because they do a modeling approach to estimate the index of abundance, and that includes all years, and certain years can influence other years down the line, and so it is good to have a terminal year, but then it's also not good. That's why we're having this debate, and it can be a bit of a struggle.

MS. MURPHEY: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think we're fine. I'm fine with 2024 being the terminal year.

MS. MURPHEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I can see both sides of why they want it open-ended, but I still go back to thinking about quality checking and all of that. Just because you can get 2025 in, it doesn't mean that it's been QA/QC'd. You know, I mean, I think there's some of that aspect to it, where at least you know, that, you know, we should -- By the time this goes into the queue, 2024 should be good to go, as opposed to, well, we're still cleaning it up, but it will be ready by then, and so I'm with Jessica. I don't have a problem with a terminal of 2024.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and I love the additional language of, if additional data is available and ready to go, to be able to be added as well. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Anybody else? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and, I mean, I certainly would lean toward, if the data is available, let's use it. We often talk about we're way behind with regard to what's happening in the fisheries, and so this is just another year of time lag, if we're not incorporating the most recent data, and so adding some flexibility to -- Whether it's 2024 or the most recent year of data added after that.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. I think we'll add 2024, and it has -- The comments are that if there's -- You know, use the more available data, if you've got it, and does that cover it for you, Judd?

DR. CURTIS: Yes, and that sounds good. Thanks for the clarification. We'll include the terminal year of 2024, and also retain the language to include all the preliminary and partial data, as available.

Moving on to Term of References Number 2, this is specific to the BAM model configurations and data calculations, and so this is saying -- Not only detailing the changes made using the new -
- Whatever the new SEDAR number assessment model is going to be, and then also doing a continuity run with the previous SEDAR 71 operational assessment configuration, to look at the changes, and then document the changes.

Term of Reference Number 3 is to the inclusion of any new and updated information on life history, mortality, and other parameters here, and, again, documenting the changes that have been made since the last SEDAR 71 assessment was provided, and then also to include any sensitivity analyses, as needed, to compare those results between new values.

One thing to mention here also, and I think it's captured in this language, but, for SEDAR 90, as was mentioned earlier this week, we did include -- Or it was recommended in the data workshop to include some other sources of information, such as the citizen science -- Some of the citizen science data from Release and other sources, and that's captured in this term of reference here, through the updated information and all those different parameters, but, if the council wanted to specify any additional language, to see what data inputs they wanted specifically included, you could add something here, but, again, we don't want to get too explicit, or prescriptive, with these things, and keeping it broad is probably better, to then allow inclusion of all those different sources.

MS. MURPHEY: Is everybody good with that, keeping it broad? All right. I see heads shaking, so thank you.

DR. CURTIS: Term of reference Number 4 is to update the --

MS. MURPHEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you. Going back to 3 for a minute, and I just want to make sure I've got my arms wrapped around this, and maybe I'll need Chip to help me with this, but does that terminology in there, about the commercial and recreational landings and discards, in pounds and numbers -- Is that getting to where I've asked to get to, as far as presenting this such that we get an ABC that can be split between commercial and recreational, and then each sector's discards taken out of it, because that seems to be the same language we had in the black sea bass, but we could not get there. We didn't get that, even though we asked for it, and so I want to make sure that we get that this time. I mean, I don't understand, if that language is in there, why we couldn't get there with black sea bass.

DR. CURTIS: So would including a statement here saying like to provide commercial and recreational landings and discards by sector and total, in pounds and numbers, something to that extent?

MR. GRINER: Whatever makes the SSC give us the information we've asked for. You know, I mean, I don't -- I'm not sure why we couldn't get it with black sea bass, but what we want is we want each sector's ABC and discards, so that we can take each sector's -- So that we can look at each sector's discards and come up with an ACL.

DR. COLLIER: It was written to be able to account for that.

MR. GRINER: We just weren't able to get it? I mean, I just want to make sure we don't repeat whatever problem we had with black sea bass.

DR. COLLIER: If you remember, with black sea bass, it's the huge number of recreational discards that was causing the issue, and the allocation within there that was causing some interplay, that they couldn't -- Basically, we couldn't get an open season for the commercial fishery, is what was causing that issue, because of the magnitude of the recreational discards. I don't believe it's going to be as bad for gag grouper, and so it should be able to be separated out a little bit easier, and so we would have an ABC for recreational and an ABC for commercial.

MR. GRINER: Right. Great. That's exactly what we're getting to, but, you know, and maybe this is a separate discussion, and so I won't harp on it too much right here, right now, but, you know, whether or not that number -- Whether or not that discard number is big or little or somewhere in between, it really doesn't -- That's a management thing, and that doesn't really have anything to do with the SSC.

MS. MURPHEY: So, Tim, I think Judd has captured your comments there. It says to include landings and discards by sector and total, and so is that --

MR. GRINER: Yes. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, and so Judd has captured that. Then Chip.

DR. COLLIER: As you guys were talking about reducing your workload, this is something that's likely to increase your workload. If we're going to be separating out landings and discards, we need to know some level of allocation between the two, between sectors, because we -- Right now, all we do allocation on is landed pounds, and there's a very -- There can be pretty big differences between discards between the recreational and commercial sector, and they don't necessarily follow what our allocation has been done, and so we would probably need to have that conversation at some point.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Chip, and we can pencil that conversation in somewhere here, and so is everybody good with that, where we are so far?

DR. CURTIS: Okay. Moving on to Term of Reference Number 4, this is talking about updating the model parameter estimates and variances, as well as the various management benchmarks and estimates of stock status, and so we've talked at length about this. We'll hear, a little bit later today, about, you know, MSY estimates, and proxies, and so this specifies, you know, when or -- You know, evaluation of using the MSY estimates, if possible, but also a range of MSY benchmark proxies, if that is what the recommended approach is, and determine which best proxy approximates MSY.

Then providing a bunch of the benchmark parameters, such as fishing mortality, yield, discards, et cetera, that correspond to the MSY or its chosen proxy. One of the comments from the SSC here was they wanted a little bit more explicit language that, if an MSY proxy is recommended, to provide some justification for its use over an MSY estimate, and the rationale supporting the value chosen, for example an SPR percentage. I didn't include that as like 4c, but I can -- If you see that

comment on the right side, we can include that as a 4c term of reference, unless there's some dissent.

MS. MURPHEY: Any feelings on that? Let me look to Amy, or Carolyn, to see if they may have any thoughts. Okay. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Could you repeat that again, please, Judd?

DR. CURTIS: The statement from the SSC was that if the -- If an MSY proxy is recommended, then to provide some justification for its use over the MSY, as opposed to using a direct estimate of the MSY, of what percent SPR proxy you're using and why, with further justification of that rationale.

MS. MURPHEY: I just -- Go ahead, Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I think this would be a good question for Luiz's talk, or when we get into the MSY, because this is kind of like almost one of those chicken-and-egg arguments, because, in one situation, the SSC recommended, under black sea bass, that we use a different thing, and the question was biology, yada, yada.

Then now it's kind of coming back to us, that, if we want the proxy, we need to explain why we're selecting the proxy, and so I think it would be good to hear from Luiz -- Let's talk about the pros and cons of how that value is determined, maybe. I mean, like I said, it doesn't need to be done right now, but I think maybe that's something that we could revisit. Are there other thoughts from folks?

MS. MURPHEY: That makes sense to me. I think C.J. raised his hand. C.J.

DR. SWEETMAN: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes and we'll definitely hear about this in Luiz's presentation later on, but, if you all recall the way that the last joint SSC meeting went, they were trying to estimate MSY through steepness, right, and, ultimately, it was determined that those levels were highly uncertain, and they chose not to use the steepness estimates, because of that. Even though that the model could predict what MSY would be, they chose not to use it, because it was highly uncertain. Therefore, they chose the MSY proxy methodology, and they did justify as to why that went, and so I think that kind of aligns with what you're talking about here, Madam Chair.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thanks, and so do we want to just leave this at this point, listen to Luiz, and maybe come back? Does that sound okay? We'll just hold off on --

DR. CURTIS: Yes, and that's fine. I think we can put a pin in that and wait for these other presentations and discussion on the proxies, and that sounds good.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Thanks. Thanks, you guys.

DR. CURTIS: Moving along to Number 5, it's looking at documenting specific changes in the input data or deviations. One of the data inputs here from the SERFS video survey is length compositions, that haven't been previously integrated, and this would be done on an as-feasible

level, and so there is some evidence that they're gaining length compositions from the SERFS video survey. It's uncertain yet whether that would be extensive enough to be able to include into the assessment model, and so that's where that "as feasible" comes in, but the SSC determined that it would be a good -- It would be a very valuable input source, if it is available and feasible to integrate, and so that's why that language is there.

5b has to do with various natural mortality estimates, including subsets from the latest literature and other research, considering direct estimation methods, such as telemetry or conventional tagging, and then also considering estimation of natural mortality within the stock assessment, which was something that Dr. Williams, from the Science Center, wanted to include, and then 5c is, if you recall, the South Atlantic SSC had a catch level projections workgroup that helped identify some best guidance for setting OFLs and ABC benchmarks, and various recruitment time series and things, and so there's the whole workgroup associated with that, workgroup report associated with that, and that's linked, and so just to specify that they should follow -- The analysts should follow these recommendations.

MS. MURPHEY: Is everybody good with 5? I think we're good with 5.

DR. CURTIS: Okay. Not seeing any other hands, moving on to 6, and so, during the scope of work process, it was identified that people wanted to see a topical working group as part of this assessment framework. This would include representatives from the SSC, industry, and other outside experts to meet prior to the assessment development to go over this specific topic.

In this case of gag, the specific topic has to do with reproductive dynamics, and this is something that was discussed at length during the SEDAR 90 South Atlantic red snapper data workshop, in the life history group, and there was a lot of information that was presented that would be relevant to the gag assessment, most likely, here, and so that's why this language is included as this term of reference.

Again, this would be investigated as necessary, if there's enough information to consider changing some of the reproductive dynamic parameters that get integrated into the stock assessment, but, instead of having a full data workshop, like we did for the red snapper assessment, we would have just this topical working group to look specifically at this reproductive dynamics issue.

MS. MURPHEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Is this topical working group convened to look at some new data that has come forth in reproductive dynamics of gag?

DR. CURTIS: Yes, and I think we staff would be reaching out to some of the investigators that have been producing new information on reproductive dynamics, and then either bring that to you all, or the SSC decide if there was enough information there that would merit, you know, forming an entire topical working group to look at this thing, but there's been, you know, pretty substantial work that has shown things like maybe spawning stock biomass might be a better metric for biomass than like total egg production. That was one of the changes made in the red snapper assessment, and so a similar application could be applied here for gag as well.

MR. GRINER: Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: I guess moving along.

DR. CURTIS: One of the new terms of reference that we've included here is Number 7, and so this -- We're kind of putting the cart a little bit before the horse here with the changes in the SEDAR process, but there's going to be more of an influence, with the assessment phase, from external members, as part of convening these technical workgroups.

That's what this term of reference specifies, is to convene this technical workgroup, including SSC representatives, industry, and outside technical experts to meet to review the model development and provide guidance during the assessment phase, and that would take the place of those more traditional assessment workshops that were previously done, and so these would be done on a little bit more of an ad hoc process, but there would be guidance from external sources, and experts, to help guide the assessment model development.

MS. MURPHEY: Everybody good with 7?

DR. CURTIS: Then, moving along to 8, it's just computing the short-term and long-term population projections necessary to provide your benchmark estimates of OFL and ABC, and then, in the event that it is considered to be in an overfished state, looking at what population projections are necessary to address overfishing and overfished stock conditions. Then, lastly, Term of Reference 9 is just to develop the stock assessment report that addresses all these terms and to fully document the input data methods and results.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Judd. Anybody have any questions or additional -- Okay. Tim.

MR. GRINER: So, going back to Number 8 for a minute, and going back to the breakout between sectors, and so, when you provide an OFL estimate, can that OFL estimate be given -- Broken down back out to where there's an OFL for recreational and an OFL for commercial, and then it splits down and you get ABC advice for recreational and ABC advice for commercial? Is that possible?

DR. COLLIER: So my thought with that is it would be better to have a single OFL, and then you could have the ABCs broken out among sectors, and then into the different parts of the catch, landings and discards.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Chip.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other questions? Is everyone good with these terms of reference? Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Where do we land on the MSY proxy? Are we going to circle back to that when we have Luiz's presentation?

MS. MURPHEY: I think we are going to circle back. Listen to Luiz, and go from there, but, at this point, is -- Are we good with that, and I guess maybe we can take -- After listening to Luiz, maybe we can come back to that, and is that -- Do you think that's doable? We'll come back to that final TOR, but is everyone else -- Is everybody good with the rest of the TORs, and we'll

revisit that one? Yes? All right. I see heads shaking, yes, and so we'll do that, and so thank you, Judd.

DR. CURTIS: Great. Thank you.

DR. COLLIER: So, just to make sure somebody remembers, this will mean we'll need a motion to approve the terms of reference for this gag assessment on Friday.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. We'll do that on Friday. Okay. All right, and I guess now we will go to the headboat report, and that will be Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Okay, and so this will be going over Attachments 6a and 6b. I have 6a open. I'm not going to be necessarily going through that. I put together a presentation, one to describe what we talked about last in December, when we presented some of the headboat information, and just a reminder of why we're giving this presentation, and the council was concerned with vessel-based bag limits for the headboat component of the recreational sector.

Once again, we provided you information in December 2024, and now the Southeast Region headboat staff provided information for this request. They did a great job putting it all together. In 2024, we provided you just a description of the fishery trends and effort, some of the commonly-caught species, and then we looked at catch per unit effort for some of the select species.

The requested information for this one was looking at changes in effort. One of them was looking at capacity, and another one was looking at vessel length, and then the minimum number of passengers that a vessel would need in order to go out. Information on species composition and depth fished, and then, finally, a map of where the vessels were.

Just going into the reminder of what we talked about in December, if you remember, they were very different effort north and south of Cape Canaveral. If you look at these two, it's color-coded, and the reddish color is the full-day trips, and then in the bluish color are half-day trips, and so you can see, in the northern region, there are a lot more full-day trips. In addition to that, those full-day trips, the number of those have been going down over time, and then, if you look in the southern area, you can see it's almost all half-day trips. There was a spike there in the early -- Or around 2015, and then it's been pretty level since then.

Going into the commonly-caught species, I have this separated out north and south of Cape Hatteras. That's what that bar is indicating. The most common species for the headboat was vermilion snapper and white grunt, and then, to the right, I have some images of fish that are common as well, with tomtate and spottail finfish, and their importance increasing over the past five decades, whereas we're seeing a decrease in importance for black sea bass and red porgy.

Following a similar approach for the area south of Cape Canaveral, yellowtail snapper, white grunt, and lane snapper were very important, with an increase in importance of gray snapper, and a decrease in importance of vermilion snapper, as far as commonly-caught species.

Now, getting into the new information, we looked at percent full, or they looked at percent full, trips a couple different of ways. One was the maximum capacity on a vessel. The other was looking at 95th percentile, and, ultimately, it was decided to use the 95th percentile as the metric,

and I'll go through this graph, because it can be a little bit difficult to read, but, if you look on the X-axis, this is looking at the years of the headboat survey from 1981 all the way through 2024. In the orange, or reddish color, we have the north of Cape Canaveral. In the bluish, we have south of Cape Canaveral. In black, that is going to be the mean, and then you also have the 75th and 25th percentiles at the end of these, and then you go up all the way to the 95th percentile and 5th percentile, and that's what these long bars mean.

What we're looking at with this graph is trying to see if there's been a change in percent full over time. It doesn't appear that there's been much change in percent full over time. It's been varying, bouncing up and down. It's usually about 50 percent full.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Chip, do you have the reference points for what that means, like total capacity, and so 50 percent full of what? Is it 10,000 total fishermen that could go, or how many spots are we talking about?

DR. COLLIER: This was for each vessel, looking at each vessel.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: (Mr. Spottswood's comment is not audible on the recording.)

DR. COLLIER: I would have to go in and multiply that out. Then we also looked at vessel length as a potential way to look at capacity. Once again, we have these -- This information was just from 2007, all the way up to 2024. The lengths, there weren't as many lengths going back in time, and it wasn't as reliable. That's why it's a shortened time series, but, overall, you can see the mean length was around sixty feet, and it hasn't changed too much.

You do see an increase here in the variability for the area south of Cape Canaveral, but, overall, it was a very minor change. It's-- This line here is about sixty-two-foot vessels, so you're likely looking at just around maybe a sixty-foot, and so just a two-foot change isn't very big.

Going into the minimum number of passengers, this time series is from 1981 all the way up to 2024, and, once again, this is using the 5th percentile, and not going out to the 100th percentile of the trips, and you can see there's been no real trend in the minimum number of folks needed in order to make a trip. If you remember, there were some of the economic questions on whether or not they were going to be making a trip, and was there a minimum number that they needed, and it was hard to determine, because sometimes some of the headboats will go out with just crew, just to find new areas to fish, or see what was biting, and so we didn't want to include that. That's one of the reasons that that 5 percent is in there. Once again, there's no real trend in the minimum number of passengers, it appears.

Then, looking at the top-five species by month, over the past five years, and this is 2020 to 2025, broken out north of Cape Canaveral and south of Cape Canaveral. Once again, vermilion snapper is one of the most important species, ranking second. It varied among species, ranging from lane snapper, black sea bass, white grunt, spottail pinfish, tomtate, gray triggerfish, scup, and then, again, black sea bass, and these species tend to be repeated as the third-most common, or third-most common, fourth-most common, and fifth-most common.

Going down to the area south of Cape Canaveral, there's a little bit more variability there, where you look at the most common species range between white grunt, yellowtail snapper, and gray

snapper. Once again, these species are repeated throughout the times here, or throughout the most-commonly-caught table, but, also, other important species end up being lane snapper, gray snapper, tomtate, and blue runner, and littlehead porgy.

Then there was a question on discard mortality. If increased effort was going to happen, would this cause an increase in overall discard mortality? A proxy for discard mortality is depth caught, and so we looked at where these trips were typically occurring, and it split out between north and south and the different types of trips that are operating.

As expected, the half-day trips operate in shallower water than full-day trips. Most of the full-day trips that do occur are occurring -- Once again, they're occurring in the northern region, but, in the northern region, those full-day trips are actually in shallower water than what they are in the southern region.

MS. MURPHEY: I've got Tim.

MR. GRINER: Chip, when you're looking at those depths, can you determine, by looking at those depths, whether those are occurring in state waters or federal waters?

DR. COLLIER: No, and it's not reported, in the headboat survey, whether or not they were operating in state waters or federal waters. In the survey, what they do is they're allowed to either choose a block, or they can pinpoint where they were fishing, and I don't know if it is categorized, if that map is categorized, in state waters or in federal waters, but some of these trips could definitely be -- Especially in the southern region, some of those deeper-water trips could actually be in state waters. I've heard David Moss say, many times, that they can catch blueline tilefish in state waters in south Florida.

MR. GRINER: Thank you for that.

DR. COLLIER: Okay, and then, looking at another graph here, what we have separated out is, by depth bin, where most fish were being caught. This is trying to get some information on how discard mortality might be occurring, and so, once again, in the southern region, most of the trips were occurring on half-day trips, and so that's probably a good idea to look at how those are occurring, and so what we have here is, north and south, you can look at the half-day trips, on the left side, and you can see there's very -- Up north, there's very few trips that are doing it, but these half-day trips are usually in thirty to sixty foot of water.

Moving down south, the half-day trips, they're operating in thirty -- This orange bin, which is zero to thirty feet, going all the way up to -- Some of the depths are going out to 121 feet, and deeper, but that's -- Greater than 100 feet tends to be very uncommon for these half-day trips.

Moving over to the right side, this is for full-day trips, and you can see, for the full-day trips up north, most of the trips are occurring between sixty and 120 feet, with some exceptional trips going in less than sixty foot of water, and some going in greater than 120 feet of water. Overall, there's just very few full-day trips down south, and that's why you're seeing very few fish caught there.

Then a map of where the headboat vessels are located. We have it presented two different ways. On the left side, it's color-coded based on the number of vessels, and then, on the right side, I tried

to match up this bar chart with the actual latitude over on the left, and so you can see the number of vessels by latitude, as it's grouped to a single decimal, and, with that, I think that is the last -- Yes, and I wanted to say a special thanks to Rob for putting this all together, and he did a great job. He got it to us quickly, and I think did a very thorough analysis.

I had to limit the amount of tables that I presented to you all. Otherwise, we would be here for another hour, but he, I believe, provided you all the information that you would ever want on this fishery, and so please let me know if you have any other questions.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Chip. I see Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Yes, and I was trying to look back to the minutes from the last meeting, but this presentation was really to help inform us on kind of how the headboats are participating in the fishery, as we look at maybe special rules for headboats, right, Chip? Okay. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, and thanks, Chip. How many headboats are actually operating in the South Atlantic? Do we have that? Can you determine that number from this data?

MS. DUKES: Chip, I'll help you out. It's in the report. It is on Table 1, and, in 2024, there were sixty-two vessels. It's been in the sixties. You've got it. Never mind.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other questions, or comments? Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Well, we were just multiplying out the overall number of people that could be going out on a single day on a headboat. It looks like it's sixty-two times sixty-two, and so 3,600 people, but that's not likely to be occurring.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Yes, and I just think that was important, to kind of put in respect, you know, what the impact of some of these can be, and, you know, understanding these operations, and how they're operating. You know, this information, to me, makes me feel much more strongly that we can be a little more permissive in allowing, you know, headboats to have some rules special to them, that allow them to operate a different way. I mean, we're talking about 1,600 people fishing, and, to a large extent, a lot of that is occurring in shallow water.

You know, we're not having the barotrauma issues with most of these, and, if you look at the types of fish being caught, you know, snappers, grunts, other, I think this is a -- I would suggest a relatively, you know, low-impact fishery, and a good one, that gives a lot of people access, and certainly serves folks that don't own boats, and otherwise wouldn't be able to get out and fish.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Robert. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I agree with you 100 percent, and so now I think -- You know, I don't want to just be like great report, and good job, and we certainly -- I mean, I do. It is a great report, and good job, and now let's think about what we're going to do with this information.

The way I think we could really talk about this is later in snapper grouper, when we're talking about our innovation plan, and we're looking at sort of the different goalposts we have for different fisheries, and, in my mind, this is a fishery we absolutely say, you know, what's a goalpost for this fishery, and is it different than a goalpost for a private -- You know, a private recreational or six-pack for-hire, and it's obviously different than commercial, and use this information to inform how we can help these guys out.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Kerry. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Kerry, I agree, and, when we get there, staff, if you could identify -- I think there were a couple of things that we talked through at last meeting, or the meeting before, where we specifically were saying why don't we -- You know, boat limits, for example, I think were a part of the discussion, right, and so should these apply to headboats, and so, if you could help us kind of highlight those, and I think we should figure out how, sooner rather than later, to make some action on those.

MS. MURPHEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Robert, and that's where I was headed. I mean, the whole purpose for me was how do we figure out a formula for a headboat that averages sixty head of passengers, and with vessel limits on like gag grouper. I mean, it's just -- It's not fair to them, or those passengers, to be held to a vessel limit, when there's sixty people onboard, when really that vessel limit was intended for a private recreational, or a six-pack, and that's why this information is important to have, and how do we manage a vessel limit for a headboat differently, and come up with a formula for that? Well, this gives us the average, so that we can make some sense of all of it. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jimmy. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, and so, yes, I agree. I like the idea of considering this in Snapper Grouper, and so, specifically, it came up from the AP, when they were talking about gag and black, but I would also like to consider it for snowy as well, and I'm thinking about it relative to some sort of vessel limit associated with every six passengers or something, and I wanted to bring this up also because you're going to see Florida's EFPs, you know, year-two of our EFPs, and we were listening to the public comment.

We have added a headboat to one of the EFPs, and this is how we figured it out, was we're trying to do some analysis per six passengers, and so I just wanted to put that out there, and, when the AP talked about it, it seemed like they were focused on gag and black, but I would also like to consider it for snowy as well.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thanks, Jessica. I think some good suggestions there. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: My brain has not had time to wrap around this, but maybe this is something we can talk about, or we can get input from other people, but, as you talk about this concept of this aggregate bag limit, if the aggregate bag limit was across the board for all of the private recreational sector, does that solve this problem for these folks too, and so just -- I don't know the answer, but

I'm saying -- When we talk about our innovation plan, remember what we're going to talk about is nothing is too crazy to think about.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Jessica, I would just add to it blackfin tuna, and we've got a couple of others, and so, just as -- You know, that's not going to be in snapper grouper, but for --

MS. MCCAWLEY: I added it to the FWC list.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: There you go. That's -- I was directing it to Jessica.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Robert. I know Jessica appreciates that. Jessica has got it. Any other comments, or questions? Is there any other information we would like to know? I think this -- As Chip said, this was pretty -- Going through the report, it was pretty extensive, and, you know, a lot of information in there. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I probably should know the answer to this question, and, you know, back to Kerry's point, if we were to be able to give these fishermen the same aggregate catch, at some point in time, that the charter boats are getting, why would a fisherman, an independent angler, not be able to catch the same thing on a headboat that they would be able to catch on a charter boat or a private boat? I'm just trying to wrap my head why -- What makes them in a lower category?

MS. MURPHEY: I'll let Kerry answer that.

MS. MARHEFKA: To that point, they wouldn't, and that's not the intent. I think I -- Maybe I wasn't very clear, or just assuming that we were all thinking the same thing, when we probably weren't. One of the concerns is, as we've discussed different regulations outside -- As we discuss different regulations for the headboat sector, in order to help them, is going down that road we've always had to talk about, which is do we have to do sector separation, and we all are aware of the pitfalls of sector separation, and so, if there's a way to skin this cat without having to do sector separation, and it is equal for everyone, then that's where my mind was going, and not that there's -- That the rules should be -- Not that their lives should be harder. We're trying to make their lives easier.

MS. MURPHEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and that's where I was going. You know, that's really where I was going, is why isn't there equality here, because there's obviously not.

MS. MURPHEY: I think that's what started the discussion over a year ago. I guess it's been a while that we've been discussing it, and so I know it's been kind of close to my heart, and so, anyway, any other questions, or comments, on this report, or -- So I think, as we move forward in both talking about innovation, and I guess other amendments, as they come up, we can take into account what we've learned about the headboat industry, and so any other -- Is everybody good? Jimmy.

MR. HULL: So how do we address the issue that they are facing currently with vessel limits on certain species at this time, and so it's affecting them now, and so when are we going to -- When are we going to be able to try to give them some relief?

MS. MURPHEY: We'll be talking about it in Snapper Grouper, and, you know, ongoing amendments, future amendments, and I think that they will get, you know, consideration in those discussions, is my vision of that. I don't know if anybody else has any thoughts, but I think, you know, we're going to use this information, you know, moving forward, to account for them.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: I just wanted to echo Chip's comments and really thank Rob Cheshire, and his group, for putting this together. It was very detailed, and I very much appreciated it. It answered a lot of the questions that we had posed to them, and did it in a way that it was very digestible, and so thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Anything else? We are at lunchtime, but we've got an hour. Hang on just a minute. Everyone, I think we might -- I think we're going to go ahead and start Mackerel Cobia, and get through -- We'll have a five-minute break, so they can get set up, but we're going to go ahead and just get started with Mackerel Cobia, and so hang on, everyone.

All right, everyone. After some discussion, we're going to go ahead and break for lunch. We will return at 1:30 and start with Mackerel Cobia. That way, those folks that are online -- They can get on in the afternoon, if they were waiting on Mackerel Cobia, and just being cognizant of the agenda and those folks that are listening online, and so thank you, guys, and be back at 1:30.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on June 10, 2025.)

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Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
July 30, 2025

FC 1
Mon 6/9

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SAFMC June 2025

Attendee Report: Council Meeting

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06/18/2025 09:57 AM EDT

Webinar ID

494-531-643

Actual Start Date/Time

06/09/2025 01:23 PM EDT

Duration

4 hours 13 minutes

Staff Details

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Not applicable for staff

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collier	chip
gloeckner	david
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gwin	sonny
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SAFMC June 2025

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06/18/2025 10:01 AM EDT

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494-531-643

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06/10/2025 07:57 AM EDT

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Bruger

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Bunting

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Carrigan

Cermak

Curtis

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DeVictor

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Delrosario

Dobbs

Downes

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Potter	Caroline
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Williams	Travis
Wilms	Olivia
Wilms	Sean
Withers	Meg
Wolfe	Wes
Woodstock	Matt
Zapf	Daniel
banks	kesley
collier	chip
ealahan	maranda
griner	tim
gwin	sonny
laks	Ira
marinko	Jeff

moss
reynolds
sandorf
tarpley
thomas
vara
vincent
zales

david
kris
Scott
sean
suz
mary
matthew
bob