

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

DOLPHIN WAHOO ADVISORY PANEL

**Town and Country Inn
Charleston, S.C.**

April 22-23, 2025

Transcript

Dolphin Wahoo Advisory Panel

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Rom Whitaker III, Vice Chair
James “Chip” Berry
Robert Frevert
Jay Kavanagh
Daniel Owsley
Glen Hopkins

Paul Pancake
Tim Scalise
David Moss
Bill Richardson
Richard DeLizza
Richard Harris

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Observers and Participants

Other observers and participants attached.

The Dolphin Wahoo Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Town and Country Inn in Charleston, South Carolina on April 22, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Jon Reynolds.

MR. REYNOLDS: All right. Welcome, everybody. Bear with me. This is my first time as chair, and so I'll do my best, and, again, I'm Jon Reynolds. I'm from south Florida, a charter fisherman and hook-and-line commercial fisherman, and I just want to welcome everyone again. It's great seeing you guys, and everyone -- Why doesn't everyone introduce themselves, and kind of tell everyone where you're from, and what you represent. If we want to start over there with Jay, that would be great. Thanks.

MR. KAVANAGH: Jay Kavanagh, charter boat fisherman from Hatteras, North Carolina.

MR. SCALISE: Tim Scalise, charter boat captain from Charleston, South Carolina.

MR. PANCAKE: Paul Pancake, and I work for a boat builder in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina.

MR. OWSLEY: Dan Owsley, recreational fisherman, Florida, out of Jacksonville, Florida.

MR. RICHARDSON: Bill Richardson, Virginia Beach, private boat captain.

MR. WHITAKER: Rom Whitaker, charter boat fisherman from Hatteras, North Carolina.

MR. HADLEY: John Hadley, council staff.

MR. HARRIS: Richard Harris, charter boat captain, Oregon Inlet, North Carolina.

MR. MOSS: David Moss, south Florida, rec.

MR. DELIZZA: Richard DeLizza, south Florida and Florida Keys, recreational.

MR. BERRY: I'm Chip Berry from Wilmington, a former retired charter boat captain. I fished in Murrells Inlet and Georgetown. That's where I was berthed, in Blue Water, down that way. Thank you. It's good to see you all.

MR. HADLEY: All right, and, online, we have Bob Frevert. Bob, do you want to introduce yourself?

MR. FREVERT: Hi. Bob Frevert, Jupiter, Florida. I'm a rec.

MR. REYNOLDS: All right. Thank you, guys, and we're going to approve the agenda. Does anyone have any objection to approving this agenda for the April 2025 Dolphin Wahoo AP meeting? Is there any objections? All right. Not seeing any objections, the agenda stands approved, and meeting minutes from our last meeting. Are there any objections to approving the minutes from the previous meeting from anyone? Does anyone have any objections? Okay. Not

seeing any objections, the minutes stand approved, and I'm going to hand it over to John, and he can see if anyone has any public comments, and take it from here.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you, and so there's no one from the public in the room, and so I'm going to turn it over to those on the webinar. If there's anyone on the webinar that would like to make a public comment, please raise your hand, and we'll get you unmuted. All right. Not seeing hands go up online, and so there's no online public comment over the webinar.

I did want to mention that there are public comments that were submitted in writing, and so I'll bring those up really quickly, for those of you that want to look through those. I'm not going to read all the comments, but, if you go to the AP meeting webpage, you can click on "Read Public Comments", and that brings up the written comments that were provided for this AP meeting.

You can see there's several comments there. It starts with the date, who is submitting them, the general location, the city and state where they're from, their affiliation, and then their comments are provided here to the right, and so I encourage you to go look at those, when you do have time, and I just wanted to note that those were submitted on the record for this meeting.

With that, we'll go to the next agenda item, where we'll have the Dolphin Wahoo Committee chair come up and provide some opening remarks. I also wanted to mention that we do have Trish Murphey, Council Member Trish Murphey, who is the chair of the council, online as well and listening, a council member from North Carolina, and so, with that, thank you, and I'll turn it over to Kerry to provide opening remarks.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks, John. Thank you all for being here. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Kerry Marhefka. I am a council member from South Carolina. On the council, I represent the commercial fishing industry. My husband is a commercial, mostly snapper grouper fisherman, but, obviously, he'll -- He's a bandit fisherman, and he will throw lines for mahi as well, and we own a seafood company here in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, and I am the chair of the Dolphin Wahoo Committee on the council. John is going to pull up a slide, and I just have a few brief remarks about what the council has been doing in regards to dolphin.

I can start by saying -- "Holding pattern" wouldn't be the right word, but I don't know how much you all remember, and NMFS is working on an MSE, which is a management strategy evaluation, plan that is hoping to help us inform the decisions we make regarding dolphin, and they're in the process of doing that. Some of you may have been involved in that.

In sort of what started as maybe a parallel process, the council had been talking about developing what we call Regulatory Amendment 3 to the dolphin wahoo fishery, which has some potential changes to bag limits and vessel limits, and I'm trying to think, and there might have been a couple other things in there, and the council has been trying to figure out how the timing of that would work along with the MSE that's being performed. What we have decided is to wait until we hear the results of the MSE, which here's what John has up on the screen now.

The SSC saw the MSE last week, and they had some comments on it, which have not been sort of put in their final report yet, and so, unfortunately, we don't have those comments to show you this time, but the council will hear those comments, and any comments you all have, at our meeting in

June, and then basically what will come out of that is sort of a set of -- A proposed plan going forward in any future action we may really want to take in regards to dolphin.

As we figure that out, you all are the body that will also help us inform those decisions, and so it's a little bit of a slow-moving beast. Dolphin is really sort of the first, or the closest, I guess, and we're doing an MSE for snapper grouper, but dolphin is, I think, even out ahead of that a little bit, and so this will be interesting for us all as we go through that process.

The council is also really interested to hear -- Currently, we're talking about possibly making changes to the requirements for for-hire reporting, and so that is something we're interested to hear your take on today, as well as there's been some discussion about whether or not there's need for a limited entry permit for the for-hire sector, and so not just dolphin wahoo. The council has talked about it in regards to other species as well, and so your input on that would be really valuable to the council.

Finally, in June, we're going to be looking at our research and monitoring plan, and we will be looking for some feedback from you all, to see what you think we need to include on there, as far as dolphin, and there's a lot. I mean, dolphin is definitely something where phenomena that everyone is either perceiving or experiencing could use a lot of science behind it, and so we recognize that there is a lot out there that could really help us. Whether or not we're in a climate, and we're going to actually have the resources, or NOAA is going to have the resources, to achieve that, I don't know, but it's always good to have a list and see, you know, what would be helpful in determining the best management for this fishery.

I think that's everything. As I said, we're not -- This is an interesting time to meet as an AP, because, you know, we're not coming before you at this moment and saying, hey, these are the things we're proposing, and these are the management actions the council is getting ready to take, but that is on the horizon, and your input, even though it's not right in front of you today, is really, really important as we decide what the next steps to take with this fishery are, and so please don't let that deter you from getting into what action you would like to see the council take. It's a good time, actually, to look at actions, because it gets us in early on the ground floor with those ideas, and so I'm here today and tomorrow. Please let me know if you have any questions, and I'll be here listening, so I can make sure that I help take back what you all have discussed today to the council, and so thanks.

MR. WHITAKER: Rom Whitaker. I know you said, the MSE report, you all will, I guess, consider in June, at the council meeting.

MR. HADLEY: The next time the council is scheduled to look at the MSE is in September, I think, and December, but not in June.

MR. WHITAKER: Okay, and I was -- I thought I heard June.

MS. MARHEFKA: Sorry, and that's my bad. We will be able to see what the SSC thought. The SSC's report we will see in June, and their reaction to the MSE, which is a little different, because, you know, our SSC will look at stock assessments and tell us -- You know, sort of like they'll say, hey, this stock assessment is best available science, right, and the MSE is a different form of stock

assessment, and so it's important what they say. It's still -- They still need to say, yes, this is best available science, and so they're still working through that process of learning about the MSE.

MR. WHITAKER: Okay, and I guess, from lack of not being smarter, what is the process, Kerry, once September comes, and you all consider it, and then it -- How does it go from there, I guess would be my question.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm going to do my best, but I'm going to invite John, and, by the way, it's not lack of smartness. It's if you don't breathe, eat and sleep this every day, no one, including myself, because being a council member is not a fulltime job, and no one knows everything. That's why we have staff here, because they do, but what will happen is there were management procedures, or sort of management scenarios, that were plugged into MSE that will help determine -- Sort of to get us to whatever goals we're trying to get at, and the council will look at that, what comes out of the MSE, and what we've heard from the AP, from public comment, from sort of -- We all know where we left off after Amendment 10.

If you all remember, there's been some debate, and sort of the northern part of the fishery was maybe not experiencing, or perceiving, there was a fishing pressure issue with mahi, and the southern part of the fishery was perceiving, or experiencing, something different, right, and so we sort of left off with Reg Amendment 3 there and trying to figure that out, and what is the best way to move forward.

Between the comments you all have, and what comes out of the MSE, the council will then -- The council is the body to take management action, and so the council would then say, yes, we want to -- I presume we would still call it Reg Amendment 3.

I don't know if we would need to develop a whole new amendment, but the council would then say, okay, we now have best available science that we know about the fishery, and we now have public comment, and what action do we think we want to take, and then it would be that process of scoping, or, well, I guess we would still scope, even though we did the MSE. I guess scoping, public comment, and it would come back before you all, probably a couple of times, before the council took final action.

MR. HARRIS: Richard Harris. I missed that somewhere, and who is MSE, and where are they from?

MS. MARHEFKA: We are so bad at this, aren't we? We get so used to talking the language, and so MSE is not a who, and it's a what. It's called management strategy evaluation, and it is a -- John, you're going to have to give me -- I can describe it, but it won't be as articulate as yours. Can you save me, please?

MR. HADLEY: Well, yes, and I'm happy to chime in, and, also, we're going to have an update on it here shortly, and so Cassidy Peterson, from the Science Center, is going to be able to explain it better than me, and not to kick the can, but the idea is to come up with a procedure, using modeling, to model that, if you made X, Y, Z change in the fishery, what could be the outcome of that, and that's part of it.

Then, really, the end goal is that -- Well, the council is sort of using it in two possible ways. As Kerry alluded to, if it's fully -- You know, if everything goes well, and it's fully adopted, then it would help provide advice on catch levels in the fishery, potentially, and then management measures that go along with those catch levels, and so that's sort of the long-term goal.

The short-term goal is that there's a lot of biological modeling that's coming out of this, and so the council may also use that in Regulatory Amendment 3, and so, if the council wants to consider changing the -- I'm just throwing a regulation out there, but changing the bag limit on dolphin, they would have that, okay, this is the effect on the catch, but the MSE -- Part of the MSE output could potentially be here's how it may be expected to affect the biological productivity of the stock, and so how many more dolphin may be in the water, that sort of help to -- Help to kind of steer towards those -- Answering those questions, but we're going to get an update presentation shortly on that, and so hopefully that'll help quite a bit, once Cassidy has a chance to run through her presentation.

MR. HARRIS: One more question, to follow that up. Does the MSE compromise, like this group, the same, or is it from Florida, South Carolina, and Virginia? Where is that coming from?

MR. HADLEY: So there's a small stakeholder work group that's helping guide the MSE process, and so kind of help the MSE team, science team, calibrate their models and say, you know, is this a reasonable expectation or not, and, you know, groundtruth it, and so that group -- There's actually a few members in the room here that are on that group.

We have several AP members that are on there, but it's also made up of people outside of this AP, but the idea is to get a wide geographic range on there from -- I guess it's from New York all the way down to the Florida Keys, people representing different areas of the coast, but, to get to your point about the AP, this AP -- It's not circumventing the AP. That's a group that's meeting regularly to help guide the science team as they go through the MSE modeling exercises and produce the outputs of those models.

The AP will still come in, after that MSE is done, and still have input on, you know, this is -- They will have input on advising the council how to use it, and so it's not -- I just want to make that clear, that it's not circumventing the AP. It's kind of a separate process, but the AP will come in afterwards to advise on it.

MR. REYNOLDS: Richard.

MR. DELIZZA: So the MSE is obviously really important to whatever steps are taken next, and that's pretty clear.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and, I mean, what I should have probably added too is, you know, if you have any experience at all with fisheries management, you may know, you know, sort of the -- I wouldn't say normal, but the traditional stock assessment, for a lot of species, is challenging to do, with a species like mahi, because of their productivity levels, because of their short lives, because of their geographic range, and so this MSE, yes, is important, because it is helping us do what is hard to do in a more traditional -- It's still modeling, but a more traditional -- What I think of as a more traditional stock assessment.

MR. DELIZZA: To prepare for this meeting, I endeavored to try to find minutes on the MSE meetings. I've been told pretty clearly that there are no minutes, that that information is confidential, that you're holding public meetings that the public is not invited to, and that minutes are not going to be provided.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, the council is not -- That's not a council-led process. That's a NOAA process, and so the council is not the ones running those meetings. I have no idea about -- They have a team of lawyers, and so I presume they're doing everything within the bounds of what they're allowed to do, but I can't speak to it, because the council does not run the MSE, and NOAA does, and management decisions are not coming out of the MSE. Management decisions --

MR. DELIZZA: I'm just asking why I can't get copies of minutes of --

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and that's a NOAA question. I don't know if when Cassidy gets on if she can --

MR. DELIZZA: The council is part of NOAA, right?

MS. MARHEFKA: Not in so much as -- Well, I mean, that's a complicated question, but we're not -- We are not -- In many cases, they have their separate processes for things they do that have nothing to do with the council, and this is one of them. We have no control over them.

MR. DELIZZA: No, and I'm not done. Say that part again, about this very important thing, that the council is waiting for, you have no control over.

MS. MARHEFKA: No, and we don't have control over NOAA. We don't -- The council has a very clear laid-out process for how the public is involved through NEPA, the National Environmental Policy Act, through Magnuson, through a few other regulatory frameworks. When the council -- When management goes through the council process, there are very prescribed ways in which public comment happens. When NOAA, which is a separate entity, is doing -- Whether it's their version of science, or I think they have their -- They also have sets of rules they have to follow, but we are not one in the same in this case.

MR. DELIZZA: Okay, and so the council could make decisions without any input on the MSE.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and the council has to have the best scientific information available when they make decisions, and so, yes, the council has made a decision. Regulatory Amendment 3, which the council has been talking about for a few years now, the council could proceed with Regulatory Amendment 3 and make management decisions before this MSE was completed.

MR. DELIZZA: Okay.

MS. MARHEFKA: But the council has -- Believes the MSE is a valid process, and will lead to us having, for this particular species, the best scientific information available, and so the council has made a collective decision to let this process play out and use that information to inform. It will not completely dictate, but it will inform the decisions that the council makes once we pick up.

MR. DELIZZA: So you're not reliant on the MSE to make your decisions, but you're -- I heard you use the word earlier that you're waiting for the MSE to make decisions, and then I think it was -- I think you struggled to explain what the MSE process was, and you deferred to John.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, and Cassidy is really going to get into the entire process, because, again, that's a NOAA-run process, and so, when you get your presentation in just a minute, Cassidy is going to go through every step of what the process has been.

MR. DELIZZA: Cassidy is NOAA?

MS. MARHEFKA: Cassidy works for NOAA, and she is one of the leads of the MSE.

MR. DELIZZA: Okay. All right. That's enough for now.

MR. REYNOLDS: Okay. Thank you, and everyone just bear in mind -- Just try to raise your hands, and then I'll try to call on people, in some kind of order, to the best of my ability, whenever we're discussing something, and then, online, if you raise your hand, we'll put you up on the board, and we'll try to call on you as soon as possible, and then I'm going to hand it over to John now, and he's going to go through some documents, some AP documents.

MR. HADLEY: Yes, and I wanted to say thank you to Kerry, and sorry for the technical difficulties there with the slideshow. I'll work on that at the break. I'm going to run through what is Attachment 1, your status of amendments, and so this is intended to be a little bit of background information on, you know, what the council has been up to in the world of dolphin wahoo and then what is going on in the world of dolphin wahoo outside of the council, the South Atlantic Council, process, and so I'll run through a few relevant items to the dolphin wahoo fishery.

Looking at the South Atlantic Council actions, the council has approved a joint commercial logbook amendment that would make the commercial logbook electronic. This has been submitted to the National Marine Fisheries Service and is awaiting rulemaking.

Under development with the council is Regulatory Amendment 3. This looks at implementing -- At changing the geographic range, applicable geographic range, of the minimum size limit for dolphin, and potentially different recreational retention limits for dolphin, and this is something that we'll get into in a little bit more detail, or, well, in a lot more detail, I should say, later on in the meeting.

Then, looking at the planned or postponed items, there is a sort of standing pelagic longline amendment that has been -- You know, the council started developing this when they were looking at Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 10, and then it has been put on pause. There's some -- There was an awaiting biological opinion that was supposed to be issued for the dolphin wahoo fishery, and so that was one of the pending actions that was going to play into that, and so, once the biological opinion was implemented, or released, I should say, this amendment would be picked up. However, that updated biological opinion has not been issued, and so this one is sort of standing under the postponed for now amendments.

Moving out of the South Atlantic Council world and into non-SAFMC, or South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, activities, the Caribbean Fishery Management Council has been working

on regulations for dolphin and wahoo in their region, and they have approved an amendment that is intended to implement minimum size limits for dolphin and wahoo and then various bag and vessel limits, depending on the series of island, or series of islands, but you can see it ranges. For dolphin, a five-fish bag limit and a fifteen-fish vessel limit for off of Puerto Rico, a five-fish bag limit and a ten-fish vessel limit for wahoo off of Puerto Rico

Then, moving down to St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John, a ten-fish bag limit and a thirty-two-fish vessel limit for dolphin and a two fish bag limit and ten-fish vessel limit for wahoo. That's some new regulations that -- I believe there's a proposed rule for them. I'm not -- I haven't seen the final rule, and so I believe it's in the works, but the Caribbean Council did approve that amendment.

Moving on down, there was -- Last year, there was a meeting of the Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission, or WECAFC, where essentially many island nations, and nations around the Caribbean, came together to discuss flyingfish and dolphinfish. Of note, it was -- It was an interesting sort of exchange of information, and each country gave a presentation describing their dolphin fisheries and regulations, which was interesting.

There's a lot going on in the Caribbean in that realm, particularly on the regulation and data gathering front. Of note, I was there for that meeting, and one thing that I was interested in, and it wasn't on the agenda, but a lot of people discussed wahoo, and the importance of the wahoo fisheries, you know, in their respective EEZs off of their countries, and so that's another thing that that group discussed, and that at least data collection should be prioritized for both dolphin and wahoo. They're a major fishery, and they make up a major fishery throughout the Caribbean.

There was essentially broad support for -- You know, this body is not like an ICCAT, where there's no binding regulations amongst the group, but there was interest in gathering additional information, if possible, and, you know, it's a resource issue, a financial and labor resource issue, but, if possible, developing a regional stock assessment for dolphin that could look at a regional, you know, being the Caribbean stock assessment, and so that was something that happened sort of, again, outside of the council process, but certainly a lot of interest in the dolphin and wahoo fisheries.

Moving over to snapper grouper, you know, a few items just may be of interest to the folks in this room, and the council is developing Amendment 46, which would implement a private recreational permit and education requirement, focusing specifically on the private recreational fisheries, and then there's the ongoing management strategy evaluation for snapper grouper, where the council is taking a step back and looking at a higher-level approach to developing regulations in the fishery, rather than looking at it on a species-by-species basis, and looking at a more holistic approach, on a fishery basis, and so work on that is ongoing.

Moving down, we'll discuss these two amendments, but there are a few comprehensive amendments that do affect, or could affect, the dolphin wahoo fishery, specifically the for-hire component of the fishery. Again, there'll be a more detailed presentation, and so I'm not going to go into every detail of each item, but the council has initiated an amendment to at least examine limited entry for the for-hire permits for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagics, and dolphin wahoo, and so, you know, that's very early in the process.

It has not been approved for scoping. It's on pause. It's paused right now, until updated permit information can be made available, so the council can see, you know, what has been the recent trends in permits, for-hire permits, for the major finfish fisheries that they manage, and then, also, the council is looking at a comprehensive for-hire reporting improvement amendment, and so this would implement changes to four higher reporting.

Again, this is -- I'm not going to go -- We're going to go into this in detail later on in the meeting, but this is some -- This one has moved further along. It's been approved for public hearings, and public hearings will be happening soon, and so I'll have more information on that, and, again, we'll get into more details on the two for-hire-related amendments later on in the meeting, but, with that, I'll pause to see if there's any questions before we jump onto the next agenda item. Again, this is more of a background piece, but I'm happy to answer any questions.

AP MEMBER: I have a question. Go back down there to where it says recreational for-hire limited entry. That throws up a red flag. First of all, there's nothing recreational about what I do for a living. I don't go out there for recreation. I go out there to make a living for for-hire, and so the --

MR. HADLEY: We can take the "recreational" out of there, but the idea is, generally, at the management table, the recreational sectors thought of in two sectors, and so the private component, which is, you know, the not for-hire related, and then the charter-headboat component, which is for-hire, and so that's why it's labeled recreational, but we can clarify that, that it is specifically for-hire.

AP MEMBER: For me, it would clearer, but I do see, especially when you throw snapper grouper in there, to where -- I mean, that's a very -- You know home-located fishery, where there could be a -- Where I could see it might be limited entry in that, in the recreational world, and I'm just trying to make sure to clear -- Try to clarify these things before we get into recreational. Are we for-hire, or are we recreational? I don't know, and it's just confusing to me. Maybe it's not to anybody else. Thank you.

MR. REYNOLDS: Any other questions? Okay. It looks like, next up on the agenda, we are going to invite Cassidy, and maybe she can fill us in a little bit more on the MSE process, you guys, and I've been working with her through the last year or so on the MSE, and she's going to give us an update, and maybe be able to answer questions possibly for anything anyone might wonder. Cassidy, take it away.

DR. PETERSON: Excellent. Thank you so much, Jon, and so thanks all for having me. Thanks for giving me some time to do a quick update on the dolphin management strategy evaluation. Let me start by saying that, if you're interested in sort of the ongoing of our small stakeholder working group, please reach out to me. I think my contact information is on the last page, but it's cassidy.peterson@noaa.gov.

We're happy to share presentation materials, and we're actually working with some AI tools, to sort of generate some meeting minutes from our past meetings, and so those aren't available yet, but we're working to get them, so that we can share more broadly on our activities thus far.

I do want to acknowledge that this is sort of a NOAA, or a Southeast Fisheries Science Center, owned project, but we are working collaboratively with the council, the Regional Office, and several subject matter experts at separate institutions, and academic institutions as well, and we're working with Blue Matter Science, who is contracting to do some of the leading model analyses, and, ultimately, stakeholders are hugely centered in this process, and so we're really happy to have a whole host of a team, who have spent a lot of time working on this thus far.

Management strategy evaluation is sort of a virtual testing chamber that we use to develop management approaches, and stress test them, to make sure that they're robust to uncertainty, and so, in the same way that a vehicle manufacturer would sort of stress test their vehicles before they release them for public consumption, we do the same thing virtually on a computer, and so, you know, an F-150 needs to be able to, you know, drive in the mud, in the snow, in warm climate, cold climate, and it needs to be able to have a certain towing capacity.

All of those things are tested, to make sure that the vehicle is safe, and will work, no matter where it winds up, whether it's in Florida or Alaska. It needs to work, and so we do the same thing with management approaches, using management strategy evaluation, and so we -- If you remember, management procedures are what we're building and testing, and those are sort of the fishery thermostat for fisheries management, and so, in the same way that thermostats -- You sort of define the target temperature in your house, and then the thermostat goes ahead, and it takes the temperature, and it determines whether the temperature is too high or too low, compared to your desired temperature, and it kicks on the heating or air conditioning units within your house to make sure it maintains the temperature at your desired state.

That's the same thing that a management procedure does, and so the management procedure itself starts by collecting data from the population, the same kind of fisheries data that we collect for a stock assessment, and it analyzes those data to determine stock health, or stock trajectory.

That information is fed into a control rule, which specifies how management recommendations should adaptively adjust to the current state of the stock, and then those management actions are implemented back into the stock, and the fishery, to make sure that we're keeping our stock and fishery at the desired state.

Management strategy evaluation is a simulation test of this entire process, and so we start by identifying fishery-specific stakeholder-defined management objectives. These are the goals of the fishery. They include federally-mandated goals, like making sure that we're not overfishing, or that we rebuild overfished stocks, but it also includes the stakeholder objectives, and so prioritizing -- Quality of the fish that are landed over maximizing catch is one example where we take stakeholder opinions into account.

Then the second step is to identify relevant uncertainties over which the management procedure should be robust, and so, the same way that the Ford manufacturer doesn't know if their vehicle is going to Florida or Alaska, it needs to work in both. There are some aspects about the stock in the fishery, like natural mortality for example, that we don't know for sure, and so we build multiple simulations of the stock and the fishery on the computer.

Anytime we make an assumption, we make multiple levels of that assumption, like natural mortality, and so we build a world where natural mortality is low for dolphin, and we build a world

where natural mortality is high, and we test out our different management procedures, in both of those different simulated worlds, to make sure that, even though we don't know what true natural mortality is, our management procedure will work no matter what, and so we're making sure that our management procedures are robust to the things we don't know about the stock.

We then develop our operating models, step three. That's the quantitative model of the stock and the fishery. We identify management procedures. Those are the green sort of highlighted steps of collecting data, analyzing data and the control rule. We identify those as management procedures and we simulation test them, and so we project our stock and fishery population into the future, applying each different candidate management procedure, and then measure how each management procedure performs.

We measure whether performance was good or bad, based on performance metrics, and these are quantitative metrics that are designed to reflect the stakeholder-defined management objectives that we identify in the first step of the MSE.

The purpose for our management strategy evaluation is to improve upon the current management for dolphin in this region, and so dolphin are really tricky to manage. Like Kerry mentioned, they have a highly variable life history, and so availability from year to year changes very frequently. We also are dealing with an internationally-exploited fishery, and so not only do we have limited capacity to manage the entire stock, as sort of the South Atlantic, but not all countries are mandated to report on dolphins, and so they're relatively data limited, and we actually don't have the necessary information to build a meaningful stock assessment for dolphin.

They're currently managed with a static catch level, and we think that we can improve upon that, to develop a management procedure that's going to work better for stakeholders, and so we're trying to develop an empirical management procedure that's an indicator-based management procedure, and so we develop an indicator of relative abundance, and then we adjust management recommendations based on the behavior of that indicator.

For example, if we have an index of abundance, and that index of abundance goes up, we assume that the availability, or biomass of the stock, has also gone up, and then we can relax management recommendations for that year. This management procedure is going to be a fully-specified recipe for setting annual catch limits, along with additional management actions like bag or vessel limits.

We're going to simulation test it within our management strategy evaluation, to make sure it's robust to uncertainty, and, in addition to meeting all federally-mandated management objectives, we're going to do our best to maximize stakeholder-defined management objectives as well.

With our management procedure, we're really looking to estimate, or predict, the amount of dolphin that will be available to the South Atlantic Council's purview for each year, and so we're trying to estimate how big the pie is going to be, and then we want to maximize utilization of those fish across different regions and different sectors, and so we want to make sure that we're that we're equitably allocating, and slicing up the pie, so that everyone gets their sort of their fair share.

You can see these two sort of graphs on the bottom. One is demonstrating our current approach, with made-up numbers, but just saying that local availability, in blue, varies from year to year, but we have a static catch limit, that's not adaptive, and that could make it so that, in some years, when

local availability is really high, there are some sectors that are missing out on sort of their fair share, and we want to move to something that's a little bit more flexible, like the plot on the right, where the catch limits and other management recommendations are adapting to the local availability of dolphin that we have in a given year.

This is sort of a flow chart of the project thus far. If we start on the top-left corner, we did in-person stakeholder workshops, where we went to several locations up and down the coast, from Florida all the way up to Rhode Island. These were done in 2022 and 2023, and we got some really good information on management objectives. We learned a lot about the regional differences in the fisheries along the coast, and we used that information to help inform the rest of the management strategy evaluation.

In December of 2023, we used the council process to select a small group of volunteers. Those are the small group that we've been working with, sort of offline, and the time requirements for that group are much higher than we would be able to ask from an AP, and so that's why we went ahead and went with a separate small group of volunteers, and we're iteratively working with that small group to help build and refine our management strategy evaluation and management procedures.

This iterative sort of engagement is also going to involve, or also does involve, the council and the SSC. We're hoping that, ultimately, we can get to a place where we have the council vote on a management procedure in March of 2026, and, as Kerry had mentioned, because we're building this framework that we're using to explore adaptive management procedures, we also are hoping that we can use it to help inform, or help do some scoping, for Amendment 3, and so these are tactical management options that we're exploring.

They're static, and so they're not varying over time, like a true management procedure, but we're going to use the tool that we're developing to help explore the ramifications of some of those actions, and so we're going to use this MSE to look at the implications for revised size limits and recreational bag and vessel limits.

As far as the modeling is going, we were able to onboard Blue Matter Science, who are a very prominent MSE group, and they were onboarded in July 2024. They've been working to develop the management strategy evaluation. It's based on some open science tools called OpenMSE, and there's a website there that has a bunch of information about it.

Basically, we're using the feedback that we have received thus far, from our first round of stakeholder workshops and our stakeholder small group, to inform the level of complexity that we need in our management strategy evaluation, and so our MSE has quarterly time steps to account for seasonal dynamics. It's a statistical catch-at-length operating model, to account for size-based management objectives that were identified, and there's clear spatial dynamics, and so we have seven spatial areas, four of which are along the U.S. east coast, and so we're making sure that we're breaking up the coast to reflect the fishery and the stock differences that each of those regions experience, and we're currently developing a trial specification document. It's in preparation, and hopefully, we'll have that to share soon.

Again, we've also been working with our stakeholder small group, and here are some of the topics that we've looked at, and, again, if you're interested, please let me know. I would be happy to

share. We don't have -- I think there's two of our presentations that we don't have the slides that are shareable, because the authors didn't want to make them publicly available, but I'm happy to share all of the rest of the slide decks and all the meeting materials.

Stakeholders have identified some key uncertainties, and so remember that we're building this as sort of our multiple parallel universes, reflecting all of these different uncertainties, and so these are some of the important uncertainties that we need to build into our MSE, so that we build a sufficient number of sort of parallel universes that we convince ourselves that our management procedure is robust.

Key uncertainties that stakeholders have identified to-date are uncertainty in removals, and this includes uncertainty in U.S. recreational removals and uncertainty in international removals, that maybe are not reported, and here's uncertainty about movement patterns, and potentially changes in those movement patterns over time, and stakeholders identified challenges with the ability to enforce size limits and things like that.

There's been some proposals for causes of changing availability and catchability, and so things like the Gulf Stream positioning, and density of sargassum weed, as well as some anthropogenic shifts that might change availability, things like offshore wind, which is aggregating dolphin, ropeless lobster pots, which will no longer aggregate dolphin. Clear economic drivers of the desire to go fishing were highlighted, and there was some uncertainty about post-release mortality and depredation and how that varies along the coast.

We have quantified some of these proposed uncertainties, and they're listed here, and so, again, this figure notes that we're going to build multiple simulation models, each with a different configuration of these uncertainties. Some of the key uncertainties are listed here. Natural mortality and recruitment is something that helps to scale the population, and it's always really uncertain, and it's hard to estimate for various populations.

There's uncertainty about the current and future levels of productivity, spatial distribution, and movement patterns, and we have sort of a secondary level of uncertainties that we'll also consider, which include uncertainty in removals, like MRIP and international landings, as well as sort of future uncertainties, and so what is future recruitment going to look like, and potential distribution shifts in the future, and future changes in life history or changes in availability and catchability.

We also asked our stakeholders to define management objectives. They highlighted that it's important to maintain opportunity and access to the fishery, and, accordingly, prevent fishery closures. Larger sizes landed were preferred. Most stakeholders indicated a desire to have stability in regulations, and we also noted some very clear regional and sector differences in goals and objectives. There was some desire to improve consistency and reliability of the fishery, and some wanted sort of area-based regulations. There was disagreement by region whether the goals were to conserve the stock or maximize landings, and there were, similarly, disagreements about whether to implement size limits.

We are going to include some of these management objectives in our MSE. There are some generic management objectives that we always include in any management strategy evaluation. Those include measuring stock status, stock yield, stability in regulations, and stability in yield, and so

we'll include those, but we also want to make sure that we're accounting for the differences in the dolphinfish fishery.

It's not -- You know, it's primarily recreational, and so we want to make sure that we're accounting for the recreational management objectives. We want to measure catch rate, fishing effort, or opportunity, and size of the fish caught. This graphic on the right shows -- We asked our small stakeholder group to really informally just sort of rank, for fishery management objectives, on what's most important, and they said fishery sustainability was the most important, and then quality of fish landed, then maintaining high catch rates, and the last place was the numbers of fish landed. Here is my email, and please reach out to me if you have questions. I would love to chat more about this. Thanks.

MR. REYNOLDS: Thank you, Cassidy. Thank you very much. Does anyone have any questions on this? Just show of hands if anyone wants to ask Cassidy a question. I have one, if -- Okay, and so, Cassidy, there is a question that I've been kind of wanted to ask, even within the MSE, that I was a little confused on, and so, when we're deciding what measures to take on an annual basis, what precise data source are we reliant upon to serve as the indicator for that management decision?

DR. PETERSON: That is a great question, and so we have a couple of candidates in mind already, but we haven't settled on anything just yet. Typically, we'll use our ability to fit these indicators in the MSE operating model, or simulation model, and how well we can fit them will be a useful indicator of how representative they are of stock dynamics. One sort of key index that we have in mind right now is a pelagic longline VAST model that Matt Damiano developed, and recently published on, and so this is a spatiotemporal model that uses the pelagic longline data to give us an index of abundance. That's the primary metric that we have right now.

Mandy Karnauskas has done a lot of really good research looking at environmental cues. She found that, when environmental conditions were sort of narrowly limited to off the coast of south Florida in March, that led to a year of really high availability for dolphin in the U.S., and so she sort of quantified that into an index. That's something we might be able to use, and then we've also done some correlation analyses to look at catches and how that correlates to commercial fishing in previous months, MRIP indicators from previous months, as well as some fishing tournament data, in Central America and Puerto Rico especially, which seems to have a good correlation to lagged fish availability off the east coast, and so we don't have one in mind, but we do have a couple of candidates that we're considering.

MR. REYNOLDS: Thank you. Anyone else have any questions? Richard.

MR. DELIZZA: Do you have any idea when the last stock assessment was done on the dolphin? I can't find anything later than 2020.

DR. PETERSON: Yes, and so I don't know of anything later than 2020. I know Matt Damiano, who developed our VAST index, and he's been a part of the technical modeling team for the MSE, he tried to build one, and didn't find that it was useful, or meaningful. I know Mike Prager attempted one, in the early 2010s maybe, and I would have to double check on the date, but, yes, to-date, we don't have any accepted stock assessment, and so nothing that's been CIE reviewed and accepted for use in management.

MR. DELIZZA: Thank you.

MR. REYNOLDS: Paul.

MR. PANCAKE: Cassidy, has this virtual program been used successfully with any other fisheries to, I guess, make any management changes?

DR. PETERSON: Absolutely, and that's a great question, and so this approach is used really widely in different countries overseas. It was pioneered with the International Whaling Commission, back in the 1980s. It's used really regularly in South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and, actually, ICCAT has been really relying more heavily on MSEs recently, and so bluefin tuna is currently managed with an empirical, or indicator-based, management procedure, just like we're trying to do for dolphin.

MR. PANCAKE: Thank you.

AP MEMBER: I just have a question. Of course, the data can make or break the management process, but is -- I'm going to bring this up now, and I know we're going to discuss it later, but do you use any of the electronic logbook requirements, fishing reporting requirements, and any state data that's collected by either dockside surveys, or, I guess, commercial landings would be the other one.

DR. PETERSON: Yes, and good question, and so we are using commercial logbook data, and we're using commercial observer data, and we're using MRIP, and so any of the dockside interviews that are MRIP is what we're using. One of the useful parts of using a management strategy evaluation is the focus on robustness, and so, again, we have a really data-limited scenario here with mahi, and so we can make a lot of different assumptions, in our different simulations, and find a management procedure that will successfully manage, even though we don't have all the up-to-date information.

A traditional stock assessment will try to estimate the current stock status, or provide the best estimate of what the stock is doing right now, but the management strategy evaluation is instead looking at, even though we don't know exactly what the stock is doing right now, can we develop ways to manage through that uncertainty, and so our focus is less on identifying stock status and more on identifying a robust management approach that we can develop, in spite of the fact that we have really limited data availability.

MR. REYNOLDS: I just have one more comment, Cassidy, and so, yesterday, it seemed that there was a very valuable survey that was taken and revealed to the MSE, and there was some talk about possibly adding to that, and making that a little more robust, with potential for value in how much more a recreational angler would fish if the stock was healthier, because that question didn't go out in that survey, but I believe David Warner spoke of that, and so my question is, is that survey going to be involved in this process?

We would like it to be involved in this process, obviously. It was a very valuable survey to decide the number of trips that may or may not happen, as it relates to potential bag limit decisions. However, it didn't really include the question of if the potential for catching more fish, or more

large fish, due to the health of the stock, was relative to that question, and how would that economically affect, you know, trips, and effort, and how that relates to economics? It doesn't really need to be a question, but just more of a comment, I guess.

DR. PETERSON: Yeah, thanks, John. We absolutely would love to use this survey to help inform our management strategy evaluation. I think the biggest place it can come in is once we have our results and we're comparing trade-offs of different management approaches, it can help us to inform, you know, what -- It can help us to quantify those tradeoffs in a meaningful way.

This was a survey that David Carter, a resident economist here at the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, sent out just to a subset of south Florida boat owners who fish for mahi. Again, we would really love to expand on this survey, and I think there's some limitations in our -- Well, there's many limitations in our ability to do that, because of the Paperwork Reduction Act, which needs to minimize sort of the onus that we place on stakeholders to fill out these kinds of surveys, and so I know that our social science group is working to sort of get clearance to do another round of this survey, and hopefully include additional areas to help further support the management strategy evaluation. Thanks.

MR. REYNOLDS: All right. Thank you, Cassidy. We really appreciate the presentation, and all the information. Anyone else have a final question? All right. Then we're going to turn it over to John here to give us some overview on some things we've already discussed, you guys, about modifications to minimum size limit, recreational retention limits, and some for-hire captain and crew bag limits for dolphin and Regulatory Amendment 3, and let's see what we've got, guys.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you. I appreciate that. If you want to follow along, it's Attachment 3 in the briefing book, and what's been put together here is a discussion document on Regulatory Amendment 3, and, you know, a lot of this is going to look familiar to those of you that were around here at the time.

This is an amendment that looks at what the council really discussed in 2022, and it looks at expanding the applicable geographic range of the minimum size limit for dolphin, basically extending that northward beyond the North Carolina-South Carolina border, modifying the daily bag limit for dolphin, modifying the vessel limit for dolphin, and removing captain and crew bag limits.

The idea here is to get feedback from the AP, and I'll go through each action, to get your detailed feedback, but, really, the goal here is to review what you said in 2022, when you reviewed this in April of 2022, and just make sure that guidance still holds, and is there anything else -- You know, is there any new information you want to add to this, when the council brings this back up before then, because this amendment -- It was developed, as I mentioned, in 2022.

The AP reviewed it in April. It was expanded a little bit, and so the AP hasn't seen the whole amendment, as it stands now necessarily, but, at the June 2022 meeting -- This is really the first time the council was introduced to the management strategy evaluation for dolphin.

They did approve this amendment for scoping, and the scoping took place via the management strategy evaluation process, and so, as Cassidy mentioned, there was the stakeholder meetings that took place from the Florida Keys all the way up through Rhode Island, in several different

locations, to gather stakeholder feedback on management priorities in the fishery and essentially what people are seeing in the fishery and what they would like to see out of the fishery.

That was really kind of scoping on steroids, if you will, well beyond normal scoping, and so the council received this feedback at their June 2023 meeting, along with progress of the MSE, and they decided that they wanted to wait to get results from the management strategy evaluation, and so the council reviewed it again in December, and, at the December meeting, they reviewed the progress of the MSE, and, really, they had an in-depth discussion on which direction they want to go.

The management strategy evaluation has had -- As Cassidy mentioned, there was a little bit of a delay in the management strategy evaluation development and modeling, and so, when it was originally presented to the council in June of 2022, the thought was that the MSE would be wrapping up with some results by late 2023, or 2024, and that has been extended, and so it's been a little bit more of a process.

There were some delays with the modeling and then the process getting through the council review and the Scientific and Statistical Committee, what Kerry mentioned earlier, the scientific body that advises the council on the rigor, scientific rigor, of different sort of modeling efforts, and so that's all to say that this amendment has been put on hold, pending those results.

With the MSE process, you can think of it -- This came out in the council's December 2024 meeting, and there's sort of a short-term use and a long-term use of the MSE, and the short term use is what would really playing to this amendment, and the idea is that the council could get in-depth feedback on the different actions that they're proposing, really much more analysis than they would normally have, and so that's why -- That's kind of why the council has been waiting for the results of the management strategy evaluation, because it will be additional information beyond what they usually get for dolphin, because, as mentioned earlier, there's no stock assessment.

With dolphin, it's a data-poor species, as far as, you know, what's exactly going on with the stock, and so the MSE modeling results have the potential to really help inform the council on what is your biggest bang for your buck, as far as any sort of management change. Is it just going to change the regulations, and that is that it, or is it going to change regulations, and this is the expected outcome to the stock, and, you know, hopefully a beneficial outcome to the stock.

That's sort of the short-term use, and that's what that's why the council, at least based on, you know, my synopsis of the council discussion, is that they want that additional input, beyond what they normally get, to move forward with the actions in this amendment, and so the MSE, you know, as mentioned earlier, our Scientific and Statistical Committee had their initial review last week. They haven't been able to review results yet, and so those are pending later this year, and so results being the modeling outcomes from this that relate to -- Cassidy had a slide up here of the tactical management solutions, and so modeling specifically what's being considered in this amendment.

That's something that's expected later this year. After that, that then the council would take this up again, actively developing this amendment, and so that's sort of where this stands at the moment, but, you know, with that timeline, and thinking about how often this advisory panel meets, we thought it would be helpful to review the input that you have provided so far, and, also, you know, again, make sure that this is still relevant, still up-to-date, still what you want to put before the

council, and so we'll get into that in a moment, but a few things to keep in mind, some management actions that have occurred in 2022.

You did have Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 10, notably dropping the vessel limit from sixty fish down to fifty-four fish. Additionally, off the Atlantic coast and Atlantic state waters off Florida, the FWC reduced the bag limit from ten dolphin to five dolphin per person, the vessel limit from sixty fish to three fish per vessel, and clarified that captain and crew are prohibited from retaining a bag limit of dolphin, and so that applies to state waters. In federal waters, those regulations are different, and so there's some inconsistency between federal waters and state waters off of Florida.

That's why, once we get this a little bit further, you'll notice that there are some options that focus specifically off of Florida only, and then -- Let's see here. Looking at the amendment timing, generally speaking, you know, this amendment has been approved for scoping, and then you're looking at probably about a year or so to develop this amendment, and so, once the council picks it up and puts it on their -- You know, really puts it on their workplan, you're looking at about a year or so to develop the amendment and have it ready for their final approval.

Again, as I mentioned, you know, we'll go through these in detail, but the idea is to review measures in the amendment, and previous AP recommendations, and provide feedback for the council to consider in developing the amendment. Any questions on that information before I jump into the draft actions that the council is considering?

All right, and so moving along, you know, and that's -- Again, that's why we had those presentations before this, the MSE update and kind of what's going on in the world of dolphin wahoo, or what has been going on in the world of dolphin wahoo. That's sort of all background information that leads up to this discussion for Regulatory Amendment 3.

The way that the council has developed this amendment, there's four major actions. The first looks at size limits, and Action 2 and 3, look at retention limits, and the last one looks at captain and crew bag limits, and so this is Draft Action 1. It would essentially change the applicable geographic range of the minimum size limit for dolphin to be, there again, applied above the South Carolina-North Carolina border.

You can see there's different alternatives there. One would go through North Carolina, and one would go through North Carolina and into the Mid-Atlantic, and so through New York, and the last alternative there would go from Florida through Maine, and so that would encompass the whole applicable management unit for the FMP, and so the whole east coast of the United States.

Also, of note, the idea here is that this would apply to both recreational and commercial sectors, and so, currently, there's a size limit in place from Florida through South Carolina. There is no size limit in place from North Carolina through the Maine-Canadian border, and so no size limit in North of South Carolina. There's a little bit of a -- This has been asked before, is what size do dolphin mature, and you're looking at around eighteen or nineteen inches. You know, it varies depending on the study that you look at, but, generally, at around the twenty-inch mark, or slightly below, is when dolphin -- Typically when you see a 50 percent maturity.

There's a link here to your AP recommendations from April, 2022, and, for those of you that had a chance to look at it, there's a very lengthy discussion in there that captures the AP's discussion,

because I know that this is a controversial topic, particularly with different regional viewpoints on it, and so that's captured in there. That would be -- You know, we can certainly bring that back up again, and rediscuss that, but I just wanted to note that, you know, those regional viewpoints are noted, and certainly the needs of the for-hire sector are noted, but I wanted to --

You know, we can go over that in detail, but I wanted to focus on the recommendations of the AP, and so the council, or the -- Sorry. The AP had sort of a long pros and cons discussion on, you know, if there is a size limit implemented, where there currently is one, you know, how would that affect the fishery, particularly the for-hire fishery, the private component and the for-hire component, and so the AP had a really long discussion about this, and it was a great discussion, and, you know, it really categorized the regional differences and needs of the fishery.

In the end, the AP came up with a set of recommendations for the council that sort of -- That the council ended up capturing, largely, in the alternatives, but the recommendations coming out of the AP were to consider extending the size limit to be consistent across the entire management unit, and so implement a size limit through the Maine-Canadian border, and do not make changes to the size limit, and so there were those of you that thought that what's in place right now is sufficient, and then it was noted that there could sort of be a middle ground, where a twenty-inch minimum size limit could be applicable to a certain number of fish.

You know, if you're out there bailing dolphin, two or three short fish end up in the box, you know, and there's sort of an allowance there that, you know, there is a minimum size limit, and that there may be a one or two fish allowance that could be seen as maybe a middle ground, with the intent that that would discourage targeting small fish.

Then there was also a note of considering potential variation in size limits onboard for-hire and private vessels, and so keep in mind the needs of the private component of the fishery versus the for-hire component of the fishery, and so, with that, I'll turn it over to the AP, and, really, you know, just to gather discussion, and, you know, are there any changes to this set of recommendations that you want to make, and, you know, do you feel like these are still applicable, or is there anything you want to add, or is there new information you want to add for the council to consider when they take this up again?

MR. REYNOLDS: Thank you, John. Okay, and so, you guys, look, and, you know, we had a pretty in-depth discussion about this stuff at the last meeting, obviously, and there was some, you know, some controversial stuff. The only -- I just want to take this opportunity, and so there has been -- I mean, look, I -- With my organization, we eat, sleep, and breathe this. I mean, we are in the middle of it all, and we've seen a lot of big changes lately, with other species, that we've implemented some good stuff, with spawning, with good scientific data on spawning aggregations, on growth, and so, for example, mutton snappers.

You know, I'm just throwing this one out there. It's amazing. You know, I mean, I'm looking at a species, when I was growing up, that was one of the favorite -- It was one of my favorite things to fish for. They were -- You know, we used to go on these four-day trips to Tortugas, you know, and they were plentiful, and they were big, and they were giant, you know, and then I watched the species decline.

It got -- It got bad, and we got involved, and we got some good science, with some other organizations, and it has completely turned around. I have to say that for that one, and blackfin tunas, and let me tell you, man, when these when these regulations were going into place, it was scary, and there was a lot of controversy, just like any other regulations, but I can tell you right now that the overall feeling of our fleet, and everyone else, is complete and utter amazement, and that's the way fishing was yesterday for us, and these whole last few months, because of some small management changes.

That being said, and I wanted to mention that, and then there has been some new information, just so that, when we have these discussions, that everyone has a little bit more information to go off of. There's been some really good studies done in North Carolina, and some other places, and one of them is important, and it's about citation-sized dolphin, which is basically a dolphin about thirty pounds, and there's a simultaneous parallel study that was done with wahoo, during the same time series, okay, but the wahoo is a little bit larger. The citation-size wahoo is about a thirty-six-pound wahoo.

This study was ran with data from 2000 to 2023, okay, and the name of it is *Evidence for Declining Numbers of Large Dolphin Fish in the Western North Atlantic*. It was published on April 1, 2025. The data was gathered specifically on citation-sized dolphin and wahoo from the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries and MRIP. Specific annual models were developed for trips per citation caught. The dataset was, like I said, 2000 to 2023, and it revealed that a fourfold increase in effort was required to catch a citation-sized dolphin, while no trend was observed whatsoever for wahoo.

Okay, and so, basically, what they're saying is, when you look at the data here, in 2000, right, there was 318, you know, citation-sized dolphin caught. In 2001, there was 459. In 2002, there was 408. In 2003, there was 410, and then you fast-forward, okay, with numbers like that, and then you go to 2020 and there was ninety-three caught. In 2021, there was only sixty-eight caught. In 2022 there was only sixty-one citation-sized fish caught. In 2023, fifty-three citation-sized dolphin caught off of North Carolina. Okay, and this was specifically to the North Carolina region.

Wahoo, on the other hand, okay, are totally different. This was a parallel study ran, okay, and wahoo are totally different outcome, okay, and we have, you know, 516, 539, 449, and this is in the early 2000s, 2001, 2002, 2003, and you fast-forward to 2020, and 533, 336, and 462 in 2022, 386, and so it stayed relatively stable, okay, and what this was supposed to show, okay, because there is a substantial increase in the effort required to catch a citation-sized dolphin, that suggests that the abundance of large individuals has declined and the stock is most likely related to increased exploitation.

Okay, and there was several environmental effects that may have affected the results, okay, and so these were all taken into consideration, okay, and, during the past several years, there's been an increasing number of anecdotal reports with greater numbers of schools of dolphin and larger-sized fish north of Carolina, perhaps supporting the theory that the stock is shifting northward as ocean temperatures rise. Only a slight trend upward was influenced by these landings from 2012 to 2018.

Okay, and so there was only like a very slight amount of fish in any sort of dataset at all that showed any increased landings in those regions above, from the Mid-Atlantic above, in that region

of time. The landings have fallen, in the past five years, to a level 16 percent lower than 1995 to 2004 to historical levels, and so, in that same region, in the past in the past few years, then it's actually showing a drastic decrease in that stock.

Okay, and range shifts are highly unlikely to explain the trend in dolphin for citations, because there was no evidence found for shifting range of dolphinfish in that region, and, in fact, it showed a decline in the abundance in the Mid-Atlantic region in recent years. Changing migration timing was not observed. We have very robust and good tagging data, obviously, and we've all seen this.

Luckily, there's a lot of involvement. I would proudly say that my charter boat won the International Tagging Award with the Dolphin Research Program this last year. My mate is really into it. He's really tagging a lot of fish, and there's a lot of other people tagging, and so we're getting very good data. Dolphin citation timing suggests only minor changes in migration, with less than a four-day shift in any large fish, or citation-sized fish, from 2000 to 2023, concluding that migration timing did not cause the trend observed.

Okay, and so that, and then just a little bit more data, you guys, just to give it to you, so we can have a little more data on decision-making while we go through this stuff. If we go from a time series from 1995 to 2004, and then we fast-forward from 2015 to 2023, okay, the average commercial landings were 1.31 million pounds, okay, and now, the new time series, that's about a 58 percent decrease in landings. All right, and you take the same first time series, 1995 to 2004, and then you accelerate to the present day, 2019 to 2023, basically, and there's a 74.8 percent decrease in commercial landings.

Okay, and, on the recreational side, 1995 to 2004, there was twenty-one million pounds landed. That's the average landings during those years, and, if you fast-forward to these years, 2020 to 2024, there's a 57 percent decrease in recreational landings. This is the whole Atlantic coast, keep in mind, and this isn't like Florida or anything, and there's only nine million pounds landed, and so there's very significant increases.

The most significant declines were off of North Carolina themselves, off of that state. From 1995 to 2004, versus 2020 to 2024, there was actually a 92 percent decrease in landings, and so, anyways, I just wanted to give that to you guys, especially about the citation-sized fish, just showing how many less large fish there are.

Anyone with a PhD in population dynamics understands that the size of fish directly relates to the stock and the health of a stock, and so, okay, and sorry for taking so much time up, and we can continue the discussion, and maybe talk about some size limits, and does anyone have any comments on size limits, or what we discussed in the past, or any other thoughts on size limits up the coast, or the split, or maybe retaining some fish under the limit, or does anyone have any thoughts on that?

MR. WHITAKER: Well, I'll start it off with North Carolina, and, yes, there's been a significant decrease, but I've been charter fishing there thirty-eight years, and, thirty years ago, we, as charter boat fishermen, said 100 dolphin is way too many, or 120, and some people were catching 300, and so we instigated a sixty-fish limit and it -- In my opinion, it has worked very good.

I would find -- I would take it offensively if you were to reckon these decreases in citation dolphin, which I think they did move the minimum size from thirty to thirty-five on dolphins in North Carolina, and I don't know exactly what year, but, at any rate, I feel like that that limit has worked well for us, as far as a minimum size.

A dolphin, you pull them in the boat, and I've tagged many dolphins, and I used to do at least 100 a year, or maybe 200 or 300 some years, but I know we pull those dolphins in the boat, and they're flapping, and they're jumping, and they're screaming around. I really feel like that, by imposing a minimum size, that I'm going to kill more dolphins trying to measure, whatever, five or six of them.

I mean, if you go back, which all these numbers -- It seems like North Carolina is doing a hell of a job with data, which I think is very important, and I'll get into that in a minute, but, if you go back and look at the same data that you're looking at, I think you'll find that the minimum size that we're catching in North Carolina -- I think the last time I looked at it, it was around twenty-three inches, and so I'm just trying to survive.

I've got two boys, and they're both fishermen. I want them to have an opportunity, if they want to go offshore, to be able to do it. I just think that we have lowered the limit from sixty to fifty-six, and we have put required logbook reporting in our realm of things to do. I've been doing it. It's a pain in the butt to do it, but I don't get my permits unless I do it. I have a limited entry king mackerel permit, and I'm not sure why our compliance rate is only 46 percent, when it doesn't seem that hard to me.

I said this at the last meeting, but to get -- You write a few tickets, and you'll see that compliance rate go from 46 to 96, because nobody wants to get a federal ticket, and so I feel like we've given the council plenty of tools to look at exactly what our industry, and I'm talking about the for-hire industry, and I'm not talking about the recreational, and, as we all know, that population has grown immensely over the years.

In my marina, ten years ago, there were twenty-four charter boats. I counted before I came up here, the day before yesterday, and there's eleven offshore charter boats in Hatteras now, and so I'm just telling you we're trying to survive, and so I'm a little aggravated that -- I called and asked how many for-hire permits are -- You all did a very nice chart, in some of this information I have, that shows, up to 2020, every state, how many for-hire permits there are, and that number, in North Carolina, I think was very stable, or maybe barely increased, but there was very little difference, but I said, well, how about from 2020 to 2025, and John --

Well, I'm not going to put John -- Anyway, they don't have it. I said, how about the logbook information, and I'm not trying to point the finger to anybody, but that is data, just like this data Jon got, that you guys could look at and say here's exactly what the for-hire fleet is doing on the east coast.

You know, it's a lot easier for you to make decisions if you know pretty well what I'm catching, what the whole for-hire fleet is catching. It's a hell of a lot easier for you to make a decision on what you want my regulations to be if you know what I'm doing, and so I guess my argument is, before I have to start -- You know, our situation in North Carolina, is people come once a year. They like to eat fish.

I have one or two marlin fishermen that fish the tournaments, but most of my people come to catch fish, take them home, and eat them, and so it's very important to them to have a nice catch of fish. I personally think -- What you want to do with the recreational part, I certainly understand, and probably would agree with you, but please don't put me out of business, and that's how I feel. Thank you.

MR. REYNOLDS: Jay.

MR. KAVANAGH: Draft Action 1, I would be in favor of Alternative 1, no action, and here's why. Bailers, which we call a small dolphin, we target them, and we generally do not keep anything under twenty-four inches, and, as far as the reference to when they mature, and when they spawn, I would say, the bailers that we catch, we see roe in seven to eight out of ten. Almost all the bailers have roe in them, and we don't really target fish smaller than that.

You know, if we run into dolphins, and often we'll run into small dolphin, tiny dolphin, on the first change, and, when we see that that's all that's going to be there, we move on. You know, again, we have self-regulated this, like a yellowfin limit, like a dolphin limit, and then the feds come along and make it the law.

Also, has there been any concern, or thought, given to release mortality when trying to measure a dolphin? You know, you're going to scrape all the slime off of him. He's probably going to have a pretty high post-release mortality, if you had to measure a twenty-inch dolphin. Also, we don't know what the recreational fisherman is catching, as far as how many pounds of dolphin they are landing, and that sector has grown greatly, exponentially, in the Southeast.

Big dolphin, as Rom mentioned, the citation size in North Carolina was recently reduced, and so I believe that a lot of those numbers could be attributed to a five-pound change in the citation size. Also, I think you can correlate the decline of big dolphin to the increase of virtually unregulated dolphin commercial fishing. It's an open-access permit. There's no trip limit. Anybody can put a longline spool on their boat and go commercial dolphin fishing. and I know, from what I've seen over that timeframe that you discussed, the dolphin size declined as the longline effort increased. Thank you.

MR. REYNOLDS: Thank you, Jay. Richard.

MR. DELIZZA: So, listening to these stories of the great fisheries off of North Carolina, it seems we should propose getting rid of size limits across the entire fishery area, because having no size limit apparently is the key to an excellent dolphin fishery. Is that what I'm hearing? Do we have support for that in the room?

AP MEMBER: Eliminating the dolphin size limit?

MR. DELIZZA: Yes, and make it just like North Carolina.

AP MEMBER: Yes.

MR. REYNOLDS: Okay, and so if someone wants to -- So it sounds like we have -- Our past discussion had, you know, some alternatives that we had kind of decided then, and it's still a little controversial. It sounds like the charter boat sector from North Carolina may not be in favor of a size limit, and there's other options, you guys.

You know, everyone has a stake, and a place to say whatever they want, you know, as far as we're talking about size limits, and so we'll stick on that. Right now, we're going to move on to bag limits, and some other agenda things, with for-hire reporting as one of them, but, if anyone wants to make a motion, or, you know, any other type of alternatives that the council can look at, we're definitely open to that. Richard.

MR. HARRIS: I don't have a motion, but I would like to bring up another fact that nobody brings up, is, in the last ten years, and you're not using this as a factor, and all we're saying is that the fishermen is responsible for the size of these fish not getting to where they are. Well, we know that -- I've been told, from the council, that one-and-a-half percent is the survival rate, correct, somewhere between one-and-a-half and 2 percent of the spawn each year?

MR. HADLEY: I can't answer that off the top of my head.

MR. HARRIS: Well, that's what was told. The first meeting I came to, it was like that, and so how can you judge, you know, what the numbers are from that? Okay, and we're not catching any big dolphin. Has anybody looked on the tidelines lately and seen the number of sharks swimming up and down those tidelines? You're talking about the data that's ten years, 1995 to 2000, or, in the last fifteen years, the numbers of sharks, since they put the moratorium on sharks, has grown tremendously.

I guarantee you that, in two weeks, I won't be able to catch a tuna out of twenty bites, because there's so many sharks. You see, two days ago, going down the tideline, 10,000 hammerheads, and they're not the big ones. They don't bother us as much, I don't think, but they go up and down that tideline, and they're eating something, and it may be these smaller dolphin, the fry, whatever the spawn is.

Duskies, and, oh, there's no duskies, and I can give you a picture of five duskies swimming around my boat eating dolphin, and so let's not blame it all on the fishermen that are causing these. We've got to do something. You know, an apex predator has to be held in check. We're an apex predator, and the shark is an apex predator. He's eating dolphin. You may not see it where you are, but we do, but I do hear a lot of the inshore fishermen, for tarpon, permit, snook, and I went down, two years ago, and went fishing in the Keys.

I went down and had a great trip. The captain was from my area, and I knew him well, and he said don't put your hand in the water to pick up the fish. Well, you know what I did? I reached down and put my hand in the water, and the biggest damn dusky I've ever seen came up, and, if I hadn't been quick enough, he would have had my arm, and I would have been overboard, and so they're having problems.

Maine is having problems and New Jersey is having problems, and Ocean City is having problems, and, of course, I know this doesn't have anything to do with it, but these predators do have something to do with the dolphin decline. The last five years, I can show you pictures of dolphin

that we've caught, that are beautiful dolphin, and they've come later. I don't mean they're -- I think they're coming back down, more than they're coming up, but we're catching seven-pound dolphin, on an average.

You can go out there, and, if you find a piece of float, 150 dolphin. Find a pile of grass, 150 dolphin. Everybody in the fleet gets their whatever they need for the day. They don't see them, and where do they go? Hatteras does not see these fish in the fall, come October. They're coming down. Where are they going? Why aren't those fish, that are seven-pound fish, and as fast as they grow, and as many as we see, why aren't they coming down to Florida and getting bigger and being bigger?

Why aren't they being caught? That's my question, because I just don't believe it's all the recreational and the charter fishermen. By the way, North Carolina's fleet of charter fishermen catch less than 5 percent of the catch, of what's caught each year, and so you can't blame it all on North Carolina. Thank you.

MR. WHITAKER: I'm just going to try to point out an example, Richard. No, I don't want to catch small dolphins. If I'm catching small dolphins, fifteen and sixteen-inch dolphins, then I'm going to throw them back, and I'm going to move on, but let's say fishing is slow that day, and I get out there, and I'm catching twenty-two or twenty-three-inch dolphin, that are nice dolphin, but, if I get one in my box that's under twenty inches, then I get probably a pretty sizable ticket from the federal agency, that maybe causes me to lose my dolphin wahoo permit the next year.

I don't know what they'll do, but they will plainly tell you that they don't have enough people to do proper enforcement, and so, if they catch you breaking the law, they're going to make an example out of you, and I know guys that got tickets for \$5,000, and I really don't want one, and I can't afford it, but my point is I'm a whole lot better off, for the fishery, to just catch me thirty dolphins and move on, thirty or forty dolphins and move on, rather than, oh, well, my mate is not a very good measurer, and having to measure and kill ten of them trying to save thirty or forty. That is the point I'm trying to make, about I just think, looking at it from what we do, that we would be better off just to get us thirty or forty dolphins in the box and move on. Thank you.

MR. REYNOLDS: Thank you. Richard, don't -- This is just the data coming out of -- These studies could have been done anywhere. However, North Carolina is, in multiple published papers, said to be an area where large dolphin aggregate to spawn up there, and so it was a very good area for them to target, to show an overall decline in the stock, just for -- But it has nothing to do with blaming North Carolina fishermen or anything like that. I just want to make that clear.

So I'm chair, and so I'm trying to hand it out to everyone too, but, as a charter-for-hire guy, I guess, you know, me, you know, what do I want to see, and, you know, I am larger on the conservation side of things. I want the ocean swimming full of giant fish, and I want to freaking fish for big fish all day. Okay, and that's what I want. Okay, and is that realistic all the time?

No, and we're going to have to try to walk the line, obviously, and so what do I want? I want it going all the way up to Maine. I want a size limit, and we've fished with a size limit for a number of years. We figured out how to do it, and we've been trained how to use dehookers. We've been doing this for, I don't know, twenty years now, you know, and so you've just got to learn, you know, and so that's me. That's my perspective on it.

My fleet's perspective is a little bit different. You know, there's some charter guys in my fleet who feel like they don't really want a size limit on all the fish, you know, and so to bring, you know, their perspective to the table is why I came up with that few fish under the limit, so that no one is getting a ticket, and we're still exercising conservation.

Anyways, that was my, as it pertains to size limits, having a few fish, almost like a slot, that you could keep underneath the limit, in case you had mortality while you were measuring. Then we were kind of walking the line there, and not exploiting small fish, because, if we are having a problem, we need larger-sized fish to create more eggs, because you are absolutely right that the live rate is only about 1 percent, and so, the more eggs, the better.

If you have a million eggs, you know, in a fourteen-pound cow, then your survival rate at that 1 percent, just in its natural state, without apex predators, is only 1 percent, and so improving that roe size is going to improve our stock tremendously, and so that's what size limits are for. That's the tool that it's utilized for, and so that's my take on it. David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. David Moss. A question, as we talk about this, and it's not officially a proposal yet, I guess, but, eliminating size limits, are you talking about for both charter and general rec, or just charter?

MR. DELIZZA: I wasn't any kind of serious.

MR. MOSS: Okay.

MR. DELIZZA: The fact that -- Let me just rip. So Jon's latest paper shows a decline in the dolphin stock, any way you want to parse it, a decline, commercially, size, a decline. You don't find any research papers showing anything other than a decline in dolphin stock and dolphin size. You just won't find anything that says this fishery is improving.

I've been coming to these AP meetings for over twenty years, and I am ashamed that, under my watch, the dolphin fishery is, if not on the verge of collapse, you can see it from here, because I know, every two or three years, you can look back, with some clarity, and say that fishing is not as good as it was, and it just -- Well, it aggravates me to no end that, while we're told how important our input is, the council's inaction during that time is staggering to me.

Nothing of significance has been done in a decade, and how all of the measurable research, that shows a trend, is just ignored is unbelievable, and the MSE -- I've heard three-letter acronyms for two decades. It's just the latest three-letter acronym that has them waiting to do something, to want perfect science, to be able to put something in a computer and get an exact answer.

Meanwhile, we'll come back here in two years, and the fishery is not going to be as good as it was two years ago, and so I don't know what we're doing. I honestly don't know what I'm doing here, because nothing gets accomplished. We repeat the same things over and over. We did it eighteen months ago, two years ago, and nothing got accomplished, and I am certain, given that we're waiting for the MSE, when we get together two years from now, once again, nothing will be accomplished, and it seems like status quo is what the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

wants, because they could make changes, and they don't, and it's just -- It should be embarrassing to everybody involved in the process.

MR. REYNOLDS: Chip.

MR. BERRY: Thank you. Well, the more we get into it, the more angles I keep seeing things, but I keep coming back to something that I've kind of been thinking the last three years. I mean, 90 percent of dolphin are caught by private recreational boats, correct? I mean, 90, and so that's where all your take is coming from.

I say leave the charter boats alone. I mean, maybe give Rom a little leeway towards a couple of smaller fish even, you know, where he won't have to slime them up on the deck trying to measure them. I think our charter boats, our for-hire, they ought to be enhanced, if anything. I want to see people like Rom make a living, and I think a lot of you all in here are charter boat captains, and so I used to be, and so I take that, but, you know, it is the private recreational angler that is doing most of the take, I guess.

I mean, it's 90 percent. I mean, why don't we stand up and let them do the conservation for us, because that's where I think the burden should be borne, on that sector. I mean, more so than it is now, perhaps, you know, and treat the charter-for-hire guys a little differently, but, if we really want to do something for conservation, I just think, you know, looking at the private, you know, recreational boating, and I think that's where they should come from. It's just my opinion. Thank you.

MR. REYNOLDS: David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. A couple of things. First, I'll respond to that directly. I don't disagree, and certainly I think the allocation right now is 90-10, I believe, and it's 90 percent to private rec and 10 percent commercial. The problem with separating out, if you will, charter from private rec, number one, is I'm pretty sure that they both fall into the same allocation anyway.

Number two, unless we have some sort of limited entry, it's only, what, twenty-dollars to get a federal for-hire permit, and I know, like where I'm at in south Florida, there's no shortage of people that would be willing to pay an extra twenty-bucks to have a different regulation and so, you know, which, listen, I'm all about -- I know that that's probably in a different action, looking at the limited entry.

Now, the other thing that's interesting to me is, in any of those studies that you indicated, Jon, there was no range shift, right, or no noticeable range shift anyway, and, as we've all alluded to here, there's certainly been -- Again, I know, in South Florida, an order of magnitude increase in private rec effort. Now, we can't quantify that, of course, because there's no private rec permit, or anything like that, and so we kind of know it, because we're out on the water, but we can't really quantify that.

For me anyway, I would love to see the same regulation throughout the whole region. When I say the whole region, all the way up through Maine. Again, as we all know the growth habits of dolphin, if you can let them live even a little bit longer, and I understand the difficulties with release mortality and whatnot, but, if we're going to do this, you know, do it through the whole

region, and I realize I'm kind of circling here, but, if I see the increase in effort as much as I do in south Florida, I can only assume that it's the same across the region, right, and so -- There's not more rec people in North Carolina than there were before?

AP MEMBER: There are more rec people, but there's way more in Florida.

MR. MOSS: No, and I understand that. What I'm saying is that there's been --

AP MEMBER: There's way less north of us.

MR. MOSS: Right. I can only assume that the increase in rec effort is throughout the region. I understand that it's going to be heavily concentrated in Florida, particularly South Florida, and I get that, but there's an increase in effort, I would assume, across the whole region. As everybody gets availability with, you know, 37 Freemans, with triple 350s or whatever, and you can all get out to dolphin grounds now in, you know, less than an hour, and, I mean, by us, it's five minutes, but you can all get out there in less than an hour. Why not have the same regulations all throughout the region, and at least somewhat give the fish a chance?

MR. REYNOLDS: Okay. Thank you. We still have a lot to cover, you guys. Go ahead, Tim. Sorry.

MR. SCALISE: I mean, I've been charter fishing for forty -- I've had my captain's license for forty-one years, actively, and I couldn't tell you the last time I limited out on dolphin. I mean, it's been at least fifteen years, and probably closer to twenty, and what I've seen, what I've visually seen, all these boats, you know, and here I am, you know, at twenty-two knots going, and everybody is passing me, in finding, you know, everything is fished over by the time I get there.

That sort of leads me to believe that the participation rate has gone way up, and it's by all the go-fast center consoles. So, you know, I mean, and I know you don't like to -- The council won't segregate for-hire and recreational in two limits, and they want to be -- You know, keep them the same, but the for-hire sector hasn't changed. It's the pure recreational sector that has morphed, and evolved, into something that needs to be controlled.

MR. REYNOLDS: Would someone like to make any kind of motion for a preferred alternative or a size limit, in any way, any kind of motion, so that the council has something to go on that we prefer?

AP MEMBER: One more question. In most fish species, like the striped bass, the channel bass, the sea bass, everything, the bigger fish have limits, slot limits. You can't keep but one over this limit, and you can't keep a one over this limit. Why aren't we addressing that with the bigger dolphin? Why can't that be like you've got six people on your boat, and you can't catch but six over fifteen pounds, or whatever, you know, and can't you limit that? Isn't that an answer, also?

MR. REYNOLDS: Rom.

MR. WHITAKER: Well, and I might be shunned from a -- But, yes, I think that our industry could deal with -- I'm not sure what you want to -- By, I mean, the allowable under the minimum size to be 5 percent, 10 percent, or whatever, but yes, and, I mean, right now, and, believe me, the guy --

The fisheries guy sits there and counts every dolphin that comes off my boat, and I guarantee you, if he thinks I got one under twenty inches, he's going to measure it, and I'm going to get a ticket.

So, I mean, I know, personally, that I could work with some type of allowance, where, you know, somehow we've got a couple of fish in there under twenty inches that -- I know I'm not going to get a ticket, and I think I could live with that. Jay and Dickie, they could comment to that, but, you know, my point is it's a hard line now, and I don't want -- You know, so if I've got one under there that's nineteen inches, I'm going to get a ticket. I could deal with, I think, some type of percentage, more than 1 percent, and maybe not more than 10, but that's my feelings on that particular minimum size.

MR. REYNOLDS: Jay.

MR. KAVANAGH: A couple more comments. Sometimes I think there's somebody on staff that his job is just to come up with new acronyms to confuse us, and first thing we do, when we walk in this meeting, is we need to be handed a list of acronyms and what they stand for.

Let me reiterate a couple points. Council boats commercially fishing for dolphin, it's an open-access permit, and there is no trip limit. It's an open access permit. It's a virtually unregulated fishery, and, granted, the commercial sector is 10 percent of the ACL, and, you know, the commercial guys will say, well, we're not even catching our 10 percent, but what they're catching, and what they're targeting, are those waves of the big gaffers, and that's why we're not seeing the big dolphin that we used to see.

I think that's a major factor why we're not contributing, and there is little or no data to support limiting size, or number, north of South Carolina that would improve the overall state of the dolphin fishery, and, yes, we need more data. I've contacted Wesley and told him that I would love to go tag some dolphin. I've got twin eleven-year-old boys, and they would eat it up, and I never heard from him again, and so, you know, we've reached out. We've tried to make an effort to increase the data, but, again, I'm going to -- I honestly believe that limiting size, or the number of fish caught, north of South Carolina is not going to improve the overall fishery.

MR. REYNOLDS: Okay. Thank you, everyone, for your comments, and for your input. Without a motion on the table, I think the council has what they need, though. It sounds like we -- You know, everyone said how they feel about different things, and what our lines are on that, and so I think we're going to move forward to the next topic. Thank you. John.

MR. HADLEY: Thank you, and, just to kind of frame the, I guess, requested input here, if you all want to make a motion, you know, that's the AP's -- You know, it's within the realm of possibilities, but one thing to note, you know, keeping in mind that this is very, very early in the process. There's not a whole lot of analysis, or additional information, to show you guys right now, and so you would have another -- You will have another crack at this towards the -- You know, as this moves along toward the end, and you'll have a little bit more information, if you wanted to sort of provide a motion then as well, and so this isn't your -- That's all to say this isn't your only shot at it.

There will be more information at a subsequent meeting, and, really, we want to make sure that, you know, the range of viewpoints is captured, and the range of recommendations is captured, kind of what Jon alluded to, and so just to help kind of frame where this stands.

To Jay's comment, I have a list of SAFMC acronyms. It's on the webpage. I'm happy to -- Because there are a ton of them, and it's confusing, and so that's a little bit of a sidebar, but it's on there. I can -- You know, I can send that around to the AP, if you guys want to study up on this very, very long, long list. Anyway, and so it does exist, and there'll be a quiz tomorrow morning, so I'm expecting everybody -- No, I'm just kidding, but anyway --

AP MEMBER: What would anybody say instead of say five under the -- Say, you know, five undersized, and what about a reduction? Nobody has talked about a reduction in the limit, and like we're at fifty-four now. A lot of the captains perceive the fifty-four is okay, and we've got four people, and, when there's two of us, we're still going to catch fifty-four. Should we eliminate the captain and the mate? It's further down there, and I saw it, but what about going over the -- Everybody's opinion about reducing the number, and this comes up, and I know it's further along, but I just wanted to -- That it didn't get overlooked.

MR. HADLEY: I know we'll certainly get into that, and I don't want to overlook it, because that's the other -- That's the other kind of piece of this. One is the size limit piece, and the other piece is changing the recreational retention limit, and so this is focused specifically on the recreational sector as a whole, and so Action 2 looks at reducing the daily recreational bag limit for dolphin, and the council has this partitioned out into three major alternatives, or three major topics.

One looks at having -- Potentially changing the daily bag limit for onboard private recreational vessels. The other would look at potentially changing the limit onboard charter vessels, and so think of these as six pack vessels, and the other -- Then the last alternative, Alternative 4, would look at changing the retention limit onboard headboat vessels. You know, currently, as noted, the daily recreational bag limit is ten per person. That's across-the-board, and that's consistent throughout the management jurisdiction of the FMP, and so Maine through Key West.

As it was noted before, and, you know, you were discussing how the harvest breaks down within the fishery. You know, we'll have some additional information, that's updated for you, when you review this, you know, towards the end of the amendment process, but, as it was noted, you know, the private vessels typically harvest -- They account for the largest portion of the dolphin harvest, followed by charter vessels, to a lesser extent.

Looking at the combined headboat and commercial component, that's about 5 percent, and so 95 would be charter and private vessels, and then the other -- Then the other 5 percent would be headboats and commercial vessels, and so, overall, the last time this was examined, it looked like it showed -- The MRIP data showed that recreational vessels tend to harvest five or fewer dolphin per person.

However, it was noted that, when you kind of break that down in a little bit more detail, charter vessels tend to have a greater percentage of trips, not surprisingly, that harvest more than five per person, and so the catches tend to be higher onboard charter vessels than private vessels, and then, looking at the State of Florida versus North Carolina, fishing vessels off of North Carolina tend to exhibit higher landings per person than those fishing off of Florida.

Going over the previous AP list of recommendations, you know, there was a -- The AP had a discussion on this and noted that, if limits are going to be changed, consider having higher limits

onboard charter vessels than on private vessels. This was noted that it would help to protect the viability of the charter industry, by maintaining and -- Really being able to help market a trip, maintaining incentive for customers to book a trip, and then, also, if the bag limit were changed for charter vessels, make sure that's consistent with headboats as well, and so keep the consistency in regulations between charter, six packs of charter vessels, and headboats, and so I'll turn it over to the AP.

We're going to get into vessel limits next, and also captain and crew limits, and we're focusing specifically on the bag limit portion right now. You know, is there any change to the recommendations that you want to make, you know, that being the overall arching recommendation to consider higher limits onboard charter vessels than private recreational vessels. Thank you.

MR. REYNOLDS: David.

MR. MOSS: As a private rec, I have a question for all the charter guys in the room, and I'm only halfway joking when I ask this, but would it be easier to market a trip -- Let's say, for the sake of argument, that the limit is dropped down to five. Would it be easier to market that you could tell everybody that you've limited out every day? With the smaller limit, like, does that look, or sound, better, and understanding I'm 100 percent private rec, and does that look, or sound, better, if you can say, hey, we limited out, you know, every day this week, or whatever?

MR. REYNOLDS: I can say, on that on that line of thinking, that you're pretty spot on. I mean, you know, we went down to ten tunas and, you know, we got our limit, you know, and, I mean, this fishery is really healthy now, you know, because we did this. I mean, you know, I know guys that were catching fifty small blackfins a day, like feather-sized fish, you know, and we changed all this, and so now it's like you catch ten twenty-five-pound blackfins and, you know, guys say - - So, yes, that line of thinking is accurate.

I would have to say -- I mean, we caught our limit of mutton snappers yesterday. We caught our limit of fifteen to twenty-pound mutton snappers yesterday, and we didn't catch twenty little mutton snappers, you know, and so I would kind of agree.

As far as the topic goes, I think a five-per-person bag limit, you know, is going to be challenging for charter fishing, and so, from me and my fleet's perspective, from everything I've gathered from them, we aim more at a vessel limit. We would like to lower the vessel limit, but keep the bag limit higher, because of less people still paying the same price, is how it works on a charter.

You know, it's -- You know, you have one -- You get one or two guys, and they're still paying the same price, and so, you know, they don't -- They feel, you know, the value in it is higher to keep, you know, and so if they were -- If say there was a vessel limit of forty fish max, you know, and I had six people, and we can only kill forty, and that's still a lot of fish, especially if they're nicer fish, if we get there, you know, and we have to see we have to have a vision for the future of this fishery.

I cannot express that enough, that where we are now is not where we have to be, but, if I have two guys, and they can catch twenty, and not only ten, that is going to make a very big difference in

my booking, and just the perspective of a customer who's going to fly in from wherever and book a trip.

MR. WHITAKER: Well, this is going to be a stupid question, but do the recreational guys have to have a dolphin permit? No? Well, I guess the elephant in the room is for-hire versus private, and I know thirty sounds like a lot, but I've had guys fishing with for thirty years, and they're used to catching sixty, and that's what they come to Hatteras for.

They take one day off, six of them, and they work on the railroad, big old guys, 350 and up, and they count every dolphin that I catch, you know, and now it's fifty-four, and so, no, I don't say it's going to put me out of business, but I would lose some trips if I told him I couldn't catch but thirty dolphins, but, that being said, I do think five dolphins is plenty for a private boat, for one person. I would be tickled to death if I caught five dolphins.

AP MEMBER: (The comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR WHITAKER: I didn't know what that was, but, anyway, by the same token, if you say -- Maybe Richard brought up the point, and I forget who brought it up, but -- It might have been David, but let's say the private boat guy said, well, damn, I don't want to stop at thirty, and I want to catch fifty-four, like the Release is doing over there, and then all he has to do is buy a -- I don't know what it costs, but a twenty-five-dollar permit, and it's not a whole lot of money.

Then, you know, then you're going to have a lot of charter boats, probably, and that shouldn't be, but I really -- I almost think it's incumbent upon the South Atlantic now to make all fishermen buy a -- If they're going to fish for dolphin wahoo, then they should have to buy a permit, and use that money wherever you can, research tag dolphins, raise dolphins, and, being that I've got two kids come up, limited entry kind of gives me a little bit of a bad feeling in my stomach, because I think, the minute you put limited entry on our permits, it's going to make them valuable.

I mean, you look at some of these Gulf snapper grouper permits, and they're going for \$25,000, and so I think, if you do it to dolphin wahoo, and so, on this hand, I see it as a solution to our problem. On this hand, if my sons want to buy one, they're just going to have to fork out the money, I guess, but, you know, things aren't always an easy solution, and so I don't know, and maybe that's the route we need to take. I just -- I think, for my industry to survive, that we do need a --

I mean, I certainly feel like, if I call people and tell them that, hey, I can't catch but thirty dolphin, then I might have probably four or five trips that say, well, we ain't coming down there to do that, and we have other fisheries, but it's not easy when you're -- You know, when you've been counting on dolphins all the time, and you go out there and then you have to fall back on bottom fishing, or marlin fishing, or tuna fishing, and the yellowfins and the white marlins, for some reason, don't come by North Carolina anymore, and I can't exactly explain why.

I think it's had to do with effort, and the Gulf Stream, and a lot of variables, but they seem to catch plenty of them just above us, and off of Maryland and up off the Northeast, and so I think that that may be -- That may be a solution. I would like to hear some discussions from some other charter guys around here, as to what they think, but it's -- As far as per person, you know, sometimes I get two people, and, yes, they want to catch thirty, you know, and they don't want to be limited by

eighteen dolphins, and they want to catch whatever the boat limit is, and I'm certainly happy with the boat limit now, but, anyway, I think it's something that may be a solution to some of our problems, and maybe not. I would like to hear some discussion.

MR. REYNOLDS: David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. Sorry to monopolize it, and so a couple of things. Number one, I'm all about -- If we want to lower the bag limit on private rec, I'm fine with that. I mean, to be honest with you, most of the time, when I go out dolphin fishing, it's part of a mixed bag. I mean, we'll go out and troll, or even live bait the edge or something, or try to find some leads to get to dolphin, and then we'll usually drop down to the bottom and try to get some muttons or, you know, yellowtails, depending upon where we're at. So, for me, I'm all about it, and, usually when we do most of the dolphin fishing, it's so that my nephew can go crazy, because they're dolphin, right?

I also don't disagree with there should be a permit for it. The only problem with the finances of it is that the money wouldn't go -- It goes to the general ledger, whatever the charge is, and so it wouldn't go to research, unfortunately, or anything else. As I understand it, any kind of monies for a permit, they can only charge the administrative costs of that, and then it goes to kind of the general ledger. They can't allocate back to the fishery, unfortunately.

My question, and, again, I'm not -- Listen, and far be it for me -- I do not want to take money out of your pocket, 100 percent, but my genuine question is would you lose trips if the regulation is essentially the same everywhere, and so it's -- You know, for these guys that want to go and catch their forty or fifty dolphin, and, well, everywhere that they go, they're only allowed to catch thirty now, and so their choice is to either catch thirty or not do anything, and I don't know. I don't know what the answer is. Like I said, I don't want to -- I do not want to take money out of your pocket, 100 percent. I'm genuinely asking the question. I don't know what the answer is there.

MR. WHITAKER: Well, to answer that, David, I think they would go for some different -- Chesapeake Bay, rockfish, and they would go do something different. I mean, they're spending - - By the time they come to Hatteras, \$3,000, for a hotel and, you know, all that food and all that stuff that goes with it, but I think they would find something else, just something that's a little less money.

MR. REYNOLDS: Dan.

MR. OWSLEY: Rom, and so kind of like echoing David, and I want to ask it, maybe the question, in a different way. It seems like your clientele is strictly just coming, and they got to catch fifty-four fish, right, and if they don't get the fifty-four fish, it's not worth their effort, the financial effort, the time away from family, whatever.

Is it strictly a numbers game, for like bragging rights for them, or if, potentially this boat limit, or vessel limit, goes to like thirty fish, but if data would say, hey, if you can, you know, restrict, or reduce, some of those fish caught, for more quality fish, are your guys coming for the enjoyment of reeling in fifty-four fish, or are they coming to put food in their freezer, because I've kind of heard it like both ways, right, and so, they can catch fifty-four fish, but only yield 100 pounds of fillets, because they're the self-imposed twenty-four-inch bailer limit that the North Carolina charter boats are putting in, or they can come catch thirty, that are a bigger, more quality fish, and

they can end up yielding, or netting, 200 pounds of fish for their freezer, and like, which one is it?

Are they coming to put up numbers, and saying, hey, I went here, and I got -- You know, my arms are sore, and Rom put us on fifty-four fish, and it was great, right, and we limited out, or are they traveling from Iowa, and the Midwest, or wherever, and they're coming for putting food in their freezer?

MR. WHITAKER: Well, if that's a question to me, I think it's a little bit for fish, and, yes, I would love to go out there and -- If I go out there and catch them fifteen to thirty-pound dolphins, they would be tickled to death. They're coming to put fish in the freezer and take home. They like to eat fish. That's why they come to Hatteras, because we have good fishing there. They usually go home with 200 or 300 pounds of fish, and they're tickled to death.

I mean, they don't want to catch fifty-four fish every time. In fact, last year, and I didn't look at my picture, but I think we caught sixteen, but, if I told them they couldn't catch but thirty, then I think they would have reservations about coming all the way to Hatteras and spending the money. I think they would say, well, hey, we can go to Chesapeake Bay and catch eight to twelve rockfish, and, you know, I just think that it would affect our business. Dickie and Jay may feel different, but I've got guys that like to eat fish, and they come to Hatteras to catch them.

If I could catch, you know, twenty ten-pound dolphins every day, I would be tickled to death, but you have to catch what's out there, and we've got a pretty big abundance of five to ten-pound dolphins, bailers, from -- You know, that would be our main fishery.

AP MEMBER: Let's say we do reduce the bag limit to thirty, or the size limit to a certain thing. What guarantees, at a one-and-a-half or 2 percent survival rate, how long -- I mean, what guarantees are that they're going to get any bigger, because we used to catch -- Like Rom said, I, when I first -- This is my 49th year chartering, and we would fish 150 days minimum during that period, and we were catching 200 dolphin.

It was -- I mean, the box would be full, okay, and so we came up, just to make it fair for everybody, so that one guy didn't stay on the tideline all day long and catch 200 dolphin, and we came to that sixty-fish limit. Since then, I haven't seen a big improvement in the size of the dolphin, and so what guarantees are there that, if we do reduce it, that these fish are going to -- You know, there's going to be enough survived to get into that next size limit?

MR. REYNOLDS: Chip.

MR. BERRY: Yes, and that's kind of what I was hoping that MSE model would kind of help us do, is -- Just as an example, if you -- Let's just say it's the private sector, and you reduce it to thirty fish, and let's say increase the size, fork length, to twenty-four inches, and what will that really do? You know what I mean?

Is that how we get -- You know, what mix in there do we do to get more fish, and bigger fish, and I don't have a clue, you know, and I don't know what that magic number may be to get bigger fish, like, I mean, you know, in terms of putting a fork length restriction or something, or bag limits, and I just don't know, and that's what I was hoping that MSE model might help us do, is some, you know, what if we did this, and what is it likely to, you know, to do, because I really don't know. I

don't know, if you change it from fifty-four fish to thirty fish in the private -- I have no clue as to what that may do. I mean, I just don't know, and so just comment. Thank you.

MR. REYNOLDS: Paul.

MR. PANCAKE: Where do our dolphin that we catch on the east coast start, because if there's a 1 percent mortality, there's a starting line and a finish line, and how do we get more fish past the starting line going up the east coast?

I should probably know where the starting line is, and I'm ashamed that I don't, but, if the numbers on that are accurate, and if, you know, all the anecdotal data that we're seeing in South Carolina is accurate, and I know North Carolina is a little bit different, just geographically and closer to the stream, but, instead of making the fish bigger at that finish line, how do we put more at the starting line, I guess this is where I'm going with this.

MR. REYNOLDS: The 1 percent is only in a biological like fiduciary, you know, and so it's only in live studies, with fish spawning and what survives out of that roe sack, is where that's coming from, and so, with tagging data, I guess -- You know, this is -- When we first started writing our first papers, this was the essence of it, was using all of the data combined, which sounds like what Richard is hinting on as well, which we need a more holistic approach to this.

What Jay's seeing is completely accurate as well. How could we possibly -- How would a reduction in anything -- With the stock in the present state that it is, how would a reduction in anything on one side, and then an unlimited access permit, with no commercial trip limit, still ongoing in the same exact fishery -- How could you ever recover a fishery and get results? It's completely impossible. I mean, it's not even -- You know, it's just not possible.

You know, if these fish were left swimming in the water, just to be killed anyways, or a larger size fish that produces more eggs at one end of the spectrum -- One sector is killing these fish, and then there's smaller fish being killed, and, you know, that's why we're in the predicament that we are right now.

AP MEMBER: (The comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. REYNOLDS: Correct, and so we have to manage the stock, and so, basically, a more holistic approach, I guess, is a recommendation, also, to look at the entire thing. I think that's what the MSE is hinting at. Does anyone else have any particular comments, regarding bag limits specifically, before we move on to the next topic?

MR. SCALISE: One thing, and I don't see it up there, but, as far as excluding captain and mate in the bag limit, and I know you alluded to it a little while ago, if you've got one or two on it, and then it's, like, dude, you only get ten, you know, and why not have where it's a maximum of six, period, but you can include the captain and crew, as long as you don't go past six, and so, if you have four, and then the captain and crew, and then you have a bag limit of six for that trip, or, if you have a total of two people, and then you add the captain and crew, then you have four people, but you just can't go beyond the six number. Does that make sense?

MR. REYNOLDS: We think alike there. I mean, that's exactly -- You know, I'm just kind of waiting for the whole thing to develop here, and try to stay on topic, but that -- I brought that up at the last meeting. I mean, I think that's a way to get through all this, and we're licensed, blanket licensed, anyways, and so it's kind of -- We're still in the recreational sector, and so, yes, then it would be an overall --

What you're what you're hinting at, it sounds like, Tim, is kind of what my line of thinking is, which would be comprehensive in the recreational sector for a reduction in a bag limit, but captain and crew would still keep their limit, which would allow them, on charters, for a larger limit, you know, only because of that anyways, but, really, it's just the amount of people on the boat, but then with a maximum of six anglers, regardless, is where is where that would land, and so I would be in support of that. Okay and I think the next thing is vessel limit.

MR. HADLEY: Yes, and so we'll look at this, and then, again, we'll come to the -- As it was alluded to, the for-hire captain and crew retention limits, bag limits. This action -- You know, the last action focused specifically on the vessel limit. This specifically focuses on the -- Or the last action focused specifically on the bag limit, rather, and this focuses specifically on the vessel limit, and, really, there's a potential here to change the vessel limit from the current fifty-four fish down to twelve. That's the range. You know, that's a very low -- The council is looking at a very wide range here, and they'll probably tighten that up, you know, as this as this moves along.

The point here is that the council is looking at potentially looking at different vessel limits, based on, there again, the type of vessel, or how the vessel is permitted, and so Alternative 2 looks at changing the vessel limit onboard private vessels. Alternative three looks at charter vessels, or six-packs, and Alternative 4 looks at headboats.

One thing -- Or a couple of things to note. One, the headboat sector, or specific subsector, I guess, their limit is ten fish per paying passenger, and so there's not necessarily a vessel limit for them. This would implement a vessel limit, and then the other thing of note within these options, within these alternatives, is the council wants to explore options that would look at applying these specifically to Florida only or to -- You know, kind of a binary choice there, and either Florida only or to the entire Atlantic region, and so there's potential that, you know, these vessel limits could apply to the whole coast or just off of Florida.

That Florida-only component gets at what I mentioned earlier, where you have the specific regulations in the Atlantic state waters off of Florida that are different than the federal waters off of Florida, and so this could potentially bring those in line.

Looking at past considerations in Amendment 10, the council looked at thirty, forty, forty-two fish, forty-eight, fifty-four fish. Those last three numbers are looking at dividing by six. That was one of the recommendations, that, if you're going to change the retention limit, at least make it divisible by six.

As noted, you know, when this was last examined, vessels tended to harvest twelve or fewer fish per vessel. That's on the high-level recreational data. If you look specifically at charter vessels, charter vessels do account for a very large number of trips that do harvest beyond twelve fish per vessel, and so there's certainly a different average harvest between private vessels and charter vessels.

There again, you do have charter vessels -- Or vessels in North Carolina tend to have higher -- This is total recreational vessels in North Carolina tend to have -- They exhibit higher landings per vessel than those fishing off of Florida, and then, moving down to the previous AP recommendations, when discussing this, you noted that the for-hire industry takes less than 20 percent of the landings, 20 percent of the total landings, they do catch more dolphin per trip than the recreational fleet. There's consensus that the headboat catch of dolphin was insignificant in regard to the ACL, or total harvest, and so do not implement a vessel limit, to kind of take that option totally off the table, and do not implement a vessel limit for headboats.

Then, in the discussion, several AP members advocated for a higher vessel limit onboard charter vessels than private vessels. It was perceived that this would not be -- That a vessel limit reduction would not be as big of a burden, regulatory burden, on private anglers as it would for-hire vessels, and then it was noted that, if the vessel limit is changed, maintain a limit divisible by six, kind of keeping that six-pack, a maximum of six paying passengers, in mind, and so I'll turn it over for any discussion, if you want to add any additional recommendations to this, or change your recommendations, and then, after this, we have one more action to get through, which is the captain and crew bag limits. Thank you.

MR. REYNOLDS: I have a recommendation from me and the charter fleet down there, and it sounds like we're pretty much on the same page, but, however, the goals and objectives in this FMP specifically state that the council is to reduce conflict, and I forget the other word, but between sectors and fishermen, and so this -- My recommendation comes with this in mind.

My fleet believes forty fish max per vessel is good. We would like to keep it at ten fish per person, and then keep for-hire crew limits, but forty fish, no matter what, maximum, and that's the recommendation. However, to reduce competition, and conflict, between not only sectors, but other fishermen -- S if I am -- If I'm on a piece of debris, and here comes Paul, and, you know, he's coming in, you know, and he -- You know, and I can only keep forty, you know, and there's more recreational vessels.

Well, now I can only keep forty, because I'm not going to sit there and catch sixty and leave less for Dan, or Paul, whoever else is out there in a rec boat, I mean, and so that is reducing conflict, and it's reducing competition between the sectors. Now, however, if I'm out there, and I pull away, and here comes some unregulated longline boats on the same line as well, and here comes Dan, and here comes Paul, and then here comes Richard, and they're -- Now you've got charter guys, and you got -- You have this massive influx of new competition, and the vessel limits are low, and then, you know, we're not really reducing.

We're not attacking the objectives of the FMP, and so, all that being said, I think what accompanies our vessel limit would be, obviously, a strict commercial limit, to reduce competition between sectors, and that would also give more fish to everyone else, as the piece of the pie goes, and that's the way we're seeing it. Thank you. Anyone else have a comment on vessel limits? Richard.

MR. HARRIS: Vessel limits are great. I think it would be a good idea. We've just got to come to, you know, an agreement, but, getting back to what you said about the we catch more, as the charter fleet, than the -- You know, our numbers are higher, and I'll give you an example. Last

week, I was out fishing, and there were sixteen charter boats, and there were seventy recreational boats.

Now, we don't have any dolphin yet. It's too early for us, and maybe a scattered, you know, nicer dolphin, but, out of all those boats, if they only caught five tunas, and sixteen boats caught fifteen tunas, who caught more fish? That's what I'm trying to say, is the recreational boats need some kind of limit, you know, other than what the charter boats have, or the, you know, for-hire boats, and I'm not saying it shouldn't be fairly liberal.

I'm just saying that it shouldn't be -- That we shouldn't be comparing charter boats, because, if you add up all the ones in North Carolina, there's only about seventy of us, and that's from Morehead all the way up to, you know, Oregon Inlet, and you've got twenty-five times that in recreational boats.

MR. REYNOLDS: We'll start with -- Okay. Go ahead, Richard.

MR. DELIZZA: So breaking out the -- Right now, the for-hire is part of the recreational sector, right, and it's clearly a different animal, for sure, and it's -- First off, it's how you make a living, which sort of matters, right? I feel like we've talked about this before, and that the council itself was not inclined to break out for-hire, because I don't think anybody here in the AP has any problem with managing the for-hire separately from recreational. John, and anybody, do you know if the council can break out in other fisheries, and is for-hire broken out as its own sector?

MR. HADLEY: Yes, and it's definitely within the realm of possibilities, and there's different ways to do that. You don't see it in the South Atlantic, and you see it in the Gulf. There's what they call sector separation, where they break up the recreational annual catch limit, where it's a, you know, the for-hire sector can catch these fish, and the private rec can catch these fish, and so that's what is typically referred to as sector separation.

There are other ways to look at it though. You can still have one -- Everyone pulling from one pot of fish, but just have separate regulations, and there's several examples of that. You know, I'm thinking of -- I think it's Mid-Atlantic black sea bass that you can keep more fish on a charter vessel than you can keep on a private recreational vessel, and so there's different ways to go about it, but, you know, to answer your question, it is possible. It's within the realm of possibilities to have different regulations based on vessel type.

MR. REYNOLDS: We will need to take a break shortly, and we can always come back to this, but, David, please.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. I don't disagree that rec maybe should have a different vessel limit than charter. The only problem is that we just heard rec is not hitting their vessel limit, essentially, anyway, and so it's like -- I actually was having this conversation with my brother-in-law not too long ago, that -- You know, I remember, years ago when it was like ten people catching a hundred fish, and now it seems like a hundred people catching ten fish, with the rec sector, and so I'm not adverse to a vessel limit with recreational. I just don't think it's going to have an impact, because, for the most part, they're not catching anywhere near their limit anyway, on a daily basis.

AP MEMBER: (The comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. MOSS: Well, maybe I'm just not that good of a fisherman, but we're not catching them by us.

MR. REYNOLDS: All right, and why don't we why don't we take a quick break? All right. Everyone take a mental break here, and we'll come back to this, and we can wrap up this discussion on this, and whatever else we have on the agenda. Thank you. All right, you guys. Let's take ten minutes.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. HADLEY: Before we get underway here, we're going to finish up this discussion. We're going to look at captain and crew bag limits, and I do want to mention -- My apologies for not putting the hands-raised document up, but for those of you online, Glen and Bob specifically, when you want to speak, just raise your hand, and I'll make sure that you're called on, and so thank you.

MR. REYNOLDS: Bob, do you have a comment?

MR. FREVERT: I do, actually. Sorry, and I raised my hand a couple of times, and I didn't get acknowledged, and so I wanted to make one comment with respect to what Rom had said about a percentage of fish that are under the limit, so you don't get a ticket, and we run into that problem down here on the rec side.

It's twenty inches, and we've had some FWC people that, you know, you're nineteen-and-a-half, and that's a problem. Other guys, if it's one, they don't consider it a problem, but the one thing I would like to say is, if we changed it to say twenty inches everywhere from Florida to Maine, but you're allowed two fish under say twenty, just to avoid that problem, and that opens Pandora's Box, because then every rec in Florida can get two sixteen-inchers, right?

MR. REYNOLDS: Okay. Yes, and it sounds -- You can make a motion on that, Bob.

MR. FREVERT: Actually, I had planned to make a motion, and I couldn't get recognized, but I will plan to make a motion maybe a -- I've been listening, and taking notes, and I think that that would be a good thing overall, because nobody wants to get a ticket for being just a little bit under, but, if we do open that up, then that allows everybody and their brother to take two fish that are short. I'm not sure that's such a big problem, and then the other comment I'll have is I'll agree that, down here in south Florida, catching a limit is impossible. That's all I had.

MR. REYNOLDS: Thank you, Bob. Okay, and I think -- So we left off on vessel limits, unless, Rom, do you have a comment?

MR. WHITAKER: Well, my comment to some type of leeway, to keep from getting a ticket, was applied to charter boats. I didn't mean to all of a sudden increase the whole recreational limit to everybody and keep under, you know, two or three or four, whatever, two or -- Whatever percentage you come up with. I guess 5 percent would be, in my case, three fish. No, I didn't, and that wasn't my intentions, and that just makes the problem worse, and so I meant for the for-hire industry. Thank you.

MR. REYNOLDS: Okay. Thanks, Rom. Thanks, Bob. Okay, and so we're back to -- We left off on vessel limits, and anyone else who has some input, or any kind of comments, or recommendations on vessel limits, to any -- You know, to any degree, recreational or for-hire, please comment. Okay. We're going to move on to, I believe, for-hire limits, crew limits.

MR. HADLEY: Yes, and so this is the last action in the amendment. It looks at essentially eliminating captain and crew bag limits for dolphin onboard charter vessels, and so there's really two alternatives here that would change the regulations. One would eliminate captain and crew bag limits, essentially along the entire east coast, and so the whole management jurisdiction, and then there's another alternative that would focus specifically on Florida, and so, off of Florida, in the federal waters off of Florida, there would be no daily retention of bag limits for for-hire captain and crew.

There again, that Florida-only component gets at the Florida state waters regulations and trying to match up, potentially match up, those regulations, so they're consistent, but, to review some of the AP's previous discussion, there was consensus, from AP members present at the time, that captain and crew should still be able to retain a daily bag limit, provided the recreational vessel limit was not exceeded, and it was noted that maintaining captain and crew bag limits -- It was noted that you should maintain captain and crew bag limits, make those bag limits the same as what is allowed for anglers onboard the vessels.

The limits are important on charter trips, particularly for those with a low number of anglers onboard, and so, if you have one or two paying passengers, the captain and crew bag limits can help with the overall retention of the vessel, and they could be used as a conservation tool that also maintains the viability of the charter industry if individual bag limits are reduced.

That's all to say that the idea was, you know, kind of what we started to get into in the previous discussion. If there is some sort of change in the overall bag limit, having those captain and crew bag limits onboard charters could allow the overall harvest to be a little bit higher, and sort of help with the marketability of that trip, and being able to book those trips, and so, with that, I'll turn it back over to the AP to discuss this. Are you okay with this set of recommendations? Do you want to change them? Do you want to add anything to it?

MR. REYNOLDS: So I believe the AP was in -- Is it that the AP was in favor of keeping crew limits then? Okay. Yes. Sounds good.

MR. WHITAKER: Yes, and I'm in favor of keeping them.

MR. HADLEY: Gotcha, and so it would be noted that that's still the AP's preference, to keep the captain and crew bag limits onboard charter trips, and so, with that, that's it for this amendment. Unless there are any other comments on it, we'll jump over to for-hire reporting.

MR. REYNOLDS: David.

MR. MOSS: I have a question that I'm not sure who can answer it, but from -- I don't even know what the perspective is, the federal perspective, I guess, and would these all technically be one regulation, and, if you want to know why I'm asking, I'll explain, and so my concern, as we all can kind of agree, that the stock has got some issues, right, from wherever it may be, and we need to,

I think anyway, be very judicious about what actions we think are going to have the greatest impact, as we look at it from a federal perspective, whatever it is, the ten-to-one ratio, or something like that, and I forget what the number is now, of eliminating regulations.

If these are going to be four different regulations, and I don't know what the math is going to be. I don't know how that works out, or what's going to have to be eliminated, and so on and so forth, or would this be all considered one regulation that, if we're going to put one in, or not we here necessarily, but ten more would have to be -- Or would forty have to be eliminated?

MR. HADLEY: So that's in relation to the new executive order, and is that correct?

MR. MOSS: Yes.

MR. HADLEY: So I don't have a great idea or a great answer for you right now. We're supposed to be getting additional guidance on that at the June council meeting, on whether or not -- You know, you have four actions here, and is that four different regulations, or is Regulatory Amendment 3 one regulation, and so I'm not really sure yet. That's -- We're going to get additional guidance on that from the National Marine Fisheries Service at the coming meeting.

MR. MOSS: So, whichever way that shakes out, I think, again, we, as a group, probably need to see what we're going to get the best bang for the buck on, so to speak, for the health of the fishery, and really for a lot of people here's livelihoods. You know, we need to be pre-judicious and make sure that we have an impact wherever we can.

MR. REYNOLDS: That's a very good point. And I agree. What you're saying is that we maybe consolidate a number of these, possibly, and just -- Or make it at least so that the council understands that, with one of these recommendations that might come with charter-for-hire crew limits, it would be accompanied by a series of other recommendations, made into one that we find the most strongly agreed on, so that, if we're going to lose other regulations in a fishery that's struggling, that we are at least holding onto that.

MR. MOSS: Yes, and either condense these into one, or, as a for instance, and I'm not suggesting that this be the one to get eliminated, but like let's say the private rec vessel limit, right, and, as we said, and, according to the data, they're not really hitting their vessel limit anyway, and so why bother with that one, if we know that that's going to cost us something else, and you know what I mean? I don't know if that's the route to take. I'm just kind of posing it, you know, and throwing it out there, which I know is a cardinal sin. Don't pose a question that you don't know the answer, but I'm doing it anyway.

MR. HADLEY: So, to that point, assuming that the MSE modeling is -- You know, it passes peer review by the SSC and can be used in management, that's hopefully, and Chip kind of alluded to this a little bit, but hopefully that can help with those decisions, and so, you know, maybe it's a change in the bag limit has a larger biological impact than a change in the vessel limit, or a change in the size limit.

You can at least have a little bit more information on that, and it can help you kind of say what's going to be your best bang for your buck, but, yes, and point taken. Absolutely, but we just don't

have that information right now, as far as, you know, what could be expected to have the biggest biological impact, but hopefully that will be forthcoming. That's the goal.

MR. REYNOLDS: All right. If there's no further comments on that, then we're going to move into for-hire electronic reporting, I believe.

MR. HADLEY: Yes, and I'm going to pull up that presentation here. This is Attachment 4b in your briefing book. This is an amendment that touches on -- It's one of those comprehensive amendments that I alluded to earlier in the meeting, and this is looking at changing the for-hire reporting requirements in the dolphin wahoo fishery, the snapper grouper fishery, and the mackerel cobia fishery, and so this is something that is being reviewed by all three advisory panels this spring.

The Mackerel Cobia and the Snapper Grouper AP met earlier, and they provided their recommendations, and then we wanted to get recommendations from the Dolphin Wahoo Advisory Panel as well, since this will certainly affect those with the-for hire permit, and so, as a little bit of background, the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting, you know, another fancy acronym, and we can add that -- We'll add that to the list, SEFHIER.

That program, you know, think of it as the for hire-logbook, the for-hire reporting program, and that was implemented in the South Atlantic in 2021, through, again, a comprehensive amendment that included all three major finfish fishery management plans, and so this -- You know, it put in place or modified reporting requirements for charter vessels, for federally-permitted charter vessels, and federally-permitted headboat vessels.

Since then, since 2021, the overall compliance rate has been pretty low. When you look at compliance rate, it sort of depends on what metric you use, and so, if you look at the overall number of vessels that reported at least one time, that's fairly high, and this is information that was presented to the council by the National Marine Fisheries Service, and so, based on that presentation, 83 percent of permitted vessels reported at least one time in 2023, which seems pretty high.

However, many vessels are not meeting all reporting requirements, such as the timing of reporting, submitting did-not-fish reports, and reporting all for hire trips, and so some trips are just missing from the logbook entries, and so, if you look at that in more granularity, then in 2023, only 37.4 percent of vessels were assessed to be meeting all reporting requirements of the logbook throughout the year, and so that was flagged by the National Marine Fisheries Service, and that information was presented to the council.

In June of 2024, the council started an amendment to improve compliance with for-hire reporting requirements for federally-permitted headboats and charter vessels, to make improvements in the reporting programs, and so, you know, really, the issue here is that the National Marine Fisheries Service mentioned, or noted that, since the compliance rate is so low, and the information cannot be validated, it cannot be used in management, which is -- Using it in management is the goal of collecting this information.

The council started an amendment to improve compliance with the program, to go along with this, and I'll show you a couple of different tables showing what other pieces are moving along with

what's being considered in the South Atlantic, but the Gulf Council and Highly Migratory Species is also revamping reporting requirements for their federally-permitted for-hire vessels.

As a little bit of background, in March of 2025, the council discussed including possible changes to the headboat survey in the amendment as well, and so some of these actions are intended to affect both charter vessels and headboats, and it was noted that it's important to maintain consistency in reporting requirements, to minimize the burden, reporting burden, on permit holders, while at the same time collecting data that is usable in management.

That last issue is kind of -- That's the crux of the problem at-hand, and the goal, the goal of this whole amendment, is to make this information and data that's being collected from for-hire captains usable in management, and so why are changes needed?

It's noted that they're needed to improve reporting from the for-hire fleet, to improve overall compliance, and so we want to bring that thirty-seven-and-change level percent up, and collect data that can be used directly in management, and, again, you know, kind of -- It's a balancing act, and so making sure the data is collected and can be used in management, also keeping in mind the reporting burden on those that are filling out the logbooks.

Looking at the overall picture on where this stands, this has been moving along in the council's process, and then the council, at their March meeting, approved this for scoping, at the March 2025 meeting, and then the idea is to convene information from the APs, and so, at this point, trying to gather information from the APs, and so, looking at possible actions in the amendment overall, as mentioned, the council was notified that the information being collected in this program was not usable for management.

Within that letter that was sent from the National Marine Fisheries Service to the council, there were several suggestions, and so each one of these actions, or at least the first four actions, look at addressing those specific recommendations from the National Marine Fisheries Service, and so modifying the reporting frequency and timing, and it was noted that that needs to be stepped up, requiring trip notification, establishing approved landing locations, requiring participation in a validation and estimation survey, and revising reporting of economic data for charter vessels, and, finally, modifying did-not-fish reports, or reporting requirements.

With this, and just to give you an idea of how this is going to go, I'll go over each action, and I'll turn it over to the AP for your comments specifically on these different measures, but the first action in the amendment focuses on reporting frequency and timing, and so, currently, federally-permitted charter and headboat vessels must report all fish harvested and discarded from each trip and submit it weekly.

Overall, the council's considerations, which I'll get into in a minute, would potentially step that up, and so require increased frequency of reporting, and a shorter timing of submission, for when each trip report must be submitted. As I mentioned, this is not happening in a vacuum, and so there are other updates to for-hire reporting that are occurring, and so in front of you is a table of what other programs currently require and what's being proposed.

The South Atlantic, currently, there is a weekly reporting requirement for when trips need to be submitted. In the Gulf of Mexico, the consideration is to require reporting potentially prior to offloading of catch, within thirty minutes of completion of a trip, or each trip daily.

Moving up, looking at the Greater Atlantic Region, and so vessel trip reports, this is required -- Reporting is required generally forty-eight hours after entering port, except in the recreational tilefish fishery, and that's twenty-four hours after the end of each trip, and, lastly, HMS is considering requiring electronic reporting of trips twenty-four hours after the end of each trip, and so that's, you know, again, some different options that the council is considering in the updating the reporting frequency and reporting timing.

The South Atlantic Council is looking at adopting similar measures being considered by the Gulf of Mexico, and so trip level or daily reporting as a requirement, and potentially before offloading fish. Other than the no action alternative, the Gulf is considering two other alternatives, one that requires submittal of trip reports within thirty minutes of arriving at the dock. If no fish are harvested, or, prior to offload, if fish are harvested, and the other reporting requirement would be for each trip daily, and so within twenty-four hours at the end of each trip.

With this, I'm going to turn it over to the AP, and, really, you know, what the council is hoping to get feedback on is what are your thoughts on what the Gulf Council is considering, and so looking at reporting, and, you know, what are your thoughts on requiring trip reporting prior to offload of catch, or what do you think is a reasonable time to require trip reporting at the end of a trip, if that makes sense, and so looking at changes in reporting frequency and changes in reporting timing, and so what is a reasonable range of alternatives for them to consider?

AP MEMBER: (The comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. HADLEY: Well, is that reasonable? Is thirty minutes -- Is it reasonable?

AP MEMBER: Thirty days.

MR. HADLEY: Thirty days, and okay, but, no, this is the kind of input -- You know, just thinking about your daily operations, when you come back to the dock, what's a reasonable -- What's a reasonable ask, noting that the council has received information from the National Fisheries Service saying this needs to be shortened from weekly reporting, and there needs to be more frequent reporting. Should it be twenty-four hours? Should it be forty-eight hours? Should it be within an hour? You know, what's reasonable? What's a reasonable ask of for-hire captains?

It's really just trying to get a feel for what would be -- Kind of, there again, weighing that balance beam of trying to make this data usable, versus not being overly burdensome to people with the permit, and so I'll turn it over to the AP for, you know, kind of feedback on that, on what is a reasonable reporting frequency and timing.

MR. REYNOLDS: Paul.

MR. PANCAKE: Just so that, I guess, all of us that are on the recreational side can be a little bit more informed, how intrusive is the reporting? Is it as simple as six dolphin, two yellowfin, one

wahoo, go, or is it like the old trip sheets that we used to have to fill out, where it was a big paper, and you had to tear the thing off?

MR. REYNOLDS: I guess I'll take that one. So, you know, they're asking for what your target species were, and they only want two target species. You know, involved in it all is your -- It's the time zone that you're in, the target species that you're after, the time that you leave the dock, the time that you return to the dock, the number of crew that you have, the number of anglers that you have, the cost of your trip, the number of hours that you fished, your effort, and then the amount of fuel that you burned. Then they want the -- They want the species that you actually caught, or caught and released, and I think that's about it. Your region, you know, you got to give -- You know, on the chart, they like -- They have the regional number, but, yes, I think that's about what they're asking for.

MR. HARRIS: They want to know -- You say I'm fishing in 500 feet of water, and you push the button where you think you're fishing, and it comes up 1,500 feet of water. I mean, you've got to pinpoint it, but it's not -- It's not that bad. It really isn't. I mean, it takes fifteen minutes. I mean, the big thing is why do they need to know how much fuel I burned.

MR. REYNOLDS: Rom.

MR. WHITAKER: Well, they're -- They want to know your start port, your end port, what gear you're using, fishing hours, number of anglers, number of paying passengers, number of crew, how much you charge, how much fuel you use, what the price per gallon of that fuel is, and then you've got to have your species, but -- I will just use last weekend as an example. I caught a bluefin tuna on Thursday and Friday. Well, for some reason, and I'm not sure why, North Carolina discontinued a trip card for HMS species, and so, instead of walking into the marina and getting a card, and putting the length of the bluefin and putting a tag on it, before I can unload it from the boat, I had to call in, because we don't have that system anymore.

I called into NOAA, to a number that another captain gave me. Well, somebody answered the phone, and they said, hold on, and so I thought I had gotten cut off. About two minutes later, I said, are you still there, and, yes, but my computers aren't coming up. Well, I'll wait five minutes, and I'm here at the dock, and I've got people standing down there unloading fish, looking at me like, well, what are you doing, and I usually go down there and take a picture and collect my money.

Anyway, five or six minutes later, the guy said, I'm sorry, and you're going to have to call back tomorrow, and I can't get my computer to work. So, the next day I did call back. I had two bluefins to report that day, and supposedly you're supposed to have them done within twenty-four hours, and so I might've been out of time on the first day, but I did finally get somebody to talk to that day, and, after about fifteen minutes, I got it done, but that still didn't fulfill my electronic reporting.

So I said that we have until a week now to do it, the following Tuesday, which I personally think that that's the minimum time I want, and I'll discuss that later, but I called in Monday morning to report my Friday and Saturday, or my Thursday and Friday fishing days, and I go all through all those things everybody just talked about, and hit the button to send, and then a red flag pops up there that I've done something wrong in here. I don't know what, but I've done something wrong, and so I try to call them.

I can't get through to anybody, and call back, and so it's not -- Yes, and it says it should take five minutes. Well, it takes me, and I'm not a computer wizard, but it's time consuming, but -- I'll say this, just because I fished maybe five days this year, and four of them have been really rough, to the point that it's all I can do to hold on to the steering wheel.

I'm not going to be able to operate a cellphone while I'm coming in from the ocean, but, once you get into the sound, what we call the sound, at the Hatteras Inlet, or even Oregon Inlet, any inlet just about in North Carolina, you've got sandbars, and you've got dry land, and you've got all kinds of navigational issues and hazards that you got to deal with. You get on a cellphone, and you're going to end up aground, and it's going to get ugly, and you might kill somebody, and so the earliest I could possibly -- You get to the dock, and you've got people, and you've got to take pictures, and you've got to get paid for your trip. You've got to, you know, get citations, if you have any.

You've got thirty or forty minutes of work to do just with customers, not to mention if you've got boat issues, and everybody knows we have those all the time, and so no, and reporting prior to me landing is not -- It ain't going to work for me. Reporting, the very outside with me, would be forty-eight hours, but I kind of -- I like the week myself, but, hell, I've been doing it within a week for the last three years, and they ain't done nothing with that, and so I rest my case. I mean, it's frustrating.

MR. REYNOLDS: Dan.

MR. OWSLEY: Yes, and I agree with Rom and Dickie and all of the -- Like what is it -- In my opinion of it, what does it matter, if they're not -- Like they want to know all this information, and what are they doing with it? Like why do they want it so much sooner, and I know you mentioned North Carolina and whatnot, and even Florida, right, and you can't text and drive on the interstate. Why do you want to text and drive on a boat, and run over another boat, and I would say a minimum of a week, but even two weeks, right?

You all are keeping logbooks, and you all know what you all done. You all are running a business. You all have got -- Even if it's two weeks, or a month -- Like Rom said, he's been doing it for three years, and what have they done with it, and like what's the point of it? Why does it have to be so timely, if it's just another paperwork, or electronic paperwork, effort, and what's the result? I would like somebody to tell me why they need it so quickly if, in the past three years, they've done absolutely nothing with it, and so I would say a week, minimum. If it goes out a month, who cares, right?

MR. REYNOLDS: Yes, and I would agree. I mean, here's what I'm seeing, okay, and, I mean, I report almost every day, pretty quickly. I'm good on it, and I'm fast on it. However, yes, here we go, and we're getting in, and we've got to get the people unloaded, and I've got to get in the hole here, man, you know, and then I might have a night trip, or whatever the deal is, I mean, you know, and here's what I'm seeing overall, and so I'm staying in full compliance.

I mean, I'm reporting a lot. I find it important. We know that the information can be extremely valuable. I also know guys that only do this on the computer, that do it though. They do it, and they don't do it on the cellphone. They're not comfortable doing it, and they write all their stuff down, and then they do this like at the end of the month, but they get it all in. I mean, they're really

doing it, like in compliance, and it would be very troubling -- So I think my perspective on this is that you have two groups that feel drastically different about this.

You have a group of guys that want good information going in, and good data, and they're getting it done, and maybe not in the timeliness that, you know, this -- Because, you know, stuff is happening, you know, and this is a business, and life is happening. I've got soccer practice, right when I hit the dock, that I've got to get to, and, you know, it's crazy. I've got kids, you know, whatever, and everyone has got their life going on, but they're getting it done.

Then there's another group of guys that they don't find the importance in it at all. They don't find the importance of the data, and they're kind of, you know, and so the timeliness -- Forty-eight hours is even tough. I mean, there are times where I can barely get home and get a shower and get to sleep, and the next day I'm going, and I'm going, and I'm going, but I'm getting it in by the end of the week, you know, but sometimes that even gets challenging, but I'm getting it in, but I'm getting it in.

Maybe the larger thing is that there's actually some sort of -- You know, at the end of a month, if you haven't put any of your data in, that maybe there's some sort of compliance thing that pops up, and that would probably get the rest of the guys that aren't really doing it, and, you know, that's the way I see it.

Now, prior to offloading catch, no way. The same thing, and I'm coming down a channel that's full of boats, and crazy, you know, madness, or it's really rough or something, and that doesn't make any sense. Within an hour of offloading catch, that's not reasonable. I mean, like, you know, I -- You know, something terribly could be wrong with the boat, or anything could be going on, and that's totally unreasonable.

Prior to offloading catch, and sometimes I don't even really know what I have. You know, I have a pretty good idea, but I can't really go through, and so I'm not going to give accurate data then, because I'm just going to try to get through it, and then I'm going to be like, oh yeah, I know we had a zero in there, and we had this, and we had that, and I didn't put that in, and I'm going to have to go back in and like change my report, and then that can get tricky. If you go back in and change it, they'll give you a red flag, and so those -- That's my input.

Just speaking on behalf of some of those guys that I know that are really writing it down, and really doing it, and they're really doing it, I mean, and they only do it on their computer, and, I mean, you know, two weeks, for them, and what's happening with them is they're getting backed up. They're having all this stuff in writing, and one of the guys I know had a ton of boat issues, like a ton of boat issues. I mean, everything you could imagine. He blew a turbo, and then he, you know, hit the bottom, and his wheel went, and he had -- You know, he had to get hauled out, and it was just over and over and over, and it was kind of a nightmare, and then he's back into fishing the next day, and so he would sit down, and he would have everything written down.

It was just easier for him, and it was like at the end of the month, but I also know other guys that went on months, and then they would like turn in whatever, and then they would be in compliance. That's not -- You know, so that's the part of it that's not really helpful, and so I don't know. That's what I have on it, at least. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Hi, Jon. Thank you. I just wanted to maybe just kind of put a little bit more background, so that, you know, it makes more sense to those of you who don't know about this amendment. I know Rom is on the For-Hire Reporting Advisory Panel, and so he has seen this presentation before, and we've talked about it a lot.

The issue is the lack of compliance is not just, are you submitting your reports, and it's also are those reports accurate, right, and, in order to figure out if they're accurate, you need to have some way of validating, some way of like checking to see if the data that was reported is accurate, and that's when NMFS is saying, if that doesn't happen, then chances are you can't really use those data for management.

You'll see the next action, and I think it's the trip notification action, and so that kind of goes hand-in-hand with this, right? In order for a port sampler to be able to check, you know, what people are catching, they need to know that they went on a trip, and so, some of these actions you'll see, it will start making more sense when you get, you know, to the other actions that are being proposed in this amendment, and, like I said, it's mainly -- You know, it's not just that you're not reporting on time. It's also the accuracy of the data, and then, like you said, Jon, there's also issues with folks submitting did-not-fish reports, in order to renew their permits, and so that, you know, lowers the accuracy, lowers the compliance, and that's why the compliance for the South Atlantic has been so low.

MR. MOSS: I have a question, and I don't -- Council staff might be able to answer this. There's two different reporting vessels, if you will, for -- Like there's a different one for the headboat industry, and then a different one for charters, right?

MS. BROUWER: So the headboat is a census, right, and so every headboat has to report.

MR. MOSS: Right.

MS. BROUWER: Whereas, well, if you have a federally -- If you're a federally-permitted for-hire vessel, headboat or charter, you have to report, but headboats carry observers, and so the validation for that survey is, you know, better, or more robust, and we have more confidence in the data that's being submitted, but they have -- I believe that the data fields that are required for headboats are the same, and another thing I'll put that -- Go ahead.

MR. MOSS: Sorry, and it's two different, I don't know, software applications, or something like that, right?

MS. BROUWER: No. So, well, okay, and so you're talking about eTRIPS and VESL, and so those are the two platforms that are currently approved for use, and so you can choose to download eTRIPS/online, I believe is the one, or VESL, which is the other one, and those vendors had to kind of put these platforms according to specifications that were issued by the agency, and so, if this goes through, there will be another round of specifications that are put out by the agency, and anybody who wants to put together an app, or a platform or whatever, can do so, and then the agency has to approve it, and then it becomes available, but there's only those two, and, of those two, what I've heard is that VESL is a lot more friendly than eTRIPS.

MR. MOSS: So, yes, and that was where my question was, I guess, and so one of my really good friends runs a headboat down in the Keys, and then I know another person runs a headboat in central Florida. They have to report every day. The headboat, I think it's close to 100 percent compliance, or something like that, in the region, right, but they use -- I guess it's an easier software platform, or I'm assuming anyway, and, listen, I don't have a dog in the fight, obviously, and I'm not a charter person, and I'm not trying to give you guys more work, but my understanding is that VESL is very user-friendly.

My buddy, he goes in there, once the catch is offloaded, and they know everything, and they distribute all their fish, and they've fileted everything up and everything, and it takes him about fifteen or twenty minutes max to upload everything, and I only know that because then he'll come out and make me buy him a beer afterwards, and so I know exactly how long I have.

MR. REYNOLDS: Rom.

MR. WHITAKER: Well, and maybe there's somebody in this room can help me. I used to use eTRIPS, and I heard the same thing, that VESL was much more user-friendly, and I need as simple as I can get, and so my last reports I did through VESL, and I hope there's somebody in this room, and maybe they can help me. If I knew what I did wrong on there, I think I could fix it, but I can't figure out exactly what I did wrong, but there's a red flag coming up. If somebody in here can help me, then I welcome it.

I talked about compliance, and any self-respecting charter boat for-hire is probably -- If you pull up his website, which about any guy that's in business has got a website, and I pretty well guarantee that he's going to have a picture, especially if he had a good catch, and he's going to have a picture of it on the website, probably the day of the catch, or within a day or two, and so it just doesn't seem that hard, to me, that, whoever is doing the compliance, they go there and say, well, okay, to -- He put a did-not-fish report for April 14th, and I'm looking at his website, and he's got six people standing behind his boat, with five tunas and two wahoo. It sure looks like he fished that day to me.

I know the federal government has come, and, by pictures of tuna, gone and measured the dock, and went back and measured the tuna, and figured out that it wasn't the right length, and wrote a ticket from that, and so I'll guarantee you that it wouldn't take but just a few of those, and not very many, and that compliance rate would go from 46 to 96, and so that's just one -- In my opinion, one simple way to get some compliance. Thank you.

MR. REYNOLDS: I guess, with the combination, and I get the survey, and I get the call, and so, with the combination of those two, if you weren't -- You know, I guess with those two together, even if it wasn't as timely, because the survey only comes like once every two weeks, the call, but so, if you were -- If the timeliness was two weeks say, or a week, whatever it is, so that people aren't losing their permits over it that are steadily in compliance, but they're answering the survey call every two weeks, and they're saying that they fish, and it adds up, you know, then I think that that would be the hard line, you know, the comparison there, to be able to make compliance more of a hard line rule.

MR. HADLEY: All right, and so it sounds like, to me -- It seems like the current weekly reporting is preferred. I'm just summarizing the discussion, what I wrote down. You know, forty-eight

hours would be the lowest you would even want to consider, and that seems like what was mentioned, but that's, obviously, not the preference. The preference is to kind of keep it as is.

Then it was noted that prior to offloading a catch, or on the way in, can be difficult, and there's some safety issues that can go along with that as well. Is there any other information that you want to -- Any other feedback you want to offer the council on that, or does that capture it?

MR. REYNOLDS: Does anyone have anything else, or -- I feel like that captures it. David, do you have something?

MR. MOSS: Sorry, and I feel a little bad saying this, and, again, not as a charter captain, but if so non-compliance -- You just don't get your permit, right, or like repeated non-compliance or something like that, right? So, and I've mentioned this before, and it's only twenty-bucks to get a permit, and what, right? To a lot of guys that don't feel like reporting, they just get another permit, under a new name, or new vessel name, or something like that.

It seems like everybody here wants to report, and understands the value in it, but, unless there's some teeth behind it, you know, and I can't imagine if there's any way of getting the observers like they have on headboats, and like every headboat has an observer. Obviously, that's not going to happen in the charter industry, and there's just way too many, right, but, if there's any kind of teeth behind non-compliance, then perhaps -- You know, it's that old adage of either a carrot or a stick. Well, the carrot is not working, and so maybe we need the stick.

I don't know, and so if, you know, you move to some sort of a more punitive action of non-compliance, and I'm not necessarily saying -- Again, I don't have a dog. I'm just, if you guys -- Because everybody else here, for the most part is in the charter industry, and so, if we want this to move forward, maybe we need to make this a little bit more something that's going to hurt. As, you know, Rom, as you were saying, if you get a big fine for something that's undersized at the dock, chances are you're not going to be doing that again. The same thing here, I would think.

MR. WHITAKER: I totally agree. I mean, if you -- I mean, the permit thing -- Of course, I can't imagine a guy that's had a successful business under the name of George's, you know, Sportfishing, and, all of a sudden he has to go buy a permit by a different name. I guess he could do it, but that would be a pain in the butt, but, yes, a monetary fine, and, well, anything above \$300 will get my attention. It might be different for some people, and I know what you all are going to say is, well, you just won \$2 million, but it would still get my attention.

With dockside surveys, and the picture, you know, and everybody puts a fishing picture up. There's -- I mean, I feel like we ought to have this compliance, and, I mean, I think that that would be some data that would be absolutely reliable, much more so than MRIP. I mean, you're looking at-- I mean, I don't have to tell you all, and you're looking at junk, when you look at MRIP, but you get -- I mean, it's like John says, and, when I make that report, I do it. I count. I take a picture, and I count my fish, and, if I release something that day, a shark, or, you know, last week, I had to release bluefin tunas every day.

Then I want it to be accurate, and, the more accurate I make it, then the better decisions you all can make as to what should I -- You know, what I should be allowed to do, and so I swear that I

don't see this -- You put me in charge of enforcement, and I believe I could get some compliance rates up there higher, but, if not, I can help you out there.

MR. REYNOLDS: All right. It sounds like - I mean, this is what we're looking for. I think it sounds like maybe there's going to be a series of strikes, or something like that, is what is necessary, right, and, I mean, maybe there's like a series of things to make it -- To make guys conform to compliance, you know, and, okay, this report wasn't in by now, and you get a notification of some sort. If you do not report your catches for X, Y, and Z by this date, then X happens, you know.

On the second time that you get this, this compliant -- You know, this lack of compliance, then, you know, maybe this happens, and, by the third time, maybe you lose your permit. I mean, right, and does that sound like what we're looking for, like some sort of series of -- You know, a hard series of consequences for non-compliance. Does anyone have any input on that? Even with limited entry, yes, and then you would still have to have a series of things that would lead you to losing your permit. Go ahead, Kim.

MS. IVERSON: I just wanted to let you know that, when you're talking about compliance and what the council can and cannot do, the council cannot set up these mandatory like enforcement of the reporting requirements. The council sets up the amendment, and then the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Permits Office, and all of that is handled through what you can and cannot do, and so, you know, the first strike is this, and the second strike is that, and then, you know, the fine should be this the first round, and the fine should be this the second, that's not within the council's purview.

While it sounds great, and, you know, we've had fishermen tell us before that the fine should be higher, and, you know, it should be more severe, or whatever, and maybe we just put Rom in charge, and -- But I did want -- I just -- You know, while that could be good recommendations, that's not within the purview of this body.

MR. REYNOLDS: Okay, but, if it was in the amendment? No? Okay. Thank you.

MR. HADLEY: It would be something that we could pass along to the service, National Marine Fisheries Service, and, you know, that's their shop, but it doesn't preclude you from passing along that recommendation. It just wouldn't be part of the amendment itself, as that's outside of the council purview, if that makes sense.

MR. REYNOLDS: Jay.

MR. KAVANAGH: I would like to point out too that the state of North Carolina is still collecting the same data that we're reporting on our vessel, and I've asked them, and I said, why are we still doing this, and their response is that the feds are telling them that they still have to do it, and I was told once that we would be reporting daily for-hire, and that the state stuff would end, and, in North Carolina, it's not. They're still doing it, and we're replicating data.

MR. HADLEY: So, to that point, that was the goal of this amendment when it was originally implemented in 2021, when it became effective, was that MRIP, which is the state sampling that you were referring to, would be running alongside this logbook, and then, ideally, you could use -
- You could stop the state, the MRIP sampling, and use the logbook going forward.

Seeing as the National Marine Fisheries Service has stated that the logbook information cannot be used in management, and the compliance is too low, and it cannot be validated, then you're going to continue to have these two going along, until the compliance can come up to the point where they can have high compliance, and the information can be validated. At that point, that's when you would cut off the MRIP sampling, but, until that happens, it's going to continue on that parallel path, and so you're going to get, you know, both the logbook reporting and the MRIP sampling moving along parallel, unfortunately, but the goal is, if the logbook can be validated and used in management, then that MRIP sampling would go away.

Really, to kind of frame this discussion, you know, the idea here is to improve the logbook reporting so it can be used in management. If that can't be done, then you are stuck with MRIP, and so that's what the council's kind of trying to get out of here, the whole -- Because, you know, most people are not thrilled with MRIP, and so the idea -- The intention here is to make the information that for-hire captains are reporting to the agency used in management and get out of that hole, so to speak, with MRIP, if that kind of helps kind of frame what's going to be proposed in these various actions.

MR. REYNOLDS: Any more comments before we move on to the next?

MR. OWSLEY: Dan Owsley. Just from what I hear from the charter boat captains here reporting, and it seems like they're advocating, or they want to have compliance, and they want to have some type of penalty, albeit maybe severe in some opinion, and not severe enough in others, I feel, and I know Kim said it's not in the council's purview, but like, in almost anything else that I can think of, and I would say my particular industry, and my main industry is construction, right, and, if I'm out of compliance with something, right, I'm going to get fined, right? I've got OSHA, and I've got state DOT, and, I mean, there's -- To protect taxpayers, I've got, you know, the antitrust laws, with false claims and stuff.

If I bill ten-dollars over something that I didn't do, right, I've defrauded the taxpayers, and I can go to jail, right, and so it seems like, everywhere else, the government has some type of compliance, and I'm not an advocate of more government oversight or anything. That's what I'm not saying. I just -- I don't -- It seems like everyone here, right, is saying that, hey, we're a proponent of some type of -- Like David's analogy is a carrot versus a stick, right?

Like me, contractor license, right, and I've got to comply by this, right, and if I don't, right, I'm going to get fined. I'm going to get debarred, and I'm going to get my license revoked, right, and, to David's point too, I can get another permit, right, and it's not that easy, right, and you're not going to just go sell your boat, right, because you've got to submit state registration, or documentation, and it's not just saying I'm going to go buy another permit and apply it to this vessel, right, and you've got to do the whole thing, right, and it's fraud.

That's the term for it, and so I don't understand why it is so difficult, right? If there's going to be value for accurate and compliant reporting, to make better decisions for fisheries management, I don't understand why there isn't some type of penalty, whether it be, you know -- You can go through and whip a bunch of no-fish reports up, but like to Rom's point, and everyone with social media, right, and I think, to your one point, Rom, like the younger generation, with social media, right, and there's captains, right, that's posting content of -- Like they have like a bunch of pictures

for the rainy day, the bad weather day, and they post this, and I look at them like what is he doing out fishing, and it's ten-foot seas, right, and so your point with that, right, is you can go see the picture, but hey, is that validated? Is that picture from that actual day or something?

I know there's like multiple scenarios with this, but I don't understand. If the goal is to have 100 percent compliance, if you're not going to hit it in somebody's pocketbook, right, and, I mean, what is their incentive to comply? You start taking money out of their pocket, you know, that sometimes speaks results.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you. The next -- I'm going to move along to some of the other actions that are being considered in this amendment, and so the next one is requiring a trip notification, and so this is basically a hail-in and hail-out, as that's referred to in other fisheries, but, currently, there is no trip notification requirement, and so this amendment would require trip notification when the vessel leaves the dock.

This would potentially be when the vessel is being used for fishing, and so such as for-hire fishing, bait fishing, private recreational fishing, commercial fishing, or it could be also required anytime the vessel leaves the dock in activities involving paying passengers, and so some for-hire capacity other than fishing as well, and so looking at things such as sunset cruises and dolphin watching, and, really, the idea here is to help with that whole validation component and enforcement component.

Creating a trip notification requirement, and you'll see some of these other requirements, allows the information being provided by the logbook to be validated in some form, and so the Gulf Council is considering requiring a trip declaration when engaging in any type of fishing or other trips that it will be engaging -- Any time of fishing activity, and the trip notification measures may also vary between charter vessels and headboat vessels, and so that's kind of a to-be-determined. I'm looking for feedback on, you know, what are your thoughts on a trip notification requirement prior to when heading out essentially?

AP MEMBER: No.

AP MEMBER: So this has very little to do with me, but, in particular, the second part, for non-fishing activities, for the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council to be concerned at all in a non-fishing trip, seems like gross overreach, to me.

MR. REYNOLDS: Paul.

MR. PANCAKE: (Mr. Pancake's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. REYNOLDS: David.

MR. MOSS: So this came up in the Snapper Grouper AP, and so devil's advocate, and, again, I don't care, particularly. The only reason that that was mentioned in there is because what people will start doing is just constantly saying that they're going on a dolphin cruise, or something like that, and so the idea behind the hail-in and hail-out is the possibility of law enforcement meeting you at the dock to confirm what it is that you did, right, and so for enforcement.

If you keep putting down that you're going on a dolphin cruise, or something like that, then nobody is ever going to meet you at the dock, and so the idea behind putting that down for other activities, basically anytime that your boat leaves the dock, is the possibility of law enforcement being there to make sure that, you know, you don't have a black and a gag and three mutttons in there, or whatever, you know, when you were supposed to be just doing a sunset cruise, or something like that, and so that's why that was in there initially, from the Snapper Grouper AP anyway, and I don't know if it's different here.

MR. REYNOLDS: Go ahead.

MS. BROUWER: Something else, and so the Gulf Council got started before we did in revamping their for-hire reporting. Theirs became non-operational in February of last year, because of a court order, but if you all know much about that, that program required VMS on those vessels, and we were trying to be as consistent as possible with what the Gulf Council was considering, and it makes more sense for them to have an alternative like this in their document, but that's kind of also another reason why it's ending up in our document as well, because we were trying to be as consistent as possible. That's all I wanted to say. Thank you.

MR. REYNOLDS: Thank you. That makes sense. Boy, I struggle with this one, I mean, because I understand the logic, I guess, you know, because of the compliance issue, you know, and like you go around in circles then with compliance on this, and so I get it. You know, VMS, no way, you know, and I wouldn't be in favor of this whatsoever, but I guess I would just say that maybe we reach this in some other way. I would say there's got to be another way to reach compliance.

MR. SCALISE: I mean, where do you draw the line? I've run a boat that's west of -- I mean, near here, and I have to go to Shem Creek to get fuel, about every other day. Do I need to report my trips that I run across the harbor to get fuel and come back? If I have a mechanic, and I need to do a sea trial, do I need to report for that? I mean, where does it end?

MR. OWSLEY: Dan Owsley. My question is, and I have no idea, but what does this current activity involving paying passengers other than fishing -- Do they have to do -- Like, to David's point, do they have to check in and check out, to have someone meet them to see if they went on a sunset cruise, or were they fishing, right, and do they have any -- Other than being most likely an USCG inspected vessel for carrying, you know, over six people, right, and what do they have to do, if anything?

MR. REYNOLDS: Rom, do you have something too?

MR. WHITAKER: Well, I totally agree with what he's saying about activities that don't involve fishing, but I think -- Well, in our cases, in charter boat in North Carolina, I've been in the same slip for thirty years, or, well, more than that, but, you know, if law enforcement rides by my slip, and my boat is gone, then I'm either at the boat yard or I'm fishing, and so I don't know.

It seems like it almost could be a detriment, to where, if he's trying to find out if a guy is doing something illegal, then -- You know, if he knows he's out fishing that day, then he's more likely to do whatever he's doing illegal to hide it, before he gets to the dock, if he knows he's reported in, and so I'm totally against it. I just -- It's a pain in the butt, and it's just -- I don't think it would help with anything we're doing, as far as data collection.

MR. REYNOLDS: It sounds unanimous.

MR. HADLEY: Understood, and I just wanted to, you know, point out that this kind of feedback is helpful for the council, and so, you know, if they're pushed in this direction, knowing that, you know, absolutely, you know, getting fuel should be off the table, and that sort of information is really helpful for them, and so, you know, these comments are duly noted and helpful.

You know, this feedback is -- You know, keep it coming, and, you know, it's noted on this action, and that will be the AP's feedback. I had another thought went away. Anyway, I'll come back to it, if it comes back in my head, but anyway -- Oh, and with the trip notification, and so the other piece of this -- You know, there's the enforcement piece, where the law enforcement officer knows when the vessel is leaving or not to enforce the reporting requirements.

The other part of it could be the validation component, and so there's going to be a validation survey that goes along with this, and so that's another reason why this was a recommendation, is that, you know, if Jon says I'm going out on a trip right now, that port sampler can be ready to meet John at the dock to validate his catch and his logbook.

That way, you know, that's making this information usable in management, and so there's kind of a law enforcement side to it, but there's also a data validation side to it. I don't think that changes the recommendation, but, you know, I just wanted to note that, you know, that's where this is coming from, partially, on the agency side.

The next action in the amendment is requiring landing at a preapproved landing locations, and so I'm going to have a few slides that explain this, and kind of the rationale behind it, and so this one certainly does have a law enforcement provision with it. It supplies law enforcement with an exact location of where a for-hire trip will offload fish and passengers, and, there again, that other side of it is it provides information to validate the information collected through the program, and so to have a port sampler there and ready to validate the data.

Participants would need to submit a new landing location via a website, and so the idea would be to enter the name and location, if it's not already in use, and so that would involve the contact information, and so who is submitting the information, and then providing an address of the landing location, whether or not it would be a private -- It could be a public or a private location, and, for example, SEFHIER staff verifies the location, if the address exists, and it's on the water, before approval, then it sort of goes into the database of preapproved landing locations, and that's sort of it. If the approval is unclear, then the SEFHIER staff would call the submitter to clarify information.

Approved landing locations are assigned a location code and an enforcement zone. Submissions are often approved within one business day, and so, looking at landing locations, there's not a requirement to offload fish or passengers at preapproved locations.

This action would require that federally-permitted for-hire vessels landed already approved locations or submit a landing location in advance for approval, and one more thing I wanted to add is this was implemented -- The Gulf is considering this as well, and, in their previous program, this was implemented, and the way that -- My understanding of how this was initially implemented

is they took all of the MRIP sampling sites and sort of had them preapproved, and so a lot of the public locations, and so boat ramps, marinas, docks, and, if you see an MRIP sampler, that would already be -- You know, that location would already be included.

A lot of the locations were sort of preapproved ahead of time, but it does still -- You know, if you're picking up someone from their rental dock, that would require a preapproval for that in the program, and so, with that, I want to turn it over to the AP for your feedback on preapproved landing locations.

MR. REYNOLDS: I just -- I kind of want to clarify something. If you can go back, maybe just like another slide. Okay, and so I keep seeing the words "law enforcement", but that's like the teeth that we say we don't have, or can't have, and that's not who meets you at the dock. It's a survey person, and it's not law enforcement, and so I just don't know if that's -- If it just says that because we're referring to like someone who is going to do a survey or law enforcement, and that's different. You know what I mean?

MR. HADLEY: The way it's been explained, it could be either one, and so, normally, it would be a surveyor, to just validate that information, and that helps validate the program. On the law enforcement side, if this is the kind of -- If it's someone who is not reporting, or not in compliance, it gets at that sort of stick aspect that we were talking about earlier, where law enforcement could be there to basically interact with that vessel when it comes back to the dock, and so it's sort of two different scenarios.

MR. REYNOLDS: Okay, but would that -- So would that have to -- Would that be another amendment, and a Law Enforcement AP, and then ran through the state, or through NOAA, because that's where I'm kind of missing how the teeth would be, or how that would -- You know, where is that decided, because there's no teeth yet, and so it couldn't be law enforcement, because there is no teeth. That's where I'm -- You know what I mean?

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and so we do have a Law Enforcement Advisory Panel. They met in February of this year, and they provided feedback on this very same thing that you guys are talking about. Law enforcement is -- How do I put it? We don't have enough law enforcement capacity in the South Atlantic. I mean, we just don't, right?

There are three of the four states that have joint enforcement agreements with the state agency, so that state law enforcement officers can enforce federal fishery management in the EEZ, and so, you know, the enforcement comes in when it comes to do you have the right permits, right, and so they need to have access to be able to check for things like that.

I mean, you know, technically, if you're fishing in federal waters, you have to have the federal permit. I think there was a lot more involvement in the Gulf with things like this, and, again, that's kind of why some of these things are not 100 percent applicable, or they may be a little bit confusing. That's why I was kind of offering that, but, no, the council does not have any control for how things are enforced, right? They just recommend regulations, and the agency implements them, and enforces them, but we can -- The council can say -- They can strongly suggest, you know, higher penalties, or what have you, and they can only be suggestions.

MR. REYNOLDS: David.

MR. MOSS: Myra, this was also meant to go along with the hail-in and hail-out, right? Like, ideally, this was kind of like 1b, if you will, to the hail-in and hail-out, and so, if we're not going to do that, then this doesn't really matter much, correct?

MS. BROUWER: No, and I think it would still matter. I think it would still matter. I mean, the idea is not to, you know, make it, like I said, overly burdensome to you guys, and the Law Enforcement AP -- What I recall they said about this is they said, you know, it doesn't matter. You know, we have enforcement zones throughout the Atlantic coast, and, you know, we can just -- It wouldn't be a problem for us. All they wanted was, you know, a location that was going to be easily accessible should law enforcement need to, you know, meet a vessel at said location.

MR. REYNOLDS: It's 5:11, guys. Are we okay to go into 5:30? I want to cut it off at 5:30. Is that -- Anyone want to show a hands for 5:30 or -- All right. Go ahead.

MR. OWSLEY: Dan Owsley, and like, I see where they're -- I get where they're trying to get at, but, at this point, I think I'm opposed to it, because it was talking about like submitting a location, and I just think about like -- So Rom fishes out of Hatteras, and I don't know if there's still people fishing out of Ocracoke, but this takes a human resource element, whether it's law enforcement or observer, right, and so who is to say, well, you got three boats fishing out of Ocracoke, and you've got eleven out of Hatteras, and we're going to have -- We've got one observer, and so you're going to have to -- Instead of going back into Ocracoke, you're going to have to run into Hatteras, and then you're going to have to show this stuff, and then you're going to have to run back down to Ocracoke, where you dock, right, and that adds extra time, fuel burn, everything else.

Then, to like Rom's other point too, about validation, right, and, if I know I'm going to be breaking the law, right, and if I'm -- Just hypothetically speaking, and I know I had to like clock out, or like trip out, right, and then I got -- I have to go to a specific landing location, and I don't know what that's going to solve, right?

I don't think it's going to say that -- You know, if the law enforcement aspect is supposed to catch people breaking the law, and they know that there's going to be, you know, green jeans at the dock, right, they ain't going to break the law typically, right, I would say, and so I don't understand what the benefit is.

Then especially like we've had the conversation about Florida fishery access, or like point of access, and there's so much more boat ramps and private docks and everything. This just couldn't happen in Florida. I think there are just so many people fishing from their docks, and so, if they don't have like marina hubs, and like you might have like, you know, your marina in Hatteras, or Ocracoke, or you only got a couple, right, and I think the human resource -- If we want to talk about efficiency, right, and this landing location thing would never happen in Florida.

MR. REYNOLDS: Myra.

MS. BROUWER: So let me clarify, and so this is not something that you would be required to land at a specific location. It is simply to document the various places where passengers and fish are being offloaded, and so, to get a landing location on the list, all you have to do is supply a name for the location. If it's not already on the list already, which, you know, in the Gulf, there are

already a whole bunch of landing locations, because this was a requirement of their program before it went away, and so that's a confusion I think that has caused a little bit of consternation, but it mainly is just to document where people are being offloaded, where fish are being offloaded.

You know, some of the for-hire captains that I've talked to -- You know, nowadays, you may be picking people up at an Airbnb, and, you know, there's lots of different locations that could potentially be landing locations, and so I hope that helps clarify that.

MR. OWSLEY: Well, to that point, like Airbnb, right, and that's a great point, and so, if I'm taking some bookings, and I've got people calling me, and they want to fish, and they say, well, hey, we're going to book an Airbnb, and especially down in the Keys. Like talk to Jon, and you realistically expect Jon to apply for a landing location when there could be, in a given week, a seven-day period, that he's got to pick up people in seven different canals, on seven different Keys or whatever, and this is completely unrealistic in Florida, right, and I say this as like -- You mentioned the Gulf did it, and then they don't do it anymore. Well, why do they not do it anymore, right? Like is it because of this or --

MR. REYNOLDS: I'm probably more with Rom on that I'm a larger boat, at a larger marina. What Dan is saying is completely accurate though. I mean, there's tons of Freemans and different smaller boats now that pick people up everywhere. I get asked all the time, you know, can you pick me up here, and I just can't make it in somewhere, you know, but, yes, in Florida, it would be pretty unrealistic to try to like have this as some sort of requirement, I guess.

You know, I do this, because it's -- Because I'm where I am, and, even on my survey, they ask are you still at this marina, and I just say yes, but that's -- But it's drastically different with smaller boats, which is -- Which there's a lot more of them in the industry now.

MS. BROUWER: Right, and, just to further clarify, that the getting approval, it takes a phone call, and it's just -- You know, you call the SEFHIER program, and you say, you know, I'm going to be offloading passengers at this location, and you provide the name and the address, and they just look on GPS, and make sure that it's a location on the water, and then they just add it to the list, and it takes one to three business days, as far as I understand, and so it's not a very complicated process.

MR. REYNOLDS: Paul.

MR. PANCAKE: So say you get a client that calls you on a Monday, and they want to fish on a Tuesday, and they want you to pick up from a dock, and you don't have it -- This would be a law enforcement question. You don't have it in your preapproved, and you pick them up, and somebody, you know, the Coast Guard or DNR, follows you, and they say, well, this isn't approved, and here's your ticket. I don't know what this solves, or helps with, as long as a charter boat's compliant with the reporting.

MS. BROUWER: Right, and I was confused about that too, and so I think it helps in that, you know, having landing locations on a list would also improve the likelihood of a port sampler being there, and it would improve the -- What do you call it? The survey frame for the port samplers to access places where passengers and fish are being offloaded for for-hire operations, but, no, you would not get a ticket because you didn't offload at a preapproved location, is my understanding,

but clearly something that is causing confusion, and something that we can get clarified for you all.

MR. WHITAKER: My only input is we're doing this to try to get compliance better, and, of course, I'm speaking for North Carolina, and most of those big boats have been in the same slip for five years minimum, but you do have a contingent of inshore fishermen that more or less I'm going to say follow the fish.

They might be in Morehead City, and they might be in Wilmington, and they might be somewhere in between, but our state has done an excellent job of building boat ramps, and I assume the rest of the states have, South Carolina, Florida, and Georgia, and so the surveyors, or these dockside surveyors, have a list. I mean, they have an excellent list, and I certainly think, between us permanent boats and the established places that they've already been surveying, that they're going to cover -- They're going to suit the compliance issue. I don't think we need to open this can of worms, but that's my input.

MR. HADLEY: All right, and so those were the heavier topics, I will say. The last half is a little bit, you know, not quite as intricate, or necessarily regulatory, and so the next action looks at requiring participation in a validation and estimation survey, and so here's a slide on what is validation and why is it important.

Validation is checking the action of -- It is the action of checking or proving the validity or accuracy of something. A validation survey is used to check the accuracy of the information reported, and so, without validation, there's no way to measure how accurate the reported data are, and so, really, what this action is looking at -- So, really, what this is looking at is basically requiring participation in a validation survey, if selected, and so this would be part of the permit.

Right now, if you're approached by an MRIP sampler, you can refuse that MRIP sampler, You can say no. In this case, if there was a validation survey, which would be along the same lines, or at least the way it's been explained to us, where there would be a sampler that would look at your catch, and it would require participation in that part of the survey, as part of the permit requirement, and so, you know, really just a pretty simple yes or no with this, and there's only one -- There's a no action alternative, and there's a requiring participation in the survey, as part of the permit, and so I'll hand that over to the AP for any recommendations or discussion on that.

MR. WHITAKER: Well, Jon stepped out, but I would say no, and, when they survey me, do a sampling, they usually ask my charter customers. In fact, I'm sometimes not even on the boat, or doing something different, but I do enough. I don't want to be required to participate in anything else.

MR. OWSLEY: Dan Owsley, and I second what Rom is saying. I think this validation survey would have to occur when you get back in the port, right, and concurrent with offloading the catch, which we just went through that, that we said, hey, you know, one week minimum, or, you know, seventy-two hours, or whatever, and so this would be like -- You know, to have an accurate validation survey, you would have to have the person back, and I guess like -- You know, they're going to sit there waiting, and, if you're an hour late, right, are they going to sit at the dock and wait, or have you got to call them on a sat phone and say, hey, I got -- This just adds more logistic to like what these guys already do. They do a lot already, and so I'm against that.

MR. HADLEY: All right. So noted that the AP would be opposed to requiring participation in the validation survey.

MR. REYNOLDS: Sorry, and just to clarify, because I stepped out for a minute, but this would be -- There would be a validator at the dock when you return, and that what this is getting at, that you would be required to take that survey at the dock on the day that you fish? Okay, I understand. Yes, I'm opposed to that.

MR. HADLEY: All right, and so this one looks at revising reporting of economic data for charter vessels, and so, currently there's a census approach, where this information, the economic information, is asked on every single trip. Charter fee, fuel usage, fuel price, and so what this is looking at is changing this from a census, where everybody is reporting, to a sampling framework, and so not everybody would be reporting all the time and so it's, I guess, slightly deregulatory, if you want to kind of think about it that way.

It would require reporting of economic information only if selected, and, annually, this subsample of permanent vessels would be selected, and then it would change each year, and so the idea is instead -- In a nutshell, instead of requiring everybody to report every trip every year, a subset would be chosen to report, and then that subset would change each year, and those that reported the year prior would not have to report the economic information, and so it would essentially shorten the survey a little bit for those that weren't selected, and so I'll turn that over to the AP.

MR. WHITAKER: I definitely would be for only if selected, but somehow I've gotten selected the last three years, but hopefully I'll make it through next year.

MR. REYNOLDS: Yes, and this is just like the commercial thing, if you're selected for economics, and so, yes, it's good. You know, I would be in favor of this, and then, if it's providing economic data, I'm in favor of only if selected.

MR. HADLEY: All right, and so it sounds like the AP would be in favor of this change to only if selected, and so, basically, right now, everybody is selected. Under the change, it would be a certain people would be selected, but not everyone, each year.

All right, and so this is the last action in the amendment. It would potentially modify did-not-fish report requirements, and so, currently, did-not-fish reports are already a requirement in the Southeast for federally-permitted charter and headboat vessels. They are supposed to be submitted weekly, and they can be submitted up to thirty days in advance, and so, you know, there's not really anything in particular that the council has noted that they're going to consider changing, but this is something that was mentioned by the service, and so, really, a little bit more of an open-ended question here. What does the AP think of this requirement, and does this requirement need to change?

MR. REYNOLDS: I don't see any necessary changes on this one.

AP MEMBER: It's a maximum of thirty days that you can report?

MR. HADLEY: In advance you can report, and so, if you know -- You know, if you know you're going to be on dry land for a couple of weeks, you can report in advance.

MR. SCALISE: I can tell you, in 2032, I'm not fishing November, December, January, February, and maybe March, and so, you know, it's very seasonal, and so, I mean, I think it could be greater than thirty. I mean, it could --

MR. REYNOLDS: I understand what Tim is saying. I mean, if you have a big boatyard planned or something, you don't want to have to keep going in there and putting your did-not-fish reports. You might forget, or you're tied up with a job, and you're not really thinking about it, because you're not in active like -- So, I mean, I guess you could extend that to sixty days or something, if you have something planned. I don't know if that's worth the necessary like amendment change, from my perspective, for them to work on it, but I understand what you're saying, for sure. I mean, I knew I was going to be down for a couple of months with a rebuild and stuff, and so I guess, you know, it would have been easier just to not have to think about it and put it all in.

MR. HADLEY: Really quickly, I forgot that this slide was the last slide, but, looking at what other did-not-fish report requirements there are in the in the Atlantic and Gulf, currently, you know, in the South Atlantic, there's weekly did-not-fish reports, but they could be submitted thirty days in advance.

The Gulf is considering implementing monthly, and so along the lines of what the South Atlantic considers, and there's no requirement in the Greater Atlantic Region, and so the Mid-Atlantic or New England, and HMS is also considering a monthly did-not-fish requirement, but no limit as to how far in advance that can be submitted.

MR. WHITAKER: I mean, I just -- I don't see the problem with how far in advance you go. If you know your boat -- If you sell your boat or something and say, well, I'm not buying one until June, and say, well, I'm not fishing. I just don't see the problem with going more than thirty days, but maybe I'm missing something.

MR. REYNOLDS: Chip.

MR. BERRY: I'm maybe a little confused, but I would -- Because I don't do this process, but I would assume, if you're not reporting that you fished, then you're not fishing, right? I mean, isn't that -- Why would you have to report you're not fishing? I don't know. I'm just curious.

MR. REYNOLDS: I guess that's like a commercial compliance. In order to keep your permit, you know, you have to put in did-not-fish reports. I think it just comes along the same regulation lines as that, and that's all I can -- If anyone else has something, or if Kerry has something.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and we have to do it commercially, and it's just a way to distinguish from sort of absence of any fishing and you are actively fishing, but you didn't fish those days. It's a way -- It's just another way to get it compliance, if that makes sense, and I can tell you that -- Like I said, we do this commercially. We can go more than thirty days in advance. If you know your boat is going to be out, or you're going to be out, you can -- It's very easy just to go in there and do it.

There is -- As you see, and John mentioned, in the Mid, or in the Greater Atlantic Region, they don't do the no-fishing reports, because they figure that it actually wasn't getting them the bang for the buck with sort of understanding whether people were truly not operating in the fishery or just not fishing those trips, and so that's something we're still looking -- You know, would still look at as a council, but this is a great opportunity for you. There's nothing wrong with you guys saying, hey, no, and thirty days in advance isn't enough, and we could still have that discussion.

It's a valid discussion to say we don't really think you get the bang from the buck for the buck for having no-fishing reports, but how would you know if someone never filed any report? If someone had a permit, and didn't file any reports all year, are they noncompliant, or are they just not fishing? That's all we're trying to get at, so we know the universe. Do you see what I'm saying?

MR. REYNOLDS: Thank you, Kerry. Dan.

MR. OWSLEY: To her point, if -- If it's just like someone has a permit, and they're not submitting fish, like why couldn't that go -- Well, I guess thirty days is a month, but, like on the commercial side of stuff, your commercial no trip tickets or -- You know, that's monthly, and you can fill in your bubbles and submit those way in advance for your permit, and so is that what you're maybe getting at, is you can -- If your boat is on the hard, and you've got planned work, or in between boats or something, instead of having -- Doing it weekly, because it is a weekly did-not-fish, but you can do them thirty days, take them like monthly, and you can do them six months in advance or something.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I don't know -- I don't remember the exact timeframe. I'll give you an example, and like my husband had to be out, because he had surgery, for like eight weeks in April, March and April, and so, in like February, he just went in and recorded all those days as no fishing days, just to get ahead of it. I will also tell you, and I realize that NMFS is listening, but, as the person who does most of the reporting for his boat, regular weekly trip reports are easy to do when he goes fishing.

Like I always do those on time, but there are usually -- Like there could be eight days in between trips, in which technically it's been more than seven days, and so I have to file a no-fishing report for one of those days, and I never remember to do that, and it's the end of the year, and it's time to like renew the permit, and I'll find out there are a couple of spots where I might have missed telling them there was no fishing. All the reports are positive, and like we're reporting every trip. We're just not reporting the negative. You just do them at the end of the year, and it gets straightened out, and so I realize it's daunting.

Again, this is not a way -- I'm not advocating for this one way or the other. We have it. It makes sense for the commercial fishery. It's easy. It helps us collect better data, but that is the whole point of this. It's not to be punitive and be like -- You know, you're not going to get popped at the dock simply because, a month ago, you didn't fill out a no-fishing report. This is really a way to identify that the data we've collected through this reporting system is accurate to what's happening in the fishery. This is not supposed to be about enforcement. It's supposed to be about making sure that, you know, we have an understanding of who is fishing, if that makes sense.

MR. REYNOLDS: All right. Well, it sounds like the consensus is that did-not-fish reports -- They're a helpful tool, in some way, but maybe we just expand it to that there's no limit, is kind of

what it sounds like, so that it's easier, and less troublesome, for guys to just get it in if they -- With that, as long as there's nothing else today, you guys, we are going to wrap this up, as long as John doesn't have anything else, and we are going to meet at 8:30 a.m. sharp, and there will be compliance on this. All right. Thanks a lot, you guys. Great meeting.

AP MEMBER: Guys, just to note that I got a text a little while ago. We sent a couple of people up to Congress, in Washington, and met with about ten of the congressmen about the sharks. I just got a text, and it's called the SHARKED Act. It passed in the House, to do something about the sharks. Now we have to go to the Senate, of course, and your senator, you know, to Washington. If you have shark problems, and you've dealt with it, call your senator and tell him you want the SHARKED Act put on a bill.

The bill hadn't been introduced in the Senate yet, but it's really important that we get enough people pushing it, so they don't just shove it under the table. I know they've got a lot of important things going on right now, but this is this is an administration that we might can get something done, and so thanks. I just thought I would tell you that.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on April 22, 2025.)

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APRIL 23, 2025

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Dolphin Wahoo Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the Town and Country Inn in Charleston, South Carolina on April 23, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Jon Reynolds.

MR. REYNOLDS: Okay, you guys, and we're going to start off. Good morning, everyone. I hope everyone had a good night. I know I slept well, and Chip has a presentation for us here, to start us off with some research and monitoring prioritization, and so we're going to hand it over to him, and he's going to take it away from here.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you, Jon. I am the other Chip in the room this morning, and so I'm Chip Collier. I as work part of the South Atlantic Council staff, and I work a lot on the science issues, and so what I'm bringing you today is the research and monitoring plan for the dolphin and wahoo fishery.

This is fairly new to the process of how we're trying to gather some of our research and monitoring needs, recognizing that fact that you guys are on the water, and you're seeing the issues before anybody else, and it takes a while to get some of these observations that you see on the water into management. I think case in point is, you know, there was the observations on the differences that were being seen for dolphin along the coast.

We had the participatory workshops that went along, and now we have the management strategy evaluation for dolphin going on, and, once that's completed, I think that's when we're going to get those observations that you were seeing back in 2017 and 2018 into management.

It takes a while, and so, if you guys can tell us now what you're seeing on the water, any research that needs to be done, I think it's key for us to get that into this research and monitoring plan. It takes a while for scientists to pick things up and be able to do the research that's needed to find the answers.

Sometimes we can do it based on just guidance from the advisory panel, but, if we can get science behind it, I think it makes a much stronger thing for managers to respond to, and so, with that in mind, what I'll do is just go through some of the objectives and just give a brief overview of this overall document, and so we're going to start off looking at the research objectives.

One of the first things is trying to assess this population, or these two populations, looking at dolphin and wahoo. We need a lot of age data, growth data, and reproductive rates. Right now, it's pretty generic in there. I think that's where we start. We don't have a lot of information on dolphin and wahoo. I believe there's been one master's project looking at dolphin growth along the Atlantic coast. There was one PhD project looking at wahoo, back in the late 1970s, or early 1980s, I think, and so I think looking at this information is very important.

We also need to investigate the potential for distinct population segments. How are wahoo populations distributed along the Atlantic coast? I hear, in the Caribbean, they only get small ones, and we don't see all that many small ones up here, and so is there nursery down south, and they migrate north? We don't know the connectivity of dolphin, or of wahoo. The connectivity of dolphin is a little bit better studied, but there's definitely some distinct population segments. If you look at some of the work that's been done off Brazil, where they have a more -- I guess that more southern stock, and then the more population going along the equator, and is that equator population associated with our population up here? I think we need more work to understand that.

We need to use advanced modeling techniques to estimate stock abundance and fishing mortality. We might not be able to use the traditional techniques for stock assessments for something like dolphinfish. They are extremely hard to age, and so maybe we have to use some genomics, or different modeling techniques, in order to understand how this population is changing.

Some fishery-dependent data collection, and I know we talked about that yesterday with SEFHIER, trying to collect some information on the for-hire fishery, and so we have some of it in here. First and foremost, we need to expand observer coverage. Although we talked a lot about validation yesterday, one of the best ways to validate anything is have observers on the vessels. I know it can be a challenge for for-hire, and so figuring out innovative ways to do it I think would be very useful.

We need to improve electronic reporting systems for recreational and commercial landings. Yesterday, you also talked about, you know, some of the challenges with our electronic reporting, and potentially we can improve upon that, to make it overall a better experience for everyone that's using the systems, and, therefore, we'll get better data, if you're happier using the systems.

We need to enhance collaboration with state agencies to improve accuracy of recreational data. I should have included commercial data in there as well. I will add that later, and then moving into some fishery-independent surveys. Conduct tagging studies to track migration patterns, utilize acute acoustic telemetry or satellite tagging for real-time movement data, establish a fishery-independent survey to track abundance of dolphin and wahoo, and I think this is probably one of the most important things that we could do for this fishery.

Then, ideally, we would have established long-term monitoring of juvenile recruitment through ichthyoplankton surveys. This is also important to know what's coming into the fishery in the future. That way, we can begin to begin to predict how things might change a couple of years down the line, although, with dolphin, it could be a of couple months down the line, with as fast as they grow.

Some environmental and ecosystem research that we need to do. Investigate the effects of climate change on distribution and spawning patterns. I think, down in the Florida Keys, you guys are getting much warmer water, and it's having an impact on dolphin. It might be getting too warm for them. That could have an impact on productivity and how they spawn.

Monitoring habitats and use in relation to oceanographic conditions. Assess predator-prey relationships and trophic interactions, and, with that trophic interactions, it could be some of the things that you guys have mentioned as well, like sharks eating some of the fish. I think that's an important thing to note, whether or not dolphin are, you know, eating your fish, like they do in the Gulf of Mexico, where they will follow boats. We heard some talk about that after the meeting yesterday, but it's interesting techniques that fishermen are using to shake dolphin from their vessels.

Social and economic research, we have a variety of things listed here. Looking at the economic contributions of the recreational and commercial fisheries, and that always needs to be improved and monitored. Evaluate the effects of regulatory measures on fishing communities. There was a recent executive order to regularly look at our regulatory measures, to make sure that they are doing what they're intended to do.

Assess consumer demand and market trends for dolphin wahoo. Are they changing? Are they static? We also need to understand, or conduct, recreational valuation studies for dolphin wahoo. Conduct social ecological system studies to improve our understanding of interactions and connectivity through the fisheries and marine ecosystems, and this is really understanding how fishermen are involved in the overall ecosystem in the fishery.

It's going beyond just looking at the fishery. It's looking at the upstream effects. Are people coming down here and enjoying the fishery in general? Is there value to it? Is it changing over time, and then, finally, conduct a situation assessment to gather stakeholder perceptions of the management system for dolphin and wahoo.

We recently did this for snapper grouper, and I think it would be of value to do for the dolphin wahoo fishery as well, and so, with that, those are some of the general research recommendations. If you all have any ideas of what you're seeing, I would be happy to add specifics into this, in order to make sure we're getting the ball started in some of these research ideas, and getting them into

our research and monitoring plan, and then potentially into grants for scientists to study, and so, with that, I'll pause and gather input.

MR. REYNOLDS: Jon Reynolds, and, yes, there's some old papers that show spawning hotspots, you know, where large aggregations of large fish aggregate, and spawning hotspots, and so I think, you know, that would be a good idea to look into that. I know dolphin are always spawning, just like a lot of other species, but there are spawning hotspots, where large fish aggregate, especially around moons and certain times of year, and those areas need to have closer attention, especially with large fish.

I believe one of them is off North Carolina, and then one of them is in the Caribbean, below us, around the Puerto Rico area, or something like that, but it's published already in those studies, and so that could be something to look at.

I think that it would be a good idea to possibly incentivize some sort of -- We're working on a different type of tagging system, that would specifically probably work better on dolphin. Right now it's in the early stages. We have a guy that is very good at barcodes, and let's put it that way, and we're trying to get -- Sat tags are just too expensive to reproduce on a large scale for the average angler, or anyone, obviously, to tag, but, if we could move forward with this different tagging system, and have almost like some sort of incentive for anglers to release fish multiple times, and enter this data, you could almost have like connect-the-dot sat tagging, to some degree, on a larger scale.

Anyways, that's an idea, if it could be incentivized, and this is done in other fisheries, especially in striped bass fisheries, in inland waters, in salmon fisheries and other fisheries, and they incentivize -- It doesn't have to be much, but, look, I'm not going to -- Most people are not going to catch a ten-pound dolphin and let him go, unless they're going to get like a hundred bucks, and, if you do that on a large scale, and a sat tag costs like 2,500 bucks, you know, and so this could be a good idea, and it could possibly work. Thanks. Anyone else who has some input, we would love to hear it. Thank you. Richard, then Chip.

MR. HARRIS: One of the questions I would have is the range has extended so much than what it used to be when I started fishing. You know, it used to -- If you heard of a few off of Virginia, that was a big deal. Now they're all the way up to Maine, and so what has caused that population of fish to move on? Is it the climate change? Are they following bait? You know, what has extended their range? That would be an interesting something to find out, as we find it out, because there's more people fishing there now than used to.

You didn't have people fishing offshore, because the run was so long. Now they've got the boats that are capable of getting there. Have they been there the whole time, or are we just finding that out, or are they actually moving that way, and more of their migration is that way? Thank you.

MR. REYNOLDS: Chip.

MR. BERRY: First, I just want to say that was an excellent presentation. I agree with all that. That's a lot of work right there, and I see that, and so I hope those modelings and all help with that. I was just thinking, and, if people are going to be required to have a dolphin wahoo permit, because we were talking about that yesterday, and where does the money go, and what can it be used for,

and it would be nice if it could -- If that ever happened, if that money could go into like a lottery or something, to be awarded to whoever like tags the most fish that year or something, and I don't know, but, anyway, I just thought I would pass that along, because Rom Whitaker would probably win it, knowing his history.

MR. REYNOLDS: Richard.

MR. DELIZZA: So Chip made a good point. That's an impressive list of research goals. Do you have an estimate as to when that will be completed, the list, everything on that list?

DR. COLLIER: I mean, this is a dream, and so I don't think all of this will get completed, but we need to develop a more -- In the past, we were very specific on certain things that we had included, but we've gone beyond that with this new plan, and putting really everything that we feel we need to manage this fishery effectively. We're always going to have incomplete parts, but I think asking for the moon, and then settling here on Earth, and I think we're going to get to a better place.

MR. DELIZZA: So I want to make sure I heard that right. Your plan is a dream that will never be completed. That's what was said, right?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, that's what was said. I mean, looking at a lot of this, it would be extremely expensive. Just starting off with this establish a fishery-independent survey, that would be extremely expensive for dolphin and wahoo.

MR. DELIZZA: See, I'm in private industry, and, if somebody comes to me with a plan that can never be completed, and that's a dream, they'll have one chance to redo that to something that's practical. The reason I'm leaning into this, and I'm going to repeat some things I said yesterday, and I've been sitting in this room for twenty years, and there's always that we need to improve this before we can do anything, and we need to research this before we can do anything, and we just spent decades not doing very much at all. So, rather than a dream, do you have any plans of things that can be completed short-term that would give the council information necessary to actually take action?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and so I would say, short-term, you know, the management strategy evaluation for dolphin. I think that is the short-term thing to get done, in order to incorporate some of the sustainability improved just using third-highest to monitor the fishery. Look at wahoo. Is third-highest the best way to manage that? Third highest is, you know, extremely difficult, when it's a recreational fishery, to say this is going to be a sustainable benchmark.

I think we could go to using some ageing techniques to look at the population age structure, to figure out where we should go for that population. I don't think those are unattainable. Right now, it still takes more work, but what we can do in this research plan, and what we will do in this research plan, is highlight the most important parts, that can get done in the short-term, in order for us to get on this track to get things done.

If you look up north, where they have -- They've been more of a commercial fishery and getting things done. You know, they have 200 percent observer coverage. We're scratching to get 2 percent observer coverage down here. There are differences, and, you know, just trying to fight for what we need I think is very important. We haven't had a detailed research and monitoring

plan, and, therefore, folks have not been able to go to Congress, and go to bat for us, saying we need more funds in the South Atlantic to get us beyond the data-limited status that we're in.

MR. DELIZZA: Okay. Thank you. I appreciate the emphasis on things that can be accomplished in the short-term.

MR. REYNOLDS: I think it was Rom, and then Paul. Thank you.

MR. WHITAKER: Yes, and I just reiterate what Dickie said. The Northeast, and I'm not sure if they come under the South Atlantic, the Mid-Atlantic, or the Northeast FMC, but I'm seeing and hearing of lots of dolphins up there, of all sizes, from bailers on up to gaffers, and so I think -- In my opinion, that would be one of the first, to try to get some kind of data assessment up there on what -- A little more on what's going on, and I thought maybe we had some people maybe listening in from the Northeast that could maybe add to what they see happening up there. I just talk to fellow charter boats and people from up there, and a lot of my customers are from up that way, and they tell me how good the dolphin fishing is.

Anyway, I don't know if it's climate change, or whether, you know, it's faster boats, with better Weather Service, and you can get out there more often, but there's definitely a big increase in the amount of catch up there, and the last thing, and, Chip, I was wondering -- You said you put it in the snapper grouper, asking as to the stakeholder perceptions of the management system. I just wonder what they had to say about it in the snapper grouper.

DR. COLLIER: So they're still working on completing that report. We should have it by June, and so, unfortunately, we did not have it at the most recent SEP, or the Socioeconomic Panel, meeting, but it should be completed fairly soon, and I'll pass along that report to you all.

MR. WHITAKER: Okay. Thanks, and, yes, there's a lot of things on this list that I don't see them all happening, and I guess we have to go in there and prioritize, and try to get something done, rather than study on it, and so I would agree with prioritizing this list and figure out what we can get done in a year or two, or somewhere where it will help us make decisions. Thank you.

MR. REYNOLDS: Paul.

MR. PANCAKE: Chip, it sounded like the data, that you gave us, that we haven't had a graduate-level study on dolphin or wahoo in ten years or better, and, going off what Jon was saying about incentivizing, is there a way -- I mean, there's a lot of universities in the Southeast, and a lot of them have marine science programs. Is there a way to incentivize one of these universities, either through the South Atlantic Council or other grants, to get a more recent study done?

I mean, this fishery is extremely dynamic, and ten-year-old data isn't going to cut it, and so, if there is a way to get a graduate student, whether it's master's level or PhD level, to get us more recent data, we -- I mean, that might help get us data faster than trying to put something in a computer, and hopefully it spits out a right answer.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and I think that's a good point, and I don't necessarily call it incentivize, but what we do, with these research and monitoring plans, is sometimes they will get incorporated into requests for proposals that National Marine Fisheries, or NOAA Fisheries will put out, and,

therefore, you know, people are able to see that and say that is the grant I want to apply for, and they write a grant for it, and usually it will involve a graduate student.

Although it's not incentivized, you know, people are able to latch on to this research and monitoring plan and then develop some research projects out of that, and so what I'm hearing you all say is like really look at the tagging projects, and maybe some of the age and growth projects, to better get a grasp on that, and what we can do is highlight that from the Dolphin Wahoo Advisory Panel, saying this is what the group recommended that we do. With your tagging project, were you referring to pit tags, or what kind of tagging were you referring to in order?

MR. REYNOLDS: They're a standard tag, but they would go into a whole system that could be scanned in.

DR. COLLIER: Okay.

MR. REYNOLDS: Well, I think what I'm hearing is that we want things moving forward, and so can we look at other fisheries, and take the tools that we have, that we know are, you know, standard, effective tools and move forward with some of these things? These are long-term goals, and that's understandable. We all want to see long-term goals. I want to -- You know, I want to see my kids having an extremely healthy fishery in every way. I'm sure everyone else does, and I'm sure everyone wants to see their businesses grow and expand and have sustainable fisheries in the future, and so these are long-term goals.

As it stands right now, the dolphin fishery is not sustainable. You know, by the definition of Magnuson, this is not sustainable. Every single -- Commercially, it's not sustainable, and, recreationally, it's not sustainable. That's just -- I mean, that's just by definition, and so we know we have to do something, and we have to move forward with some things as quickly as possible.

The fishery has been in decline, drastic decline, for, you know, at least twenty years, and so, yes, by all definition, you know, and so we need to move, and so I think what I'm hearing out of the AP is we need to use standard regulatory tools, at this time, to move forward with some regulations that have been useful in other fisheries to stabilize a stock, and then, after that, in the background, and I'm sure, as hard as all you guys are working on all this all the time, you're not going to let it go. You keep moving forward on this stuff, and, anything else we can do to try to acquire grant money to get more robust data, then that's the ultimate goal.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and we think one of the most important things to get done is what you guys had a presentation on yesterday, is completing that management strategy evaluation, to make sure that we can incorporate some of the international aspects of it, and make a sustainable harvest along the Atlantic coast, but I also feel like we need to improve, for wahoo, going beyond the third-highest catch and saying that is sustainable.

We need to figure out something additional beyond that. It's been recommended from the Scientific and Statistical Committee to look at other methods, and I just wish we had more options for wahoo, but, quite often, it's the forgotten child of the fishery. It's an important part of it. It's a very interesting fish. It grows fast, and it's great to eat, but we just don't have much information on it.

MR. SCALISE: There's an ongoing tournament for wahoo now going up the whole South Carolina coast. It's been going on for a few years, you know, and you -- I think it starts in February and ends sometime -- It may have already ended. Do you know?

AP MEMBER: It just ended.

MR. SCALISE: It just ended, but do you fish, what, three days?

AP MEMBER: You fish three out of -- Essentially, it's a rodeo, but, I mean, I think there was over a hundred boats in it. It would be a great dataset for the South Atlantic to --

MR. SCALISE: I mean, it's the same amount of hours, basically, and, I mean, you can look at -- The participation is in stone, you know, and the results are in stone, and then it's every year, and so you can benchmark it from year to year, and one other thing I would like to see is I don't -- I mean, is most of the data relying on for-hire reporting? I mean, what are you all getting from the truly recreational weekend warriors, as we call them?

DR. COLLIER: So, you know, it's hard to say where most of the data is coming from, but I will say that most of the landings are coming from the private recreational. That's usually where almost all of our landings come from.

MR. SCALISE: I mean, how are you all getting that?

DR. COLLIER: So that's going to be through the MRIP program, doing the dockside surveys and then doing the mail surveys to get overall estimates of effort.

MR. SCALISE: I mean, I just never see anyone collecting data at the boat landing. Like, this time of year, everyone is targeting dolphin, starting right now, and so you have -- You know, there's -- Probably this Saturday, looking at the weather, and there's probably a hundred boats leaving out of Charleston, and, you know, they're all from landings, marinas, you know, and it just seems like -- I mean, you fish where the fish are, and so you've got all these boats leaving these marinas.

They're all coming back here at about the same time, and so you can consolidate your effort. I mean, I got -- I don't want to offend Amy, but I got stopped by DNR forty-five miles off Charleston about this time last year. You know, I wasn't comfortable with them boarding the boat in the ocean, and it just -- It seemed like the most inefficient thing, you know, but he could have been at the docks, you know, gone to the marinas, and they could have intercepted a hundred times more boats than what they're going to find in the ocean, and so what's the point?

DR. COLLIER: So that's a different monitoring side. That's the law enforcement monitoring, and sometimes they do need to be offshore.

MR. SCALISE: Well, I'm just saying, even as law enforcement, and I don't -- Irregardless of what his goal is, it's like you're -- You know, then again, you fish where the fish are. The boats are at the marinas. They're all coming back there, you know, and you're -- Then he starts heading offshore, after he checks me, and this is like going on 3:30, and I was like, dude, there's -- All there is is container ships from here to Africa, and you're not going to find another boat. You know, I just -- It just seemed like a waste of fuel and manpower.

MR. OWSLEY: Dan Owsley. Maybe, for what Tim is saying, is like who schedules like this MRIP? Like, does somebody watch the weather, and so, like what Tim is saying, up here off of Charleston, Sunday looks like -- Or Saturday looks like it's going to be a good day, and I don't think I've ever been asked any like dockside survey or anything.

Maybe I have, but I don't recall, and I don't know how many people in here have actually been, you know, to look at it. I know I have in Louisiana a couple of times, over there fishing for red snapper, but like is there a component -- Like who schedules this, right, and like who is the manager that says, hey, here's the weather window, and this is in season, and I want to get my landing recorder surveyors, and they need to be at Wappoo Cut, you know, boat landing, and who is in charge of managing that group and looking at, hey, the weather is good, and checkbox, and dolphin is here, checkbox, right, and, like someone mentioned --

Shoot, the Wahoo Shootout, Paul Dozier's tournament, out of Jacksonville, Florida, and you can go on their website and see all of the data, fish days, or declared fish days, what fish was weighed, and I think that goes back to like 2010 or something, you know, and so there's -- That's a great point. Mark Pincus puts on the South Carolina wahoo series, and he's about to fire up the South Carolina mahi series. I'm fishing two mahi tournaments, kind of the rodeo-type deals, out of Jacksonville, northeast Florida.

More importantly, to Tim's thing with this MRIP, because I always hear a lot about MRIP, and I understand it a little bit, right, but who is the manager that is managing that program, that's looking at optimal weather days this season, and like who's coordinating that effort, to make sure that they're actually getting -- Because, yes, those offshore boardings -- I mean, I don't know what they do, right, and they joyride -- Or not joyride, but they're -- You know, it seems like they're not getting a real -- That's not efficient, right, burning all the square miles of ocean, when you could like have a targeted effort. If a hundred boats are fishing off of Charleston, and, you know, we have some people at Wappoo, and some other at Mount Pleasant, you know, and really see some, you know, some data.

MR. REYNOLDS: Rom.

MR. WHITAKER: Well, all I would add to that is North Carolina, in my opinion, does an excellent job. I get surveyed, dockside surveyed, at least twice or three times a week, but they go to the boat ramps, and they go -- They know where to go to look for the fish, and they do a good job of accurate accounting, measure the fish, weight of fish, record the data.

\In fact, it saved us, in North Carolina on bluefin tuna. The HMS said that we had exceeded our quota. They were actually doing it in Hatteras and Oregon Inlet, and they were just about counting every fish, but then they were extrapolating that number out over the number of permit holders, and so it got ridiculous. They said, hey, well, wait a minute, we're tagging every single fish, and we were able to keep fishing with bluefin tuna, and the same thing happened with king mackerel.

All I could say is the states -- If you don't feel like they're doing a good job, tell them to call North Carolina and find out what they're doing, and improve their system, because I do think they are doing a good job with data, and so I would just add that to the story.

MR. REYNOLDS: That's a great point, Rom, and Florida -- I would say they monitor and look at weather, and they do a really good job. It's more challenging, as other people have talked about, you know, with some of the private docks, but they do the same thing, and so, yes, we need more state funding, possibly, and then that can collaborate, you know, with the effort on the federal side.

There is -- With dolphin specifically, because it seems like some of this that we're talking about is in-the-field research, and, the DRPs, they are heavy in the field. I mean, Wes is all over the place. He's in the Caribbean, and he's up the coast, and he's in the Keys. I mean, he is an in-the-field PhD scientist that is doing all of this research, and data, and, although we're having him to show us some presentations, I don't feel like a lot of his data is going into the system enough, and it's a shame, because, if what we're asking for is more data, and in-the-field research to accompany our MRIP surveys, and we have a funded stream of data that's in the field, and it's working in all these various areas, and monitoring all of these fisheries, commercial and recreational, and we're not utilizing this data properly, then we're giving it up.

We say we don't have the money, and he's being funded, and he's doing a lot of this, and this isn't going directly into our datasets, and that could definitely happen, and so I would -- I want to say that, as a priority, that we need to collaborate, for dolphin specifically, with the DRP, to get more of this data directly inputted into the system, to be able to utilize it. Paul, did you have something?

MR. PANCAKE: It was a question. I know that the for-hire guys fall under the reporting. We talked about that yesterday. Is there any self-reporting for your regular recreational guy that's voluntary, and, I mean, the way to validate would be, hey, fill out essentially a trip ticket, and, you know, include a picture of -- You know, if you took one on the dock.

I mean, I bet, out of Charleston, for every one charter boat that fished, I bet at least twenty recreational boats fished, if not more, and just to help expand that dataset, and, I mean, like I said, an easy way to validate is fill this out, take a picture, and send it in, just to help get more data in front of the people who can, I guess, consolidate the data and give us the numbers.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, I will say that Julia is going to be given a presentation on citizen science projects that they have, and so she would be able to talk about that, but it sounds very similar to a project that they have for some of the shallow-water groupers, where it's called Release, and they're getting -- They're trying to get size estimates of released snapper grouper species and red snapper. Going back to who conducts, or who figures out where these samplers are going for the recreational interviews, it's states each do a statistical design for where their samplers are going to be going.

Just remember, when they're talking about the recreational fishery, they are designing a survey for all recreational fishing, if they're going spotted seatrout fishing, red drum fishing, or dolphin fishing, and it's a very complex way that they try to figure this out. If you want more details, Amy knows a heck of a lot more about it than I do, but it is a statistical draw that they use, and, even if it's a bad weather day, unfortunately, some of these samplers have to go out to verify that people didn't go out that day. It sounds like a waste of time, but you need to know when people don't go, just as much as you need to know when they do go. That zero is very important.

Some of the offshore stuff, you know, it's not just looking at -- There's other reasons that they go offshore. One of them could be for looking at whether or not people are fishing in protected areas.

There are protected areas out there. Commercial fisheries have regulations on the water, whether or not you're using a circle hook or something like that, and you can't do that back at the dock, and so that's why these law enforcement officers have to go offshore, to make sure people are following the rules, and, unfortunately, not everybody does. If you write it, they don't just automatically follow it.

AP MEMBER: Chip, building off of something Jon mentioned about the Dolphin Research Program, DRP, if you need the acronym, how much coordination is being done with the data that the DRP collects, because, you know, they're averaging close to a couple thousand tags deployed, and there's recoveries, and that's great, and so that gives you some migration information, and so that's important, but it also -- Just monitoring the number of tags being deployed seems like it would correlate to abundance of fish year after year.

I know that the program also monitors some boats, to measure effort. They have pelagic trackers that they've been funded to have out. I don't know how many are currently on that, but there's a lot of information being collected, and so what is the council's cooperation, or utilization, of that information?

MR. HADLEY: So, as far as the coordination aspect of it, you know, thinking in the past, Wes has presented to the council, and also presented to the AP. Wes has been incorporated -- Well, he's part of the science team for the MSE, and there were several -- I think a couple of meetings focused around dolphin tagging, and so trying to incorporate it through the dolphin MSE is, I guess, the most recent use of that information.

AP MEMBER: That's good to hear. Are there similar efforts out there of independent research that's being done on that kind of scale, and I'm getting to the funding issues, right, and there might be stuff being done there that doesn't need to be funded, and it just needs to be collected. Is anybody aware of other similar programs?

MR. HADLEY: I'm not aware of any ongoing programs. I know that there have been sort of time -- You know, Point A to Point B in time studies, using tagging data, but no ongoing, similar to what's going on -- Or what the DRP carries out, you know, through time, over several years, and continuing ongoing.

AP MEMBER: Thank you.

MR. WHITAKER: Rom Whitaker, and I might wait to the next session, but I'm just going to throw this out there. We know -- Well, it started out as MRFSS, and now it's new and improved MRIP, and, from my knowledge, even some scientists say that the data they're getting is not -- That they won't even say that it's enough to make a decision on, and so I'm just throwing out there that, if you made every recreational boat buy a dolphin wahoo permit, well, now you have a population to work from.

I had a twenty-three Seacraft for fifteen years before I started charter fishing, and, most of the guys, they bought Fountains, Freemans, Contenders, and they spent a lot of money on big boats, and these guys are great fishermen. They're as good a fisherman as any charter boat guy, and they've got a fast boat, but, anyway, my point is those guys I don't think mind telling you exactly what they're doing out there.

If you had a population, and let's just say you said, okay, you guys, if you want your permit, we're going to choose 10 to 20 percent of these fishermen, and we're going to make them electronic report, and not only would I think you'd be -- You would spend a lot less money than what we're spending on MRIP, but I think you'd be getting some really valuable, timely, accurate information, and we wouldn't be so much smoke and mirrors, and so I'm just throwing that out there, but I could see where it would work, and if they -- I don't know. If you had half a million, and you charged forty-dollars, that's a lot of money to instigate the program, and do the research, and so just a suggestion. Thank you.

MR. REYNOLDS: I think Glenn -- Glenn, you have a comment?

MR. HOPKINS: Yes, and can you hear me?

MR. REYNOLDS: Yes, sir.

MR. HOPKINS: All right. Great. I just want to say Rom hit exactly what I've been thinking. I mean, this -- We've got to get a handle on the recreational fishery. I mean, we don't even know what the -- You know, how big the universe is. I don't see any way around not getting a permit for, or a license, whatever you want to call it, for the recreational fishermen, and not just for, you know, in the future, but for bluefin or yellowfin tunas, big eyes, whatever, but we need to -- We're throwing money away with MRIP, and we know that.

I mean, it could be helpful, but it's not very effective in other fisheries I've been involved in, but we've really got to get -- I mean, we don't -- Maybe you all do know, and, I mean, you all touched on it a little bit in the presentation, but is the universe a hundred people, or a thousand, or 10,000, or 100,000, or a million, you know, recreational fishermen, and, until you know that, we don't know anything.

I mean, it's just like now I'm planning a wedding, and the first thing you do is how many people are coming. That's what you base all your management decisions on, and we don't even -- We don't even have that, not to mention the data coming from that. To me, that should be the number-one priority. With phone apps these days, it would be easy enough.

I mean, I'm a hunter. I'm sure several people there are hunters. I mean, it's so easy these days to punch in the date and what you caught, or what you killed, and we could do the same, or they could do the same, thing, but, until you get a handle on that universe, which is a large universe, I'm sure. I mean, we've got a little bit of a handle on commercial, and we've got some on for-hire, but we have nothing there, absolutely nothing, and, until you get that figured out, I don't see how you can move forward anything. Thank you.

MR. REYNOLDS: Thanks, Glenn. Just on the bright side of that, the survey that David conducted was a lot -- On the MSE was a lot more precise. It was directed at even size and type of boat that would most probably fish for dolphin, and then the results that came back from the decisiveness of -- You know, so look, and there's no, you know, fifteen-foot Whaler going dolphin fishing.

You know, he took the licensing, and it was more thought out, and, basically, what he ended up with in the survey was that I think it was above 75 percent of the chosen anglers and licenses did

actually fish for dolphin, and so it was more thought out of a survey, and then he directed those survey results at people that actually go dolphin fishing, instead of just extrapolating over, you know, however many licenses are held, which, you know, we know that that's completely ineffective.

The bright side of that is, within the MSE, there is another survey being conducted, that is much more definitive directly upon who is actually fishing for dolphin, and what they're catching, and how much money they're spending, and how much effort they're giving. David.

MR. MOSS: So I'm going to be the bad guy in the room here for a minute, and I apologize in advance. I agree with everything, damn near, that everybody here has said. I think that we should have a rec permit. I think that we should have better data, and I think that we should have more data. The reality, if you look at SEFHIER as a for instance, and 46 percent whatever, validation rate, and I forget what we called it.

AP MEMBER: Compliance.

MR. MOSS: Compliance rate. Thank you. Words were escaping me. In the snapper grouper side, we've been asking for a snapper grouper permit, in the fishery that we've known has been upside down in so many ways, for damn near fifteen years, and we're no further along than we are with the dolphin wahoo permit. I don't disagree that certain people will report, but you're getting a 46 percent compliance rate from supposedly required charter boats, and we think that recreational fishermen are going to do it just because, and the unfortunate truth is it's not going to happen. There's got to be a carrot or a stick, right?

There's all kinds of apps that exist right now where you can report what it is that you catch. The fact of the matter is not enough people are using it for the data to be valid really, right, unless we put some teeth behind any of this, and that's number -- I guess, the first ugly point.

The second is, as we look at all this different data that we want, and these research priorities, and Chip kind of alluded to this with MRIP, right, and so, when an MRIP does a survey, and that's exactly what it is, is essentially a survey, right? It's not super accurate, but it is what we have. They want to know how many flounder you caught, how many seatrout, how many dolphin, how many grouper, so on and so forth.

There's all kinds of research priorities, across all these different fisheries, and the fact of the matter is that funding is getting cut for damn near everything, and we want more and more and more, which we need more and more and more, but funding is getting cut, and I'm saying that to say that we need to be, and I said it yesterday, briefly, very judicious and smart about where we can have the most impact, and whether it's partnering with tournaments, which I think is a fantastic idea, or whether it's, you know, sort of citizen science approaches with tagging, and I think that's a fantastic idea, but, as you said, you know, Chip has all these sort of pie-in-the-sky --

Not Chip, but the council has all these pie-in-the-sky ideas of all these different research priorities, and we know that it's not all going to get done, and, to be honest with you, all of us probably don't know if any of it is going to get done, the unfortunate truth is, because of where funding is going to be at, and we have no idea.

We need to sort of temper our expectations and understand what's going on, and where we can have an impact, for a fishery that we know is in trouble, and, as we've all said, there's more and more people accessing this fishery. The population of people are growing. The population of fish are not, to my knowledge, and so we need to come up with some really creative ideas on how to get better data and what to do about this fishery. Sorry for the doom and gloom, but it's the reality of the situations that we're facing with both permits and data.

MR. OWSLEY: Dan Owsley, and David said a lot of it. I remember, like five or eight years ago, when we were talking about the red snapper, right, and talking about the recreational permit for snapper, and then the reporting on the recreational side, and this was when I still lived in Georgia, and so it was like Georgia town hall meetings or whatever.

The rec people, right, they said, you know, because of mortality, right, and I'm going to bring up red snapper mortality, because dolphin mortality has been mentioned. One of the downfalls of that reporting thing is the people would say, okay, if I reported that I caught fish, 98 percent is dead discards, and so why do I want to report that I caught anything, if it's going to die, and it's going to be used like say against me, and then, on the other flip side, the researchers were saying, well, we know there are fish out there, and the people are putting forth fishing effort, but they're reporting that they're not catching anything, because they don't want it to be counted as a dead discard, and so it's like you're in this stalemate.

There are, and I've mentioned it in these meetings, but there are recreational people that do care, right? They might not voice their opinion in the right protocol, or avenue, but like myself, right, and I know Jay mentioned it yesterday, for Wesley's dolphin tagging, right, and you can buy the tag stuff. 've been tagging for like five years. I don't need to have that incentivized, right, and there's a lot of people, like-minded conservation anglers, that recreational -- They don't need any incentive, right, to tag fish, right, and I don't, right?

I don't care if you pay -- It doesn't need any money for me to tag fish, right, and I'm paying for the fish tagging kit, which is like next to nothing when you compare with the other costs involved with recreational angling, and I've mentioned this for years, like sign me up, right, and go to some of these outreach, like some of these tournaments, and I'll say like the Northeast Florida Marlin Association, that puts on these events. Have someone come and talk about, you know, maybe dolphin tagging or something, and you're going to have way more people that are going to want to do that, to help support this, because they're already out there. They're spending money.

I look at it this way, is I'm going to be out there fishing, and so, if I can tag some fish, that will help, and a lot of the people on the boat, especially kids, they think it's cool as can be, right, to get the fish, and put the wet rag over it, you know, and insert -- Then, you know, oh, wow, that's really cool, right, and I'm performing surgery, right, and, you know, they love doing that, right, and we write all the stuff down, and it's cool, right, but that's the downfall with those recreational permits, right, and especially when for-hire people, when it's mandated to report, and then you make the recreational guy report, and they're always thinking, you know, ten steps ahead and like how is this data going to be used against me.

That's -- I mean, I do that, right, you know, and like why do they want to know all this, you know, pros and cons, and is it going to be used against us, and I think that was the biggest thing why you haven't seen it in the red snapper, and, like David said, and maybe we can talk about red snapper,

maybe someone in here, but that -- Well, no one is in here, right, that is from my area, but they're talking about completely taking hooks out of the water from Canaveral to the Florida-Georgia line, right, completely closing down the snapper grouper complex, all fifty-five species, no hooks in the water, right?

I'm the only one that's going to be affected by that, right, because I live right there, you know, and so that's like -- We don't need to get into that, but I'm just saying that's like -- You know, that's an extreme, right, and we all recognize that something needs to be done with the dolphin fishery, and getting some data and stuff, and I'm just bringing that snapper grouper thing up because the feds, or whoever, this law-making legislative body, right, and that's like -- You know, on the document of like no action to extreme action, right, they're like going right to extreme action, right, and so I think Richard has mentioned it, and like, at some point -- He's been here for two decades, and there's shown to be a decline, right, and we probably need to do something, right, and I don't -- Nobody has the crystal ball, but we need to do something, because, at some point, right, we mentioned that there's a spawning area off of North Carolina.

You know, if we don't do something, who's to say in a couple of years, they just say, hey, no trolling, and no targeting dolphin, right, and since dolphin -- If you're trying to catch tunas, and I know it's a little different area, right, but, hypothetically speaking, it's like, well, we want to save the dolphin, and so you're not allowed to troll for any pelagics, and shut down your marlin fishery, because dolphin is a bycatch for marlin, and a bycatch for tuna, right, and they're trying to do it with snapper, and so we need to do something for the dolphin.

MR. REYNOLDS: All right. As I look at research priorities here, it looks like that's what we have on the screen now. I'm taking from -- What Dan is saying is, you know, potential closure, and we want to avoid that big time, and so we need to take some measures before that happens. Dolphin is, by all statistical data, the most important economic recreational species that the council manages, by far. A closure of the species would be catastrophic, and so that's a priority, and we definitely need to invest in this fishery and demand that there is some sort of grant money allocated towards the research.

AP MEMBER: One other thing, and I thought about it last night, is maybe the dolphin fishery is not as bad as we think it is. You know, the pie has been cut up in so many pieces, with participation rates going up so high, and is what it is, and so, until we find out how many pieces of pie there are, I mean, how can you look at the -- Even begin, I guess, of the stock of it? I mean, I see it in real time, over the past forty years, or fifty years, and participation rate just expands exponentially, and until we know how many people are -- It's in a set window, usually May, early June, late April, and so, I mean, it's not like you need to survey people year-round.

It's just that one window, and it's year after year after year, and so you can compare apples to apples and oranges to oranges all day long, but, until we know how much the participation population is growing, it's like where do you begin to guess what the population is?

MR. REYNOLDS: All right. I think we have Rom, and then David.

MR. WHITAKER: Okay. Thank you. Rom Whitaker. I mean, I feel like, if we don't put some teeth into what we're trying to accomplish, and I'm still baffled about the 46 percent compliance, but, if we don't put some teeth in some of it, then we're just basically here to look at each other and

go have a good dinner, but I just -- It's mind blowing to me, but I will add, the HMS, if you do a marlin, tuna, shark, or swordfish, and that's what they control, tournament, you have to get a permit from them, and you have to make a reporting of not only every fish caught, but every fish released, if it's -- Of course, it has to be reported, and so I think there's certainly a precedent. They do it, and so, I guess as far as a tournament goes, if you've got a dolphin tournament, or a wahoo tournament, I guess you could set it up where you have to get a permit from the South Atlantic, but that's what HMS does, and it seems to work, and so just letting you know.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. David Moss. I just want to reiterate, and I'm not saying I'm against any of this. I just wanted to temper everybody's expectations, and I am 100 percent for like a dolphin wahoo permit. I think it's a great idea. Tim, I think it was you who had said, you know, this weekend, nice weather on Saturday, and you might see a hundred boats off of Charleston. That's a Tuesday with, you know, three to four-foot seas by me, and so, yes, getting some idea of the population of what's going on is paramount.

Then, again, and I'll say it again, and you have to put some teeth behind whatever it is that you're doing, and we had the discussion yesterday about like SEFHIER, and it's easy for me to say I get it, because I'm not a charter captain, and I don't have a business, but then we were -- You know, we kept saying, well, we didn't want this, and we didn't want that, and there were different, essentially, accountability measures through the whole process, right, which is certainly up to you guys, because, you know, I feel kind of bad saying anything, because I'm not the one that has to record my catch every day, but, if we're going to move forward with, you know, a rec permit, or something like that, it needs to be thoughtful.

Again, keeping funding in mind, and, you know, whatever the cost is for that permit doesn't come back to the fishery, unfortunately. It goes to the General Treasury, and so, if we're not really monitoring it, and having teeth behind it, and putting forth accountability measures within that process, then there's kind of no point. We're going to end up with a 46 percent participation rate in that as well, at best.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you so much. This is -- I think I've heard a lot from you guys, and what I'm going to do is improve on this research priority tables, based on all the discussion I heard here today, but you all get on with the rest of your conversations, and I certainly appreciate all the input. Don't think of this as your last opportunity. We're going to come back every two years to update this research and monitoring plan. If things get accomplished, we're going to take it off, and then go on to the next topic, or revisit something that maybe was accomplished a few years ago, to make sure that, you know, we're using fresh information, and so thank you, all.

MR. REYNOLDS: Thank you, Chip.

AP MEMBER: I just happen to write a few notes down of things I think are important that were discussed, you know, regarding this topic, and while Chip is here, but, like Rom said, look at the northern ocean, to assess what's happening up there with dolphin and wahoo, and that's -- Yes, we need that. More tagging on both dolphin and wahoo, and let's see. I'm all about collecting any kind of data we can on the wahoo, because, like you said, it's a beautiful, interesting, built to kill fish. I mean, there's nothing like a wahoo, but we don't know anything about them.

Then I've got more surveys at tournaments, and boat landings, to try to get a handle on what the private sector is bringing in. Two other quickies are get all data with DRP and -- Yes, get all this data, HMS data too, or whatever, and try to get it into those MSE management processes, you know, and, I mean, I think that's important.

Then Rom had said -- Jon had actually made that comment, and then Ron had said about, you know, the recreational dolphin permit, with a certain percentage required maybe for electronic reporting, or I'm in favor too of some of that money going into some kind of pot, that could be distributed at the end of the year by a state, to people who participate, you know, be a drawing, as an incentive, and so I just wanted to make that, and I just want to comment. Thank you.

MR. REYNOLDS: Okay. Anything else, Chip?

DR. COLLIER: The one last thing is I do want to make a plug for our seminar series next month, May 13. There's going to be a presentation on dolphin, looking at tournament catches of dolphin, looking at the length distribution and how they've changed over the past, I think, twenty years. I'm not certain on the time period for that, but they're going to be presenting on the more northern area, and so it should be of interest to this group, and, once again, I'll pass along the link to that, with additional information. It's not on our website yet, but we'll be getting it up there shortly.

MR. REYNOLDS: Awesome. Thanks, and I encourage everyone who wants to get more involved to just go to the DRP's website, and order some tags. It's super easy. It's -- We can get a lot more tags out there, with lot more people doing it. Okay, and I think we're moving on to the next topic, and it looks like Julia is going to give us a presentation on the Citizen Science Program.

Okay. Actually, you guys, we're going to do a quick break, because people might need to check out of rooms, or a biological break, and so let's -- Why don't we take like twelve minutes here, and we'll be back, and Julia will take it away.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. REYNOLDS: Let's do it. We still have some more stuff to cover you guys, and then we need to allocate a little bit of time. There's definitely a few things on Other Business that some people want to discuss, and so we're going to go right to Julia, with a citizen science presentation for everyone, and an update, and here we go. Take it away.

MS. BYRD: Thanks, Jon. Good morning, everyone. For those who I haven't had an opportunity to meet, I'm Julia Byrd, and I oversee the council's Citizen Science Program, and so I kind of work with lots of council staff on the program, but there are two of us at the council who focus on citizen science, myself and then Meg Withers, who runs one of our projects called Release, which I'll get into in a few minutes, and so a lot of what we do is try to work with fishermen and scientists to develop projects that kind of help fill some of the data gaps, and so the conversation you all were just having made me write down lots of notes from the discussion, and so thanks for that great discussion, and we'll speak a little bit more about that later on in the presentation.

What I really wanted to do today is just -- It's been a while since I've given kind of this AP an update on what's been happening in our Citizen Science Program, and so what I'm going to do is just share a little information about the different projects we have underway and then talk a little

bit about ways where we would love to get ideas about citizen science projects from you guys, so we can start trying to figure out if there are ways that our program can help support projects like that.

Before getting into the projects themselves, I wanted to talk a little bit about some research we've been working on with a few other folks, and so the council's Citizen Science Program started a few years ago, and one of the things we really want to make sure that it's doing is what the council wants it to do, and so, in order to do that, we're thinking about how we can evaluate the program and improve it moving forward.

The program is really working with lots of different folks, but three of the main groups we're most interested, and are most important for us to work with, are fishermen and scientists and managers. We've got to work well with all of those groups for the program to be successful, and so we've been working with researchers on some work to help us evaluate the program, and one of the first things we wanted to do is try to figure out what fishermen and scientists and managers in our region know about citizen science, how much they trust the citizen science process of collecting data to use for fisheries management decisions, and the idea is, if we know that now, we can ask those same questions to those groups in five years, and ten years, and see if people's kind of perspectives have changed over time.

I'm just going to give a real quick overview, and there's some links on this slide, if you're interested in kind of checking out more of the results from this research, but, to do this work, we worked with a researcher named Rick Bonney. He is kind of a citizen science expert, and has been providing guidance to our program, and, in order to figure out how to collect data, he first did interviews with a small group of fishermen and scientists and managers.

What he did is kind of he interviewed those folks, and that helped us figure out ways we could collect information from a much broader group of fishermen, scientists, and managers, and so he did an online survey with scientists and managers, and ended up having about seventy-nine folks kind of respond to the survey, and it was -- I'm not going to get into results, again, but it was really interesting to see.

There seemed to be a lot of interest in citizen science to help fill kind of fisheries data gaps from scientists, but they also had a lot of concerns about how the data could be validated and used and that sort of thing, and then we worked with a research team, led by Jennifer Sweeney-Tookes, who is at Georgia Southern University, to gather information from a much broader group of fishermen, and they did that through a series of interviews.

Some of you may have been contacted by them, or participated in interviews, but what Jennifer's team really did was kind of learn more from fishermen about kind of their interest in citizen science, their concerns about citizen science, some of which I think you guys were talking about a little bit in the previous discussion, and talked about some trust issues between kind of fishermen and scientists and managers.

Through this work, they also kind of identified certain areas where fishermen seem to be most interested and willing to collect data to share with management, and so, again, if any of you guys participated in this, or were contacted about this, I wanted to make sure to mention it. If you're

interested in checking out more of the results, especially kind of these interviews with fishermen, that may be of interest to you guys, there are links here for you to check them out.

Now getting into projects, and the first project I wanted to talk about is one that's working not with fishermen, but with recreational divers. It's being led by a group called REEF, the Reef Environmental Education Foundation, and they're a group that's been working with recreational divers to collect data over the past kind of decades, twenty or thirty years.

What this project is trying to do is kind of use these laser-mounted underwater cameras, so you can kind of see these cameras here and right here. It's just a normal underwater camera. It's an Olympus camera that's mounted with a laser, and the idea is to try to collect more information on the length of some of our data-limited species, and so what the divers do is they'll go down, and they'll put the laser on the fish, like right here, and then take a burst of photos. Then those photos are analyzed to get length information from different fish species, and so this is a pilot project where they're kind of testing the cameras, and they're testing the methodology.

They've had two kind of field seasons that are complete, and now they're kind of analyzing the data, and another cool part of this project is they're collecting, you know, hundreds and thousands of photos, and so, in order to try to analyze the data more quickly, they're using an artificial intelligence workflow and training it so that they'll be able to pull the length information from the photos much quicker into the future, and so that's a little bit about our SMILE project.

The next project I wanted to update you guys on is the FISHstory project, and I think -- I know we presented to you guys a little bit about this project in the past, but I just wanted to kind of update you guys on what's happening with this project, and so this is a project where we're using these old historic fishing photos to help us learn more about kind of the fish that were caught, and the size of the fish that were caught, back in the 1940s and 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, kind of before there were catch monitoring programs in place, and in particular from the kind of for-hire sector.

There's three project components, and I know I've gone over this before, but I thought it might be helpful to just quickly run through them again. One, we're trying to digitize and archive these historic fishing photos from across the South Atlantic region, and then to help -- Once we have those photos, to help analyze them, there's an online website called Zooniverse, where we train members of the public to help us count and identify the fish in the photos, and then the third part of the project is we've developed a method to estimate the size of the fish in the photos that are hanging on those leaderboards, using the lumber as kind of a scaler.

Over the past -- I guess it's probably been a year, or maybe even eighteen months now, and we've been really working to grow our FISHstory photo archive, and I know there are folks around this table who have provided photos, or have suggested places for us to go look for photos, for the project and so we did a pilot project.

The pilot project just had photos out of kind of the Daytona Beach, Florida area, and I'm happy to say that we now have photos from the Outer Banks through the Keys. The majority of photos are still in that northern Florida area, but, to date, we've had over 2,300 photos that have been contributed to the project, by kind of fourteen different providers, and so we've gotten photos from individuals, anglers, or, you know, maybe their father was a captain, and they kind of saw a post on the internet about it and reached out to us.

We've also -- Folks have connected us with restaurants that have photos on their wall, or libraries that have kind of archived some of these photos, and so I'm really excited to say that the photo archive is growing, which is great, because that means the data collected through the project will be more representative of kind of the South Atlantic as a whole.

If you look at the photos, the percentage of photos by decade, the most are from the 1960s, then 1950s, 1970s, and 1980s, and we have kind of photos from all the months of the year, but the majority of photos that we've collected have been from trips from kind of that May to August timeframe, which makes sense maybe, because that's kind of -- It may mimic the effort in the for-hire fleet.

Then we're always looking for new photos, or, if you guys haven't seen any suggestions of folks who may be good to contact to get more photos, we would be all ears. When we're archiving these photos, not all of them can be used for analyses. Even if we can't use them for analyses, we're archiving them anyway, just because I think you can learn a lot from these photos about kind of the culture and the history of the fishery, and we can use those things for kind of outreach projects or that -- I mean, outreach products, that kind of stuff, but the photos we're using for analyses need to be taken at the end of a fishing trip, where the harvested catch is displayed with the anglers.

We need to know a year, and ballpark year is okay, but we need to have some sense of kind of the time. We need to know at least kind of the state that that photo was taken in, and then we would love to get kind of photo provider information, just so we can keep them up-to-date on what's happening with the project.

Then what makes a photo even better for analyses is if the fish are hanging on a leaderboard, because then we can estimate that size, and then, if we have more specific information on date, that can help us do some seasonal analyses, and then we always just love to learn more about kind of the vessels, the captains, the docks, where these photos came from too, and so we gathered all these new photos, and we needed to get them analyzed.

We have this project on this webpage called Zooniverse, where, again, we train members of the public to help us count and identify the fish in these photos. We relaunched the project in July of last year, and I am excited to say that we've had really good participation. As of -- This was a couple of weeks ago, and so we have kind of different levels that folks identify fish, so they're only identifying three or four fish for each of these levels, and I think we're just -- I think we're 99.9 percent complete now to have kind of the photos we have archived, have gone through Zooniverse, and then what happens is we have -- Some of these photos can be tricky, and so we have multiple volunteers looking at each of these photos.

The next step will be having our validation team, which is made up of fishermen and scientists. If there are any of these photos where there's a lot of volunteer disagreement, they'll help us kind of confirm what's within the photo, and so that's exciting, and then the next thing, with the length component of the project, is, initially during the pilot, we were measuring king mackerel. That's kind of our pilot species to test the methodology.

The methodology worked well, and so now we have measured all the red snapper that are in our photo archive as well, and so we're kind of crunching numbers right now to produce length

compositions from red snapper within the project, and I will say, as we've expanded the project, we've gotten more and more photos with dolphin in them over time, and particularly there are a couple of captains who provided photos from the Keys, and then some of the photos from the Outer Banks in particular, and we've been seeing more kind of dolphin in the photos that we've been archiving over time.

Then the last project I want to talk about is focused more on the snapper grouper fishery. I know you guys are the Dolphin Wahoo AP, but I'm guessing many of you may also bottom fish a little bit, and so I wanted to update you guys on this project as well, and so this is a project where we're working with fishermen to gather information on released shallow-water grouper and red snapper, and so Chip is the one who mentioned this project kind of a few minutes ago.

Fishermen are logging this information in a free app that's called SciFish, that you can download on your phone, and so we have participants that have been logging information over kind of the past couple of years.

One of the things that we're doing a lot, and really Meg is the one who's leading the charge on this, and works really closely with the council's best fishing practices program, is doing outreach and going and talking to kind of fishing clubs about the project, and about kind of use of descending devices and best fishing practices, and so there've been a lot of fishing expos, and we actually did a seminar on -- Today is Wednesday, and so on Monday night at -- Sorry. The days are running together.

We did a seminar at Haddrell's with a couple of captains that talked about bottom fishing tactics, and then we shared information about best fishing practices and Release, and so doing a lot to kind of tell fishermen-- Meet fishermen kind of in their communities, to share information about this project, and hopefully recruit them to kind of help share what they're seeing on the water with us.

Every year, we do an annual data summary, that kind of summarizes all the information that has been logged through the project, and so first that's shared with our participants, and then it's posted to our webpage, but I wanted to just share a couple of the highlights from that summary with you all, in case it was of interest, and then the last thing I'll talk about is a partnership that we have with Sea Grant going on, that we're really excited about, and you all might be interested in.

Again, a data summary is pulled together every year. It's on the council's webpage, on this project's webpage, if you're interested in checking it out more, but there's a lot of great information in there, and it kind of summarizes where submissions are from, the sector that they're from, the species that are kind of logged within the project, and then we'll put together length composition information, and this is kind of length composition of released fish for some of the key species, and then we also kind of summarize information on shark depredation, kind of hook types, and location, and then we also have a participant recognition program.

Every year, we have set milestones, and so, when participants meet those milestones, they get recognized in a variety of ways, and, thanks to a partnership with Sea Grant, Sea Grant can kind of provide thank-you packets for when folks meet some of these milestones.

In 2024, if you look at where our Release submissions came from, the largest percentage was from South Carolina, followed by Florida, then North Carolina and Georgia, and 80 percent of our

submissions were from the private recreational sector, and about 20 percent were from charter captains.

If you look at kind of this species that were logged, it was the majority of them were red snapper releases that were logged, followed by gag, and then red grouper, and then graysby and scamp, and then one of the things that we were kind of most interested in learning from kind of fishermen was about kind of use of barotrauma mitigation devices, and so when people were venting fish and when people were descending fish.

This graph kind of shows, on the bottom, as you move across the kind of screen here, different depths, and so you're going deeper this way, and so we know that barotrauma is an issue that occurs more frequently in deeper water, and so we were excited to see that people were more likely to treat a fish either by venting it or descending it as you were getting into those deeper depths.

Then, again, we have this participant recognition program, and so some of the kind of milestones are kind of the smallest and largest logged of each species. I wanted to throw that up there, because there's maybe a familiar name on the screen, and then we also have a variety of different recognitions. One is called Around the Reef, and so this is one where we kind of -- You reach this milestone when you log a release from all the different species in the project, and, right now, Jake Harmon is kind of leading the charge on this. He has logged information on four different species, and then we have a release kind of champion this year. This year, it was Mark McWaters, who is a private rec fisherman out of Jacksonville.

This year, we're really excited, because, in addition to this participant recognition program, we're partnering with Sea Grant on the Sea Grant South Atlantic Release Rodeo, and so Greyson Webb, who is with Sea Grant, and she's their Reef Fish Extension Fellow, kind of works here at the council, and she had a great idea.

They're working to get best fishing practices gear into fishermen's hands, and so they want to get the sending device gear into fishermen's hands, and the Release projects -- You know, we want to encourage more people to participate in the program, and then we want to make sure to try to encourage people to include photos with their submissions, so we're able to do some data validation of the data that's coming in through the project.

The Release Rodeo is a three-month challenge that starts in May of this year, when shallow-water Grouper opens, and it runs from May to July, and you can earn entries into a Sea Grant prize raffle when you submit a release through the project that includes a photo. You can double your entries if you include a photo of a fish on a ruler or something of known measurement that can help us validate the size of the photo.

Each month, Sea Grant will be drawing two names for their raffle prize drawing, to give away some best fishing practices information, and then they're doing a grand prize drawing, at the end of the challenge, where anyone who submitted kind of -- Who has earned raffle tickets, and everybody's name gets put in a hat, and then there's a grand prize winner that will be drawn, and so we're really excited about this.

This is the first time we've done a kind of rodeo like this, but just another way to kind of help Sea Grant get best fishing practice gear into fishermen's hands, for us to kind of encourage more folks

to participate in the project, and to thank them for participating in the project, and so that's a little bit about the Release project. If anyone is interested in kind of participating, or getting signed up for Release, to participate, just let me know, and I can hook you up with that.

Then the last thing I wanted to talk about is we've launched a new tool, and it's an online form, basically, and it is called the Citizen Science Project Idea Portal, and so we know folks like you guys, who are on the water a lot more than we are, have great ideas for citizen science projects that we haven't thought of, and so this is just a way for you to share citizen science project ideas with us.

It takes you to an online form. It would take less than ten minutes to kind of fill out a project idea, and how the idea submitted will be used is so, each year -- Chip just walked through you guys on how the council updates their overall research and monitoring plan. They do that every two years. Once they do that, we have a more specific citizen science research priority document.

What that does is it narrows down kind of all of the many data ideas to tangible project ideas that are important to our fishermen, our scientists, and our managers, and that helps us guide the types of projects that our program tries to support, and then, also, a lot of times another group or someone will kind of contact the Citizen Science Program and say, hey, we want to try to collaborate with you guys on our project, and so we can share that research, citizen science research, priority list with them, to see if they're interested in any of the kind of research priorities we have, and so it's a great way to not only help guide our program, but to help people who want to partner with us kind of develop projects that meet kind of our needs.

Through the conversation you guys had earlier, I already wrote down, you know, kind of trying to figure out ways where projects could work with tournaments. It seemed like there was some interest in trying to see if citizen science projects could help supplement some of the recreational data that are being collected, or help validate them, that sort of thing, and so I've already written down a number of ideas from your conversation earlier, but, if you guys have any other ideas, I would encourage you to use this, or just contact me and let me know.

We'll be updating the citizen science research priorities later this year, and, before I turn it over to answer any questions you guys had, the last thing I wanted to say is we have different citizen-science-specific advisory panels, and so one of our advisory panels, and we call it the Projects AP, is made up of representatives of all the different council advisory panels, and so Snapper Grouper, Mackerel, Dolphin Wahoo, Spiny Lobster. We have folks from the Habitat and the Outreach AP there too, but one of their main responsibilities is helping us update our research priorities.

Jon Reynolds sits on that AP from the Dolphin Wahoo, as the single Dolphin Wahoo representative, but we would love to see if anyone else is interested in participating in that AP, too. I think it's really important to have folks from all of the different APs participate in that, because you guys will have different ideas on what research priorities are for the fisheries you're really involved in, more than others perhaps, and so I will put a plug in there too, if anyone wants to kind of join that AP, and it's not a heavy lift.

They meet normally once a year, via a webinar. It's normally a three-hour webinar, and so it's not very long, but I think it's important to make sure that kind of we're thinking about what you all think the research needs are for dolphin wahoo that would work well with citizen science, and so,

with that, that's just an update on what we have going on. I'm happy to take any questions that you guys may have, or if any of you guys are potentially interested in joining the Projects AP, and I would love to know, or I'm happy to talk with you about it kind of later this morning.

MR. REYNOLDS: Thank you, Julia. That was awesome. This is sort of the resourcefulness that we need, you guys, if we're going to -- You know, if there's not a ton of funding, you know, we can take some more things into our hands, and some of this is real -- You know, it's simple. Just, you know, if you catch something that we can put into a dataset, you know, and you're just taking a quick picture, and entering something in. We take tons of pictures on charter boats already as it is, and everyone is taking pictures on their phones all the time, and so it's pretty simple, and, yes, this isn't a heavy load, or a heavy lift, like she said.

You know, if anyone else wants to get involved, just with the priorities side of things, that would be a big deal. Anyone have any questions, or comments? All right. Then we're going to move forward. Thank you very much, Julia. That was an awesome presentation.

I think next on the agenda is -- What are we looking at? The for-hire limited entry? Okay. All right, and I think John is going to show us some stuff on this, and then we'll go into questions and comments.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you, and so, yes, as Jon mentioned, the next discussion item is gathering some information from you on the AP's thoughts on considering limited entry for the for-hire dolphin wahoo permit, and I'm give you a little bit of feedback, and, you know, over the next half hour or so, just try to get some feedback for the council on how the AP feels about considering limited entry for the dolphin wahoo fishery.

How this came about, it really is something that's been brought up by the other -- That has been brought up by the other two finfish APs, and so Snapper Grouper and Mackerel Cobia, and so the Snapper Grouper AP discussed this over a couple of meetings, but, in 2023, you know, they provided some feedback for the council on limited entry.

They were generally, you know, generally -- I think generally in favor of adding limited entry, or considering limited entry, at least for the snapper grouper for-hire permit. You can see there's several comments there that they included in their report, but, you know, one thing that was noted from folks in the Keys, Florida Keys, as well as off of South Carolina, is the large population growth in recent years has led to an increase in the number of for-hire captains and for-hire participants in the fisheries, and so they've seen a growth in their fishery.

They noted that there should be a differentiation between headboats and the six-pack charter boats. They noted that the council's previous control date in 2016 should be updated. They thought that that was outdated, and I'll get to a little bit more on that. They also felt that illegal charters are becoming more of a problem, through social media advertising, and that many snapper grouper -- They noted that there's some resource issues with many snapper grouper species.

I mean, we talked about it a little bit earlier, and there had been discussion on red snapper, but many other species are seeing -- You know, becoming a very limited resource on the annual catch limit side, and they also said limited entry could -- Or they just suggested that limited entry could

be considered for South Atlantic fisheries outside of snapper grouper as well. They did note that the Gulf does have limited entry for their reef fish and mackerel permits.

So, on the mackerel cobia side, for that advisory panel, and I believe this was the item that was brought up under other business for that advisory panel, but they discussed it, and, again, they were mostly in favor of considering it in the fishery. Again, you know, I'm using the word "consider", and so it's not like a done deal. I'm trying to bring that -- You know, kind of make that point apparent, but they felt that it would be worth exploring.

They noted that it would control expansion of recreational harvest and professionalize the fleet, the for-hire fleet. The Mackerel Cobia AP would be interested in discussing new and unique techniques for a limited entry program, and so thinking -- You know, thinking in great detail how to get new entrants into the fishery, if participation is limited, and they also recommended forming a workgroup to discuss limited entry for the for-hire fleet.

The council has received this feedback for the other two large finfish APs, and, at the December, 2023 meeting, they initiated development of an amendment to consider limited entry in the for-hire fisheries for snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagics, and dolphin wahoo. They also updated -- They passed a motion to update the control date in the for-hire fishery. You know, I highlighted some points there, but there's sort of a dual control date there.

One is looking at -- It would be anyone who had a permit prior to December 8, 2023, and then, also, they were looking at who would be reporting in the for-hire logbook, and so, additionally, federal permit holders that have not reported snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, and/or dolphin wahoo catch through the SEFHIER program, which we discussed earlier in the meeting, on or prior to December 5, will not be assured future access.

This new control date has moved forward, and, really, the idea of the control date is it's a notice to say that the council is considering this. They don't have to use that date. They can use another date. It's just what's on the books for now, but the note is to sort of put people on notice that those that are not -- Do not fall within that specific control date will not be assured future access.

Overall, this topic was discussed by the council over a couple of meetings, and, to go along with this, and I'll get into this a little bit, but a notable roadblock for them has been that they don't have -- That the council has not been provided updated permit information since 2020, and so there's been ongoing issues and updates with the NOAA Southeast Regional Office's permit system, and permit database, and so there really hasn't been detailed permit information provided to the council.

They have put further development of the amendment on hold pending updated permit information, because they really want to see what has been the trend in permits since COVID, you know, whether it's gone up, continued to go up, or has it gone down, and that information is important in considering whether or not a limited entry system would be appropriate.

So, you know, the take-home there is this amendment is on pause, but this AP has not had a chance to weigh-in. The other two finfish APs have, and so the idea here is to get some feedback from you on, you know, should -- On considerations for limited entry in the dolphin wahoo permit, but -- I will note this amendment has been initiated, but it's very, very early in the process. It has not

even been approved for scoping, and so, if it does move forward, there's a lot to go. There's a long way to go with the development of the amendment.

Next, I'm going to show you a little bit of what available information there is on permits in the dolphin wahoo fishery. Again, note that the cutoff for this is 2020. That's the last full year of data that we have for permit information, and so that's why you see that there's not additional information provided for recent years, but there are a couple of tables.

There's a table here, and a figure, that show the number of vessels that held the dolphin wahoo for-hire permit, by homeport state, and so, generally speaking, I'm going to move down to the -- Well, I'll start with the table, and I'll move down to the figure, but, generally speaking from the -- We'll call it the early 2000s through 2020, there was an upward trend, especially towards the end there, in the number of dolphin wahoo permits.

When you look at the trend in permits on a state basis, or at least on a regional basis, you see many states -- There's some states that have seen some increase, but, for the most part, it's somewhat flat. A lot of that increase in the number of permits has occurred in Florida, and so the east coast of Florida or south Florida and the Keys, and so that's, where when you go up to this total here, you see it does go up over time. You go down, and see a lot of that increase, at least through 2020, again, came from Florida, or vessels homeported in Florida.

This is where I'm going to turn it over to the AP, to gather some information, and, you know, just to kind of frame the discussion, this is initial feedback. You know, if this were to develop, which is an if, then there would be additional information. There would need to be additional -- There will be additional information provided, and this AP would have more updated information to really get into the details of it, and what the council -- The council needs a chance to develop their thoughts on limited entry.

As I mentioned, it's very early in the process, but so this is trying -- This is sort of a first look initial feedback for the council on whether or not limited entry should be considered for the dolphin wahoo for-hire permit and, you know, aspects thereof.

There are two main discussion questions here, you know, to get your feedback on what you're seeing on the water, and so has there been a notable change in the number of for-hire vessels participating in the dolphin wahoo fishery since 2020, and so, you know, get your on-the-water observations on that, and is there a state or regional aspect to that observation, and does the AP feel that there's a need to consider limiting the number of for-hire dolphin wahoo permits available, and just, you know, a little bit of feedback on why, and so, if not, why, and, if so, why? Also, is there a coastwide need, or is this a region-specific need, and so, with that, I'll turn it over to the AP.

MR. REYNOLDS: Dan.

MR. OWSLEY: Dan Owsley. John, I was waiting to see it, and maybe I missed it, but what is the intended result for limiting this entry, because, if we limit entry, and I saw on here something that was like about reporting, right, which we already know reporting, and we've talked about you can't even use for-hire reporting, because it's not validated.

To me, and I thought we had talked about this before, but my position on it is I need to know why, before I could weigh-in, and is it restricting competition, right, because these other limited entry permits have now put a -- They've monetized this permit, and so they're twenty-five-something-thousand dollars, and buy two snapper grouper permits for one, right, and it's almost monopolizing the stuff, right, and so that's restricting competition, which that's an antitrust thing, right?

If it's for someone to say, hey, if we do limited entry for-hire, to professionalize the for-hire fleet, to get better reporting, well, we learned yesterday that the reporting is coming in at 46 percent, but, even if it was 100 percent, you can't even use the data, because the data isn't validated, and so what is -- Whoever is even talking, and why this discussion comes up, and what is the intended result, like good, bad, whatever, for limited entry?

MR. HADLEY: That's a good question, and a good point. I'm just thinking back to the council discussion, and the other APs' discussion, and so I think there would be multiple goals. One would be, ideally, this would help with the reporting compliance, and bringing that compliance rate up, and the other was -- This is coming from the other APs' feedback, is that they felt it would professionalize the fleet. They thought -- You know, I'm thinking some of the other comments have been that you have sort of captains that aren't in it for the long haul, and so they come into the fishery, and they'll leave the fishery, and so they felt like it would stabilize participation in the for-hire fishery. I'm not saying if it's one way or another, but that's the feedback that has been received.

That could be in the industry, but that's what's been mentioned, and so that would be the goal, you know, stabilize -- I think stabilize participation, and then, also, as an ancillary benefit, improve reporting compliance. I will say, the stipulations within the Magnuson-Stevens Act, that reporting compliance can't be the only reason to implement limited entry. You know, it's clear in the MSA that that's not the only reason, and so that would be sort of an ancillary benefit.

Really, I think. in the Magnuson-Stevens Act, limited entry should be considered to improve optimum yield in the fishery, and so that's the guidance in the legislation, but I hope that helps answer some of the questions and relay some of the other feedback that the council has received.

MR. PANCAKE: This is Paul Pancake. I'm against limited entry in every single fishery we have. I know that I'm not going to make many friends with that, but, for a governing body to limit somebody's desire to start a business, be successful with it, and provide a good service -- I mean, what happens if you have a kid that walks on the dock from Illinois, who cares about this fishery more so than the guy who's been doing it for twenty years, and is in it for the right reasons, but now he can't get a permit, because limited entry has now made permits -- You know, the price of the permit, and to lease one, a premium, and now he can't afford to go chase what he wants to do, you know, essentially what he's done forever.

I mean, we live in a capitalist country, and, to limit something like this, and somebody's access to it, and I understand that there are good intentions behind it, by trying to preserve the body of -- You know, the fishery body, and try to raise some of the professionalism, but I don't believe this is the answer, and I could be wrong, but there's other ways to get better data than saying only X number of people can give us data.

MR. REYNOLDS: Jon Reynolds. Obviously, in my area, there's been a lot more participation, a lot more charters. Does it make it more challenging for me and my business? Yes. Who am I to say though who can and can't do this, and so what that means -- How this translates to me, and my perspective of the world, and this country, and everything else, is that the pie is still the same size.

We're dealing with a natural resource. We are not stocking this fishery, and so the natural resource needs to be conserved and protected, to a degree. I'm going to get less of that pie, you know, but, hey, this isn't my fishery, you know, and so that's my perspective on it, is that, you know, there are more guys coming in. They all have these dreams. They have these aspirations, and they -- The demand is there, and the pie is only going to be so big.

You know, again, this is a natural resource. We have to regulate this, through restrictions in what can be caught, in my eyes, really, and there can be more guys fishing, and more happy participants, spending a ton of economic value into this fishery, still with a more restrictive fishery, really. I mean, so that's my take on it. I'm not really in favor of it. You know, I'm kind of in the middle, and most of my fleet is kind of in the middle too, you know, that it's definitely a point of contention.

What I can say is that, if there's no restrictions on what can be caught, or the regulations and what can be caught are not correct, then the more boats fishing is a problem. If we get to a sustainable level of regulation, then it's not a problem, and so that's kind of where I am. I think Glenn has his hand up.

MR. HOPKINS: Yes, and mine is more of a comment. I'm just totally blown away that you all don't have the numbers from 2020 to 2024 on how many permits were issued and asking for the AP's advice on that. How hard can it be to count the permits? It just diminishes my faith in the whole system, I guess is what I'm saying. That's all for now.

MR. REYNOLDS: Rom, did you have something next? Then Dan.

MR. WHITAKER: Yes, and Rom Whitaker. I totally agree with Glenn, and I've asked a couple people with the council and, well, what's the deal, and it's not that hard. There are not that many of them out there to start with, and it can't be that hard to count them, but, anyway, maybe they'll get that straight.

To address the increase in for-hire effort, and I can only speak for our area of Oregon -- I mean, Morehead City to Oregon Inlet. Just like I said the other day, the charter fleet in Hatteras Harbor has gone from twenty-four boats actively fishing, probably ten years ago, to we have eleven there now, and so the day of the owner-operator charter boat is gone by the wayside.

Boats have gotten too expensive, and there's not enough income to support a -- When you buy a \$700,000 or \$800,000 boat, it just doesn't work out, but what we are seeing an increase in is what, in our area, we call dot-com charter boats, and that's they get on the internet and, hey, I've got one guy, and I need three more, and yes, there's an increase in that.

I really don't know, when you don't even have to have a dolphin wahoo permit -- If you say -- If he just tells people, well, if we get stopped, tell them we're recreational fishermen, and so that is a problem, and that's -- In our industry, I think that's where the increase is, and that is -- I mean, that's, I guess, one of the reasons maybe that limited entry would be -- Then you've got to be

legitimate, if you're going to do it, but I guess you could still do it and just lie to the enforcement people, but getting four or five people to all tell a lie is not -- I wouldn't want to have to do it, if I was a captain.

At any rate, that being said, I've got a couple of kids, and, of course, they're inshore fishermen, but occasionally they run offshore. In Hatteras, sometimes the dolphin are moving in five or six miles in the fall, and they can run out there and have a really good day on them sometimes, and so I'm very -- I see some advantages, but it seems like, in our discussions here, the last -- Yesterday and today, that even if the for-hire -- Let's say, okay, and I'll take limited entry, and, you know, I've got a charter headboat permit, but I'm still grouped in the recreational category, and so am I really getting any kind of protection? I just -- I don't know. That's something that I haven't been able to get straight in my own mind, but, anyway, that was about all I had to say about that. Thank you. One more thing, and I've got a couple of Release stickers, if anybody wants them, and they're free.

MR. REYNOLDS: Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you. I just wanted to address the question that I think also came up yesterday for why we don't have access to permit data after 2020, and so let me tell you that the council is just as frustrated as you are, if not more, because they've been waiting for these data for going on four years now.

The permit system, that is managed by NOAA Fisheries, had an issue with it that has not been resolved. We keep getting updates, at every council meeting, from the Regional Administrator on the progress of fixing this issue that is not allowing the council to have access to those data, and so I just want to make clear that it is not that the council does not want to get that information, and provide it to you all, but it is that we have not been able to access that information, and so hopefully -- We've been told that we'll have another update at the June meeting, and that they're making progress in addressing this issue, and, as soon as we do, and we have access to that information, we can begin to incorporate it, and, you know, this is not -- This is affecting a lot of the other things that the council is doing, other amendments that are under development, and we can't finish the job, because the information is not available. Thank you.

MR. REYNOLDS: Thank you, Myra. Dan.

MR. OWSLEY: Myra, I've got a question for that, because I know it used to be all Freedom of Information Act, and so you could go on the Southeast Regional Office, and click a link, and you can see all the permit holders and everything, and does it still fall under Open Records Act, and, if it has, why hasn't, or has, the council filed an official Open Record Act release to make them, by law, if it is Freedom of Information Act, to put some teeth behind that record request, because I think from 2000, right, to today, you can electronically renew, and there's no excuse, right?

Any other industry that, if we need to have good data to make managerial and financial sound business decisions, and this is almost inexcusable, right? In today's age and time, with technology, why they haven't released it is they don't want to, right, and so that's why I'm asking, and has the council -- If it is still considered open access records, have they engaged services of counsel, or whatever needs to -- And filed legitimate, formalized open record requests under the Freedom of Information Act?

MS. BROUWER: The council has not done that. The council keeps asking every -- After every council meeting, we submit a letter, a memo, to the Regional Office, and to the Science Center, with the list of items that council is requesting for the following meeting, and we've been sending those memos, with that request, for, you know, getting an update on the progress of fixing whatever the issue is for, you know, a long time.

The Gulf Council has submitted a letter, a more formal letter, because they don't have access. They need that information as well. Our council hasn't done that yet. I don't know that the agency itself could, you know, figure out how to tunnel into the database and get those data out. They've offered to provide -- They're called snapshots, and so kind of like just little chunks of information, so that the council, both councils, can continue doing their job, but we have not yet received those either, and so I hope that's helpful. It's a very frustrating situation.

MR. OWSLEY: You know, if you all have been requesting this, and it's not been getting action, I think that it needs to be formally filed, pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, because, if you all are continuing to write memos, right, and you're doing the same thing, and you're not getting any different results, but yet we're talking around here about how do we get good reporting, or we get good this, or we get good this, and like, you know, there is legislation for Freedom of Information and Open Record Act. Why hasn't --

I mean, it needs to be filed formally, so it has the, quote-unquote, teeth behind it, and get that. If those records are that important to be making managerial decisions, and, for the past five years, they haven't been provided, it's because they don't want to provide them, but, if it still falls under open record, it needs to be formally and legally requested, hands down.

AP MEMBER: I'll second that.

MR. REYNOLDS: Chip.

MR. BERRY: If it will be helpful, I think this -- If we're in agreement, I think this advisory board ought to shoot something to the council saying, you know, we've been looking for data for a long time, and we need it, and everybody needs it, and so I don't know, and, I mean, I could hand count those. I mean, Jesus.

MS. DUKES: Hi, guys. Amy Dukes, South Carolina state council rep. To add on to what Myra said, is it's not so much that the information is being held, or withheld, and it's that there's a database structure issue, and so being able to track permits associated with vessels, and associated with people, through time, and they were having issues with that, and so, yes, some of the permit information is considered publicly available, and you're absolutely right that the website used to have not only a lookup screen, but then also a CSV file that you could pull down.

Some of that is no longer available because of the database structure issues. I'm just as frustrated as all of you are. It is holding up the council from being able to move forward on very important decisions, this being one of them. If you have a recommendation that you would like to provide to the council, please feel free to put that on the record though.

MR. OWSLEY: Well, in today's technology, I don't know if you've -- If you've got a database, if there's someone who could write that code and include the columns that's needed, permit, person,

because they know to mail the renewal stuff. They know how to email the renewal. You can go renew your permits online. For me to sit here and hear that there's a glitch in a database, when the 2000 data was -- What, and there's 2,000 or something permits, right, and, like Chip said, it could be hand counted. There are people that can write code, and back in, and hit a button, and it will spit out everything you want to report.

I do not buy it for one second that is a database issue and that someone can't do that. Like I'm sure there's a private person, code writer, that knows all that, that he could have that done in minutes. I think it's just they don't want to do it. That's my opinion.

MR. REYNOLDS: Okay, and does anyone have anything else on limited entry for, against, you know, any other kind of statements that can sway the councils? Go ahead, David.

MR. MOSS: David Moss, and so I doubt I'm going to say anything that's going to sway the council anymore, but, Paul, this had come up in snapper grouper quite a few years ago, and, when it first came up, I was exactly like you. I was very much against it. I was all about free enterprise, and I still am, and part of what gave me heartburn was, believe it or not, the title of limited entry, and, when it was explained to me, it's not so much limiting people.

It's not saying that you can't come into this, right? It's like, for instance, I used to own a landscape company. If I wanted to go into a landscape company, there were certain permits I had to pay for. There were certain -- There was actually even certain trainings I had to do, certain what they call CPUs, continuing -- Or CEUs, continuing education units, or whatever the hell it was. Anyway, there were these -- If you want to call them barriers to entry, that's fine, but certain hurdles, if you will, that I had to do to own that business, right?

The way it was explained to me is that this is something similar, though, admittedly, it's more monetary than anything. In our region, the number of, as Rom had said, dot-com charters has increased. I have no idea, because we don't have the data. I can tell you a lot, and, again, I'm not a charter captain, but I know a few people that have told me that what has happened through the advent of like Fishing Booker, and things like that, is it has caused their pricing to go down considerably to be competitive, because of all these fly-by-night guys that come in here and have -- Not necessarily Freemans, they might have Contenders, or SeaVees, but, you know they can -- Especially, again by us, they can literally go out of their back dock, right, because there's so many -- It's just there.

The push for this was to somewhat professionalize, if you will, the industry, to almost -- I don't want to say that word, but to unify it more so, and to have, and I'll say it again, really a more professional industry than what was previously existing, where, like I said yesterday, you pay twenty-bucks, and you get a permit, and here you go, knock yourself out. If you've, you know, got the money to have a boat, you can do it, which, by us, there's plenty of those.

I still kind of feel two ways about it, because like you, you know, if, one day, I wanted to do this, why should I be prevented, and the way it was explained to me was that I'm not necessarily being prevented, but there are certain hurdles that you're going to have to overcome to make sure that this is a professional industry.

As we were talking about like dolphin wahoo permits and whatnot, you know, perhaps this is an area where we can, as we keep saying that we want to put teeth behind it, we can put some teeth behind something like a dolphin wahoo permit, where, you know, if you're not reporting, you don't just get to have another boat name, or whatever, and get another twenty-dollar permit. You know, there's -- Again, I'm rambling a little bit.

I didn't like the term "limited entry" when this first came out in snapper grouper, because I was like, well, why -- Who are you to tell me that I can't do this, and the way that it was explained to me was it's not necessarily limiting. It is to a point, I guess, financially speaking, but it's not necessarily saying that you can't. There is just going to be some barriers to entry, necessarily, that would help professionalize this, for whatever that's worth.

MR. OWSLEY: I kind of -- I agree with you, David, there, but like what I kind of take exception to is what is the definition of "professionalize", right, and like, on other professional, right, if you're an attorney, you're a doctor, professional engineer, right, and who is defining a professional charter captain, right?

Is there going to be some kind of bar exam, a board exam, and like who can define what is a professional or what isn't a professional, right, and is it because they have a website, or a nice social media marketer, or they're using one of those booking, fishingbooker.com, and like what is the definition of "professional", right, and I think everyone in this room, right, and they think that -- You know, they have pride in what they do, and they're a professional in their own rights, whether it be fulltime charter captain, or part-time, or, you know, professional boat builder, whatever you want to call it, right, but I kind of take --

Like, I don't necessarily -- I do take kind of the exception to the limited entry terminology, like you brought up, but I also take exception to professionalizing the industry, in the "professional" term, because who is defining "professional", right?

AP MEMBER: I -- When the limited entry stuff came out for grouper snapper, I was pretty vocal with some of the council members on their Grouper Snapper AP. I -- To me, after seeing what the permits started going for -- I mean, the barrier to entry to this industry is already extremely high, and I know that who I work for has helped compound that issue, but it's -- The professionalism side of it, I mean, to me, is somebody who that is their only job, is to go out there and provide a service with fishing, but, to increase the barriers financially, I'm not okay with.

Continuing ed, and a big part of our fishery is educating ourselves, customers, and the general public about what the -- What I guess we go out and do, whether it's selling boats, whether it's selling a charter, and whether it's taking the fish home to eat them, but it's limiting that and increasing the price tag. Like I said, I'm as far against this as you can get, and -- But I understand the intention is to help protect the resource, but I don't think this right now is the way to do it.

MR. REYNOLDS: Chip.

MR. BERRY: I think I'm against limited entry, but I just want to pass on something. I have a real estate license in North Carolina. Every year, everybody gets licensed, and that's true in South Carolina too, because I got a reciprocal here, but we're required to do eight hours, four-hour blocks,

anytime in a year, and one of them is mandatory by the state, and that's where it brings you up to snuff on regulation and all that, and then there's a couple of electives to do.

In our case, it might be how to use a descending device, or whatever, but that's a good model. It keeps our industry professional, and it gives you a chance for education, but, if the mandatory for instance, was, okay, one of those four-hour slots -- They're all by Zoom, by the way, and so no money, or, well, you actually pay a little money.

They always get you for the money, but, you know, a model like that might be something to consider for fisheries, because, I mean, the mandatory could be on electronic reporting, how to do it, and why we need the data and all, and, you know, you might say continuing education, in other words, and we call them CEs every year. You know, that just might be something to really help get compliance up and make, you know, who we are more -- You know, we're a professional group of people. Just a comment. Thank you.

MR. REYNOLDS: Jon Reynolds, and, yes, I think that's valuable. It combines what Dan is saying with professionalizing, and so you don't limit entry, but you create a mandatory educational, or professional, you know, requirement, in order to obtain the permit, which will automatically sort of weed out and restrict, while you still can have -- You know, while you still can have capitalism and free enterprise, and so those are very valuable comments.

MR. BERRY: Yes, and one other quick comment. The way the real estate works, it's pretty simple. Everybody understands it, and everybody likes it. We enjoy Zooms, you know, getting to see people, like when we meet. I forgot the comment I was going to make. Oh yeah. If you don't do your eight hours, and, the instructors that do it, they're licensed people. It doesn't have to be all staff members that do this. They're private people who have become licensed from the state to actually do these seminars.

If you don't do your eight hours, then your license goes automatically on a certain date, and I forget the date, but it goes from active to inactive, and you can't practice real estate until you get your CEs done, and it's just a good way of communicating with each other, and so maybe it could be -- North Carolina has got an excellent program for that.

MR. MOSS: One other thing I'll just throw out there. As I'm looking at like these numbers, and again, obviously, we don't have the, you know, the 2022 through 2024 data, and, down by us, you don't even really need a federal permit to go dolphin fishing. I mean, you can catch them within three miles, and there's plenty of guys that go out there and do it.

Again, I'm not advocating necessarily for one way or the other. I'm just sort of providing information, and so, whatever this ends up showing 2020 to 2024, down by us, you can add quite a few, because there's a bunch of people still accessing this fishery, certainly within state waters, and plenty that go out in the federal waters that just aren't federally-permitted, because why bother, when, again, there's no real repercussions if you don't.

MR. REYNOLDS: So it sounds, as a tool of any sort of management of the stock, it's not -- It doesn't make any difference. Anyone else have any other comments on limited entry? Next on the agenda -- We're going to move forward, and, next on the agenda, we are going to have a discussion and an overview by Christina about the Lines of Communication. Okay.

MS. WIEGAND: Soon, as this presentation opens, which is a new initiative that the council is working on, and so, to give you guys the briefest bit of background, the purpose of this is really to meet fishermen in their communities and engage them in conversation.

I'm sure you all have participated in public comment before and know that, often, it's get up, say, you know, three minutes about the specific management action that the council is talking about, and that's sort of the extent of the interaction, but, in talking to, you know, council members, as well as various AP members, we really learned that a lot of the most valuable conversations are actually happening on the side, when you're just able to sort of sit and talk and have a conversation with your council members.

The council wanted to sort of harness that interaction in a bit more of a formalized way, because public input is such a critical part the council management process, and so they've created this new engagement initiative that we're calling Lines of Communication: Conversations with the Council, or just Lines for short, and these will be meetings that are held every year in fishing communities, and so we'll be there in-person. Council members will be there giving presentations, running through activities with you guys, trying to gather information on what is really important for you, your community, and what they should be prioritizing in management, and so there are a couple of goals and objectives.

I'm not going to go over them in huge detail. They're available in your briefing book, but, again, the purpose is really to start to build relationships with stakeholders, by engaging them in those two-way conversations, because, the more council members are able to build relationships and have this open dialogue and mutual learning, the hope is that we'll also be able to increase knowledge of the fishery management process and increase engagement in the council process, and so getting more people to participate and provide information, because, the more information the council has on what's happening in your fisheries and your communities, the better decisions they're going to be able to make.

This also will provide an opportunity for stakeholders to bring their concerns and observations forward to council members, and also to have council members share information with stakeholders on management issues that may be of particular importance in a given community, and so, again, really driving home that two-way discussion aspect of these meetings.

The council intends to use that information first to identify topics that they haven't addressed, but should be on their radar and to set their workload priorities. If you've ever been to or listened to a council meeting, you see the spreadsheet that comes up with a long list of tasks that the council is working on. They can only get through so much at a given meeting, and so they oftentimes have to prioritize what they're going to be working on, and so getting information from stakeholders on where they should be setting different topics on their priority list.

Then, last, but not least, while these are meant to be sort of forward-looking and proactive, inevitably there are going to be discussions about management actions that are already occurring, and so using any information that comes up relative to whatever management action may be ongoing at the time and utilizing that information, as appropriate.

The key thing I want to drive home about this is that it's not public comment. It's not going to be sort of you have a limited amount of time to get up, speak about a specific management action, and sit back down. It is really an opportunity to have discussions with your local council members, as well as council staff, and so we are going -- There's sort of three activities that we will run through at an actual Lines meeting.

We would like to practice one of them with you guys today. It's a sticky wall activity, and so, if you all wouldn't mind getting up and moving over to this corner of the room, Myra, Julia and Nick are going to walk you through a quick activity. For anyone online, I'm sorry. Since this is interactive, it won't really be broadcast over the webinar, but we will return around 11:20, a little later than 11:20 now, because we're a touch off schedule from the presentation, but we will be back on the webinar for the AP members to provide feedback in about twenty or twenty-five minutes.

(Whereupon, a Lines of Communication Activity was undertaken and was not transcribed.)

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Well, thank you, guys, for participating in that brief activity. I think, in the interest of time, what I'm going to do is briefly run through the rest of this presentation, and then, once we wrap that up, have an opportunity for you guys to provide feedback, like Julia mentioned, on the sticky wall activity, as well as this Lines of Communication concept as a whole, because I believe this is the first time this is being presented to the Dolphin Wahoo AP.

Like I said, there are sort of three activities, so to speak, that we will go through at an actual Lines meeting. The first will be that sticky wall activity that you all just did. The second one is what we're calling sort of our topical discussion session, and, this one, we will put meeting attendees into breakout groups, so that it's a smaller group of people. We're hoping maybe ten people per group, depending on the number of attendees we get at a given meeting, and then there will be a specific topic we're looking for you all to discuss.

One of the topics we've been throwing around for this upcoming set of Lines meetings is trip satisfaction, and so understanding from attendees what makes a successful trip, and knowing that not all trips can be the ideal trip, but sort of where are the tradeoffs? What is most important to stakeholders on a given trip, and so those -- There will be some guiding questions, and council members will walk their small groups just through a quick discussion of that topic.

Then the last activity we hope to go through at the meeting is what we're calling sort of our informal session, and, for this, we're going to have areas set up around the room with different topics. The topics we've been talking about are sort of an introduction to fisheries management section, a section that looks at some of the citizen science work that Julia presented to you all, and then another section that talks about released fish, and those topics will change every year. Those are just the ones we've been discussing for the meetings that are going to come up at the end of this year and the beginning of next year.

During that session, attendees will be able to just sort of move around to the different topic areas to discuss whichever of those topics is of interest to them. That session will be about forty-five minutes, with the hope that attendees will be able to go and talk at each of the three sort of stations, so to speak, and so, in addition to, you know, a welcoming presentation and a concluding

presentation, those are the three activities that we'll be having attendees walk through at these meetings.

After the meetings, we plan to send a thank you note to anyone who took the time to attend. The plan is to have these meetings run two hours, and so 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the evening. We'll provide them a bullet-pointed list of some of the things that were learned, and then information on any upcoming council meetings or opportunities for participation.

Then, at the following council meeting, at the very start of the meeting, council members that were at the Lines meetings will take a moment to note their biggest takeaways and what they learned from the most recent round of Lines meetings. The purpose of this is to really set the tone of the council meeting at the outset, with input that was received directly from stakeholders.

Finally, we'll put together a presentation, that has slides or a summary report, that will be provided in the briefing book as sort of a written documentation of what happened at the meetings, and then also any detailed information, and maybe there was a specific topic, and say shadow shark came up a lot when we were in North Carolina. Then, before the hypothetical shadow shark committee, we would talk about the input that was gained from Lines in detail, and so, again, really setting the stage for council meetings with stakeholder input.

We're, obviously, going to need to do quite a bit of outreach to get people to attend these meetings. We're working on putting together a council website. We will also be sending out materials and information through all of the usual council methods, flyers, news releases, feature articles, talking to tackle shops.

Probably a lot of you are subscribed to things like the South Atlantic Bite, our social media pages, but, for these, we also plan to really harness sort of our community contacts, working with people like you, our advisory panel members, as leaders in their community, to come to these meetings and to get members of their communities out to these meetings. We'll work with any and all industry groups willing to share information as well as different media outlets as well.

We have done practice runs with the Mackerel Cobia, Snapper Grouper, and now a very abbreviated one with you all, and so we'll be working on incorporating all of the feedback we get from you into the structure of the meetings. We're already working on locations and outreach materials for our 2025 and 2026 meetings.

We will finalize the plan, and then we will be conducting the first round of Lines of Communication in Georgia in November, and North Carolina in February, and then, next year, we'll be doing South Carolina and Georgia, and so, in the interest of time, because I want to give you guys time to provide us feedback, that was a very, very, very quick overview of what this is.

If you have any questions, I'm happy to answer, but we would really love feedback from you, first on sort of that sticky wall activity, as well as more generally about this Lines of Communication effort.

MR. OWSLEY: Dan Owsley, and I don't have any comment on the sticky wall, but, if I understand it correctly, this is supposed to be like a brick-and-mortar meeting type deal, and, from what I have

seen when I was in Georgia, when they were doing -- It was some cobia stuff and snapper grouper, and it's the same people, coming to the same meetings, saying the same things.

Unless there is a way to get meeting participation from different people -- I don't want to sound pessimistic, but this is great in theory, but, to put towards application, with making people -- Like, look, and I'll be honest. One thing COVID taught me was tele-meetings, that we can use technology, because I was traveling all over the place, going to meetings, brick-and-mortar meetings, and I love tele-meetings now, right?

I think a lot of my colleagues, and various people in industry, do not like going to brick-and-mortar meetings, and then when -- Like I was saying in Georgia, it was the same, people saying the same things, and people I talked to at the dock, all of the people that didn't go to these meetings, they were very opinionated, right, and, like we just mentioned over here, some of the Facebook and social media groups, and those people are super, super opinionated.

They have -- A lot of them have good ideas. A lot of them are just venting and whatever, right, but, the Lines of Communication -- Like what I would tell them is like, hey, you know, you have to participate in these meetings, and this is where you, and like you've got to make your voice heard.

I just -- Not to be pessimistic, but I just don't think that you're going to get the effort and the participation in brick-and-mortar meetings, like you're going to hope for, unless they're like meetings every thirty minutes apart. You can't expect someone to travel, you know -- I mean, people don't want to drive thirty minutes to go do something now, and, you know, they're not going to drive an hour to go participate in these meetings.

MS. WIEGAND: Well, and so I will say I don't disagree with you. We have had challenges getting people to attend both in-person meetings, and virtual meetings as well, and I think the council is aware that some of that has to do with, you know, frustrations, a lack of trust, and not, you know, necessarily knowing what the best avenue is to provide information, and so one of the goals of this is sort of start building relationships, with the hope that we can build momentum long-term over time to get people to participate, and not just in these, but in the broader process, but I agree it's going to be a challenge, and I guess I would sort of throw it back to the advisory panel members.

You guys are a group of people who are actively choosing to be involved in the process, and so do you think there is something that we can do, as council members and council staff, to illustrate that this is a bit of a different type of meeting than we usually hold and to encourage a different set of people to come out and participate in these?

One of the things we're doing is, again, hoping to hold these in communities that the council doesn't always reach, to hopefully get around some of that. I agree, and no one wants to drive thirty minutes, and I don't want to cross a bridge, when I'm in Charleston, to go somewhere, and so trying to hold these in convenient locations, but what can we do to encourage people to attend, especially those that have otherwise been disinclined to attend council meetings, be they virtual or in-person?

MR. REYNOLDS: David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. David Moss. You've heard me say this once or twice, but a couple of the problems, as Dan was saying, is nobody is going to want to go unless there's a major issue, and I'm sure, for the vast majority of us, even here that are involved, one of the reasons that we got involved was because we saw issues in a given fishery, and so, for your average everyday person, that goes out, you know, maybe once a month, or something like that, and they don't know that there's an issue, it's going to be tough to engage them.

One of the things that I've -- A question that I've asked, that I don't necessarily have the answer to, is how do you engage the unengaged, right? My advice, that I'll say again on the record, I guess, is get the popular people in that locale involved, whether it's, you know, a famous captain from that area, like Ray, you know, Rosher or something from Miami, or a YouTube personality, or whatever the case may be, to help you guys publicize that. I realize I just probably stated my age, when I said "a YouTube person", but, you know, a social media personality, a TV person, whatever the case may be, to help publicize whatever it is that's going on, to help you guys be the voice, and certainly help us be the voice with that.

MR. REYNOLDS: Rom and then Paul.

MR. WHITAKER: I'll just reiterate what Dan and David said, that I've been going to fishery meetings a long time, and, you want to put this room full of standing room only, then I go back and tell the fishermen in North Carolina that they're getting ready to cut the dolphin fishery completely off, but they're going to have a meeting in Manteo on August 5, and we'll have to have the law enforcement there, and it will be standing room only, and a council member will be scared to come.

The only other way is create an incentive. I mean, I don't know if you want to give away a TV, or have a movie star come, but that would get some people there. That might get the people that are interested there, but it's really hard to get people to participate, and, I mean, I've talked to them, and I'm blue in the face, and just trying to get my local charter captains to join NCWU, which is an organization that tries to help fight to keep us fishing, but that's all.

MR. PANCAKE: I mean, to piggyback on what Rom said, talk to Mike at Haddrell's, and talk to the Palmetto State Army, and get tackle to give away. People like free stuff. I really like free stuff. Feed them, give them something to drink, make it a fun atmosphere. I mean, there's a reason that people go to captain's meetings for tournaments. It's because it's fun. There's food, and they get to see people that they don't normally see on a day-to-day basis, but, I mean, it's -- I'm sure the council can get something from some tackle company donated, that -- Or buy at a discount, to make it worth somebody's while.

Adding the personality to it, you know, say Stanczyk came to something. There's going to be some kid that -- Yes, and, I mean, somebody who has got a name in the industry, that somebody's kid really wants to go see, that, okay, maybe they've never been to a fisheries meeting before, but their kid watches them on YouTube, and they want to go meet them. Then, all right, maybe that gets one person involved that could make a difference somehow.

MR. REYNOLDS: I agree, and these are probably the best ideas. I will say that, with the stakeholder meetings up and down the coast for dolphin, and it was similar to this, this is going to

be the test to see the trust. This MSE process, and those meetings, there was a lot of people at them. However, this dolphin regulatory thing goes, this is going to be the -- This is going to be it.

It's either going to be like, okay, that worked, or it's going to get explosive, and especially in dolphin. Dolphin is not like other things, and like I'm talking about this Mahi Maniacs thing. I mean, we're talking about -- Listen, and it's nuts. I mean, people are -- There is a lot of people that love dolphin, and want to catch dolphin. I mean, it is explosive.

A lot of people got engaged in this. You know, I mean, we got, you know, 6,000 signatures on a document, and every single, you know, big boat manufacturer, and other organization, and everyone was in on this, you know, and there was a lot of engagement. If this doesn't go well, you know, then people are going to throw their hands up at stuff like this, and so that's going to be a big test.

MS. WIEGAND: Just one last question. Does anyone have any thoughts on the sticky wall activity specifically, before I turn it back over to, I guess, Jon and John?

MR. REYNOLDS: I like the idea that people are spitballing. It's a good idea.

MR. OWSLEY: I think the same thing that Jon said. It's good for people to talk like off the record, and I think, to kind of echo what Jon was just saying about, you know, if it gets results, like everything, and like, if you want people engaged, and giving ideas, they want to be heard, and they want to be thought of participating and having good ideas, and so, as long as it's going to be done, and there is a plan to use it, and like the council member just isn't there to say like, hey, I'm just checking a box, right? As long as it is specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely, right? They need to be used properly.

MR. REYNOLDS: All right. Thank you, Christina. That was good. Okay, and so I think now we are on Other Business. There's definitely a couple of things some guys wanted to talk about in Other Business, and we can have a quick discussion on a couple of these.

I know wahoo, a brief discussion possibly, and we -- At our last meeting, we talked about wahoo and a twenty-four-inch size limit. That was definitely a topic for discussion that sounded like it wanted to continue a little bit, and maybe some more recommendations on that, and then, also, there was another issue that it's been brought up recently, that I see, and that is spearing wahoo, and maybe some sort of idea of further regulation, because of that, and it's very similar to the black grouper thing, with the spearfish fishery accelerating, with the larger, spawning-grade fish that weren't always landed to the same degrees on rod-and-reel.

They're just being hit a lot harder, and so it's definitely a stock issue that's coming about a little bit more, and so I'm going to open up. We'll start with that, with wahoo, and, anyone else that has any other business discussion, feel free to say something. We are limited on time, but --

AP MEMBER: Has the council proposed the minimum limit on wahoo yet? I mean, I know we discussed that until we were all kind of blue in the face. I mean, it was in full agreement in here, if memory serves.

MR. HADLEY: So it was reported to the council. It's a standing recommendation of the AP. There just hasn't been an avenue, an amendment to the fishery management plan, that would make that happen, but, when the council takes up an amendment, that would be on the docket. The AP has listed these items to take up, and that would be kind of right up there at the top, because it's captured in the fishery performance report, that that was a unanimous recommendation.

MR. REYNOLDS: Richard.

MR. HARRIS: You alluded to the spearfishing of the wahoo, and I know that's more in Florida than it is up our way, but it is coming our way, because we're seeing more boats come up. There's three boats now that are advertising taking kayaks out for spearfishing dolphin and wahoo, whatever they can get, and even marlin, but what can the council recommend, because you're looking at -- I hear several friends in Florida that are fishing, and, all of a sudden, the spearfishermen come where they're fishing at, and they can't fish there anymore, because, for some reason, they have the right of way.

They're down there spearing, you know, these big spawning females, and so it's kind of like the big deal with the giant yellowfins over in Ascension Island. They're, you know, paying a lot of money to go get their lifetime fish, or whatever it is they call it, or their list fish. What can the council even do about that? What can be recommended to help get ahead of it? That's what I want to say, is get ahead of these females that are migrating right there. That's where they hang out. You know, they're spawning there, and I'm curious if there was any recommendations, or anybody had any ideas on it. Thanks.

MR. REYNOLDS: Well, I know, in other fisheries, it's pole only, for a lot of things that they've went to, and our spearfishing industry has accelerated, to really high degrees, with the advancements of spears, and so it's a lot easier, especially on a big -- You know, like a big dive boat, that has tons of spearfishermen on it now.

You know, that, if it's not pole only, and there's like a large group, with like accelerated gear, and so we could recommend that, you know, pole only, and a twenty-four-inch size limit, if anyone wants to comment on that, and that's my take on that, from what I've seen be successful in other places.

MR. WHITAKER: Well, clarify the pole only. I'm not a -- I keep up with spearfishing a little bit, but I'm getting too old to do it. Tell me, and what do you mean by pole fishing?

MR. REYNOLDS: Well, every species, you know, has different gear restrictions, and so there's no gear restriction right now. Pole spear. Instead of -- You know, instead of like some of the guns and the bands. Hawaiian sling. Correct.

MR. OWSLEY: Dan Owsley. As a spearfisherman, mainly bottom-dweller spearfisherman, I have seen, with social media, some of the wahoo getting speared. I -- Before I like say that, hey, we need to change gear types, I would like to see -- Is that making a difference, right? If somebody is diving, pre-diving, you know, breath holding, with flashers, trying to shoot wahoo, then I would venture to say it's not that many, but maybe I'm wrong, right, because I don't know, but is that really impacting? I don't know, but I will say, you know, like we did talk about the twenty-four-

inch minimum size limit, and this kind of echoes what I've said about other things, with soliciting feedback from these Lines of Communication meetings and this and that.

If we're making recommendations for twenty-four-inch fish, right, to the council, and they've done nothing to it, right, I mean, what are we -- You know, does it make sense to recommend, you know, more things that they're just going to take inaction on?

MR. REYNOLDS: Okay, and so everyone is pretty much in agreement though on the twenty-four-inch size limit, and is that correct? Can we get a show of hands? Okay, and we would like a twenty-four-inch size limit implemented on wahoo, and, if that's -- It sounds like that's unanimous.

The next order of business, that we have on Other Business, is about the commercial trip limit. It sounds like what's going on is dolphin is a very accessible fish, and so it's being hit by both sectors at a much higher rate now, and so it sounds like what we have is we have recreational fishermen with much easier access, a lot more boats, and we're talking about restricting them further.

Meanwhile, we have an unsustainable fishery, with a declining stock. This is all in the data, and there's no denying that, and so if we -- If the commercial side isn't anywhere near their cap, and we have more entrants, with an open access permit, with no trip limit at all, and this is just continuing, and we have more entrance from recreational people, and we're not restricting any more limits on them, and it's just a revolving door.

We will get nowhere, and so, if we initially restrict the recreational, or the charter side, and there's still all these other fish with no restriction, then we will not gain any benefits to our fishery at all. These fish, obviously, are not swimming offshore of the coast with commercial lettering written on them, or recreational lettering written on them, and charter fish, and so they're just everyone's fish, and, you know, unfortunately, even though an ACL may allocate different things, it's definitely a problem, and so that was the next order of business under Other Business, if anyone wants to comment on that. David.

MR. MOSS: So a question that I don't know has, again -- I'm doing it again, a question that I don't know has an answer, but what difference is a trip limit going to make? If I'm looking at like the 2024 preliminary landings for commercial, for dolphin, and it was at 4 percent of the ACL?

MR. REYNOLDS: The answer to that is it makes a very big difference on every other angler participant, every single charter that's out there that has a load of people on their boat, and it makes a big difference for the sustainability in that moment, the fish that are coming by, and you can wipe out an entire ecosystem of fish that's coming by, and migrating by, in that moment.

It's affecting -- Not only would my limit affect another recreational person's experience on the water, and for them to even want to come back out there and utilize the fishery -- If my limit is too large, and I am going down this weed line, and I haven't hit my limit yet, and he's behind me, and he's behind me, and he's behind me, and I keep going, and I'm hitting my limit, there's only so many fish out there at once, and so I -- With my limit even being larger, which is not unrestricted, keep in mind, it's going to affect every other participant in that fishery, and their involvement, and their experience. Not only that, it's going to directly affect the stock, that could even be spawning right outside there, and so it's two different answers to that.

MR. MOSS: So I understand, in the macro, what a trip limit can do. I get that. My question is, if I'm looking at it, and we're talking about commercial, I assume, right, for trip limits, or are we talking about both?

MR. REYNOLDS: I think they both go hand-in-hand. If we're going to see any sort of sustainable dolphin fishery, then they would -- They would both -- If we're going to restrict a recreational and a charter fleet, to gain more fish regionally, but then there's no restriction commercially, then all -- Then those fish are just going to be caught anyways, and we're not going to gain anything, because we're not even getting near our limit. We're not getting anywhere near the ACL, and so there's that many more fish that can be killed, regardless. That's if the stock was high, but the stock isn't high.

MR. MOSS: So my question, I think, is -- So there's already effectively a trip limit on recreational, right, and it's a vessel limit. That's essentially your trip limit. There's not one right now on commercial, I don't believe. There's just the total ACL, correct, and so my question is, and, again, this is -- I'm looking at 2024, from January to December, for dolphin.

They caught 72,000 of the 1.7 million total pounds that were available to the commercial stock, right, and I have -- I don't know the answer to this one, and I'm sure somebody does, like what the average trip catch of dolphin are for commercial. How much more can it be knocked down when they've only caught 4 percent of their total ACL?

AP MEMBER: I think one way to explain that is --

MR. MOSS: Sorry, and I'm not -- I'm not trying to say this in defense of commercial and all this stuff. It's a genuine question. Like I have no idea where it can go.

MR. REYNOLDS: I've David, Jay, and then Glenn.

MR. KAVANAGH: The commercial side has never caught their -- Maybe one year, I think, it was shut down, and it's deceptive, because there's like a four to six-week window where they target the gaffer-size fish, and so, when those fish go away, you know, they quit fishing for them, and this kind of puts the PLL holders, the pelagic longline holders, the -- I will call them the real longliners, at a disadvantage, because they're under gear restriction.

They have reporting requirements. It's very costly for them to go fishing, whereas a council boat, that buys a twenty-five-dollar open-access permit, can fish any gear, no trip reporting that the PLL guys have, and it's -- If we would just make the dolphin longliners comply with the same regulations as the PLL longliners, I think that would solve the problem, in and of itself, and I've seen discussion. I've seen it written that there -- There have been discussions to make them comply to the same gear restrictions reporting requirements as the pelagic longliners.

MR. REYNOLDS: Yes, and that was an amendment that's been put on hold for quite some time. Glenn, I think you're next.

MR. HOPKINS: So I wasn't -- I didn't have my mic working yesterday, but that was going to be one of my questions, was what's the holdup with the council boat discussion, as far as making them comply with the PLL rules, and, as far as trip limits are concerned for commercial, like I said,

we're working with a small piece of the pie here. I mean, a very -- It's less than 10 percent of the pie, and we're -- You know, it's like you all said, and it's a business. If we can make more money tuna fishing, we tuna fish, and it's a short window of opportunity to make any money mahi fishing.

Trip limits could make or break us in a certain situation, you know, depending on what the limit was. If you're talking about making big limits, then fine, but a small trip limit, and, you know, if we make a trip, and then get on a body of fish, like you were saying, and that body of fish is working its way out of here, and that could make or break whether we can, you know, make a dollar or not, and so, to be honest, in my opinion, at this point, commercial fishing is nearly irrelevant.

We're limited. We report not only the weight of fish, but the amount of fish that is caught on the trip on the logbooks. Anyway, I think we're just barking up the wrong tree on that, but I would like to know what's going on with the council boat thing.

MR. HADLEY: To question about the pelagic longline specific amendment, that was -- So there was -- The council had developed that in Amendment 10, and they pulled it out of the amendment to be its own particular specific, you know, subject-matter-related amendment, and then they were notified by the National Marine Fisheries Service that there was going to be an updated biological opinion on the fishery related to protected species.

The council put it on hold, because they didn't want to change the regulations, and then what comes out of the biological opinion, which is unknown, and have to go back and change the regulations again to reflect that. I guess the sticking point, and why it's still sort of in purgatory, is that biological opinion -- It was being -- It was worked on, and then it has not been issued, and so that's why that amendment is still on hold.

I know it has been several years, but the -- You know, the council is kind of going off the feedback that they're getting from the agency, that, you know, there may be other specific regulations that need to be implemented in the longline fishery, and so the council is trying to address it all in one fell swoop, if that makes sense, you know, knowing that -- Well, the guidance at the time was that they had this biological opinion forthcoming, but it has not been issued.

MR. REYNOLDS: Thank you, John.

MR. HOPKINS: Was that coming through the Permit Office?

MR. HADLEY: It's coming from the Southeast Regional Office. Got it, but, no, it was from the Southeast Regional Office.

MR. HOPKINS: All right. Well, thank you.

MR. REYNOLDS: If I may just -- Jon Reynolds. If I may just create another example here, okay, and so, when I was young, and we were all fishing at the Islamorada Hump, there was a very large stock of amberjacks there. There would be, I don't know, eight or ten commercial bandit boats there, and they would be catching about 4,000 pounds each.

There was still plenty of stock for everyone else. There was a lot of sharks too, and there was still plenty of stock for everyone else fishing there. There was probably a good dozen charter boats fishing there as well. Everyone was catching plenty of amberjacks. We were catching them over a hundred pounds. The stock was high. There was absolutely no reason to believe, in that moment, that there needed to be any other restrictions.

You fast-forward to now, and, if there's even one bandit boat there, and now the restrictions are much tighter, and there's ten other charter boats there, you know, and it affects, because the stock is just not high enough, and so it's a very similar -- You know, it's a very similar case with dolphin now. I mean, you know, years ago, there was no recreational limit on dolphin, and no size limit, and, you know, I worked on boats that killed 200 dolphin, and we're not there anymore.

You know, I mean, all these limits, these are just normal management decisions, and normal limits. It's surprising, and very disappointing, that, with dolphin, all these are being avoided, to every single degree. It's baffling, mind boggling, but, yes, that's just another example of a fishery that needed to be addressed, and it was, and now we're rebuilding amberjack stocks.

MR. OWSLEY: Dan Owsley, and so, to that point, Jon, right, we're talking about commercial. I hear what Glenn is saying, and especially what David is saying, with the ACL only getting 10 percent, but they're not even getting close, and so like if -- Does ACL need to be changed, right, and, you know, we've talked about data. What is the stock at? Does it need to go down?

To some of the other things, with like you mentioned size, and, you know, bag limits, and we talked about vessel limits. I mean, instead of just like saying, hey, commercial is not even getting nowhere near what their 10 percent is, and, you know, I understand what everyone is saying, but do we need to look at the other side of it as well? We talked about it yesterday, with size limits, vessel limits, and bag limits, and so, if we're all in agreeance that the dolphin isn't what it used to be and whatnot, maybe we should look at some of those other ones, too.

MR. REYNOLDS: Chip.

MR. BERRY: I believe it's Amendment 3 we're working on, right, but, the wahoo thing, just before we get off all that, and the wahoo is not a part of that Amendment 3 that we were talking about earlier, and it's not part of that, and I want to have one other quick clarification, and so the council is considering now, at least for dolphin, for the private sector, right, and it was a range, and it went as low as twelve, and as high as something else, but that's in the amendment they're looking at now, right? I was just trying to see where --

MR. HADLEY: Yes, and, with Reg Amendment 3, for the vessel limits, I believe the range is twelve to fifty-four fish per vessel.

MR. REYNOLDS: Bob, did you have a comment?

MR. FREVERT: (Mr. Frevert's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. HADLEY: Bob, we're having a hard time hearing you on our end. It's coming through very garbled on this side.

MR. FREVERT: (Mr. Frevert's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. HADLEY: It's still a bad connection, unfortunately. I'm going to try to mute you, and then unmute you again, and we'll see if it's a little bit better. All right. Are you still there?

MR. FREVERT: (Mr. Frevert's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. HADLEY: Shoot. It's still -- Unfortunately, it's not coming in well.

MR. FREVERT: (Part of Mr. Frevert's comment is not audible on the recording.) Let me try one more thing. Is that any better?

MR. HADLEY: There we go. Now we can hear you.

MR. FREVERT: Okay. Well, the third time is the charm. So I've been listening to what everybody has been saying, and, basically, I think what I just heard on the last couple of comments is the commercial guys aren't really hurting us. They're not getting very much of their ACL. The real problem is the recreational guys and the charter fishermen. You know, we're 90 percent of the problem, and so I looked at -- I looked at what everybody was saying, and I put together a little presentation. Can you pull that up, John?

MR. HADLEY: Bob, I didn't get it. Did you email it to me?

MR. FREVERT: I emailed it to you last night. I'm trying to send it to you again.

MR. HADLEY: Bob, I'm sorry. I didn't get it. I'm looking at my email now. I sent you an email earlier this morning. Do you think maybe you could reply to that one and reattach it? I'm sorry. It didn't come to my end.

MR. FREVERT: Okay. I sent it to you last night, and I just re-sent it to you.

MR. HADLEY: There we go. It just re-sent it. I'll work on bringing it up, if you want to keep going.

MR. FREVERT: Okay, and so I've been listening to everybody, and I kind of -- I wanted to put together my thoughts in a summary of what I think we should present to the council to try and get off of dead center. Let's see. If you haven't pulled it up, it's like -- One moment.

MR. HADLEY: Sorry, Bob. I've got to transfer it from my computer to the laptop in the room.

MR. FREVERT: Okay. Well, I'll go ahead and start, and then hopefully you'll pull it up in time, and so I'll read the first slide to you. Basically, it says the data shows, and I think most people agree, that dolphin fishing is on the decline. Similar to Rich DeLizza, I've been on this AP for over twelve years, and we've made one paltry change from a sixty fish to a fifty-four-fish-per-vessel limit, which really hasn't made any change, and I think it's time for the AP to step up and recommend some changes.

One of the things we've heard is that the Caribbean Fisheries Management Council is way ahead of us. They've already initiated a twenty-four-inch fork limit, a five-fish bag limit, and a fifteen-fish vessel limit for dolphin off of Puerto Rico. Likewise, they have a ten-fish bag limit and a thirty-two-fish vessel limit for St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John, and so they're helping, and we're not, and so I have a proposal. I would like to make a motion to support Amendment 3 and change it as follows, and I'm going to have to have you pull this up.

MR. HADLEY: Bob, I have it pulled up as I would like to propose a motion to --

MR. FREVERT: Right. Okay. Thank you very much. What I'm saying is I've kind of listened to what everybody was saying, and I think this is a fair assessment, where everybody gets hurt a little, but not a lot, and I did take into account the fact that charter vessels are -- It's their lifetime, and, you know, it's their life. You know, that's their business.

I would like to propose that we take Draft Action 1, Alternative 4, which is a twenty-inch fork limit, from Florida through Maine, and, to support Rom's condition of going to jail, you allow one fish greater than nineteen inches, in case somebody mismeasured, or it shrank in the fish box, or whatever, for the recreational fishermen. Then the charter fishermen would get three fish greater than nineteen inches, which is the 5 percent you were asking for, Rom.

Then, next, I would like to -- For Draft Action 2, I would like to modify the daily recreational bag limit to five fish for private vessels. That matches the Florida state reg, which just makes it easier for everybody, and make it six dolphin per person onboard charter vessels. No change for headboats, and, as far as Draft Actions 3 and 4, the vessel limit would be thirty fish for private vessels, and thirty-six fish for charter vessels, but, again, you allow the captain and crew on charter vessels to retain their daily bag limits, and that gives you a total of forty-eight.

Nobody I know in Florida is getting anywhere near thirty fish, but I know you guys up in North Carolina are, and so that's kind of what -- I've been listening to what everybody has been saying for the last day-and-a-half, and I think this is kind of a compromise for everybody. That's all I had.

MR. REYNOLDS: Thank you, Bob. This is well thought out. I could -- Looking at this, with all our discussions, I could definitely get behind Draft Action 3 and 4. That sounds reasonable, and, for Draft Action 1, maybe a slight modification, but I could get behind that. Anyone else have any comments on this? We have --

AP MEMBER: On Draft Action 1, it would seem like eighteen inches would be the right number for the -- Let's call it the accidental fish, rather than nineteen inches, and I see there's some question-marks there, and I would lean towards eighteen.

MR. FREVERT: Can you hear me? I spoke with a couple of people last night, and I chose nineteen inches. Another guy said eighteen, and another guy said go all the way down to fifteen, but -- The real thing there is like -- I mean, I've had a charter where -- Not a charter, but I've had a fishing adventure with my cousin from Illinois, and we caught one dolphin that was nineteen-and-a-half, and it killed him that he didn't get to have a dolphin for dinner, right, but I'm not taking a nineteen-and-a-half-inch fish in, but, you know, he would have been happy with that one fish, and maybe eighteen is the right number. You could make it eighteen for the charter vessels, also. Again, the key there is to -- Basically, if you're bailing them, and you miss one, and I've seen guys that they

throw it in the box, and forget to measure it, and they got a short at the end of the day also, and so that's just going to give you a little bit of leeway on that.

MR. REYNOLDS: Okay, and I see where you're coming from, Bob, and so is there any support, or, the way I would modify Draft Action 1, that he has up here is just fish below twenty inches. Instead of a slot, and this would have to work in some sort of slot, and it would be a little more complex. If someone catches a fifteen-inch fish, they can just throw them back, but, if you catch like a twenty-inch fish, that you're trying to measure, and he's not quite there, you're not going to get a ticket, and so that's my thought process on that, and so there would be maybe a three-inch --

I mean, a three fish, you know, that could be under twenty, so that there's no slot, so this is straightforward, and it's a size limit all the way up, but then, you know, your allotment of -- So that's the way I would modify that. I don't know if there's any support for that.

Then, Draft Action 3 and 4, if we want to call -- So I think what he would like to do is propose a motion. Does that sound like a motion that would be acceptable to you as the one that you want to propose under Draft Action 1 at all, Bob, or do you want to keep it the way it is?

MR. FREVERT: I'm not an attorney, and this is my thoughts, you know, but certainly it could be tweaked. I like the fish below twenty, so that -- I mean, what I was really thinking is it gets to a point where a fish isn't big enough, right, and so you don't really want to keep a twelve-inch fish, because you're not going to get any meat off of it, but, on the other hand, maybe you want to keep a twelve-inch fish, because it's the only one you got that day.

MR. REYNOLDS: Okay, and so John took it upon himself here to modify that first one, and we're going to put it to a vote, if you're proposing a motion.

MR. FREVERT: This is a motion, yes, and we need a second.

MR. HADLEY: So we need a -- Before we do a vote, we need a second, to see if any of the other AP members want to second.

MR. WHITAKER: Okay, and we're talking about Action 1. You're talking about, with the charter boat, allowing three fish. I'm kind of like Jon, you know, and I don't want to set a precedent. You know, maybe eighteen inches, three fish at eighteen to twenty inches, just in case we miscount, or they get thrown in there. I would go along with that, and I know Richard brought up a good point though.

I think it was him that said, well, we're going to all of a sudden tell everybody they can keep -- But he does specify in there that recreational would be one fish, and charter boat would be three fish. Am I understanding that right? I would -- I would accept that, if that's what we're trying to do.

MR. FREVERT: Thank you.

MR. REYNOLDS: Bob, we're just trying to get specifics. If we're going to make a motion, then it has to be -- It's your motion, and it would have to be specific on to what exactly we're motioning. Does that sound -- Does this look like something that you're going to motion now?

MR. FREVERT: Absolutely. Yes, sir. I'm good with that. Really, I mean, this is

MR. REYNOLDS: A show of hands to support the Draft Action 1 motion. A show of hands that support the size limit motion. Is there anyone not in favor?

AP MEMBER: I just have a quick question. Would that be three fish greater than eighteen inches per person or per vessel? Per vessel? Okay.

MR. HADLEY: So I just want to clarify, so I'm following this, and so it ends up on the record correctly. The motion was just regarding the size limit, and that passed unanimously. Is that everyone's understanding, because it's a little -- I'll tell you what. I'm going to transfer this over to its own document, just to make it clear what the motion was focused on, because there was the other information on there regarding vessel limits, and I don't want to -- You know, I want to make sure that this is a clean motion that makes it into the report.

Basically, what the AP was voting on was a motion that would essentially allow -- It would extend the twenty-inch minimum fork length size limit through the east coast. It would allow sort of a one fish allowance for private vessels of one fish that could be eighteen -- That needed to be eighteen inches and higher. On charter vessels, you could have three fish that could be eighteen inches and higher, and so it's almost like an allowance for that twenty-inch size limit.

I just want to make it clear, just because -- You know, so it ends up on the record, and, again, in the report, and I'm not misrepresenting the AP's statement, and so that's what we just voted on, the size limit portion of that, and is that everyone's understanding? Okay.

MR. REYNOLDS: Okay, and we're going to move on to the next motion then, what Bob has.

AP MEMBER: Do you need to put in there about the vessel or no?

AP MEMBER: So you can take that as meaning only three greater than eighteen-inch fork length, and so, yes, you need to be more specific. That could be read that way, that it would limit you to only catch three dolphin over eighteen inches.

MR. HADLEY: So I just want to -- So I'm trying to wordsmith this correctly, but the idea here is not to -- My understanding, based on the conversation, is that you're not trying to create a slot limit of an eighteen to twenty-inch fish. You want a one fish can be under twenty inches, but no smaller than eighteen inches. Is that -- Okay, because you're not advocating for a slot limit.

AP MEMBER: No, certainly not.

MR. WHITAKER: I think we're doing that not only for mistakes that might happen, but also you all, yesterday, were talking about the handling of the fish to measure, that might do us great with mortality stuff.

MR. PANCAKE: It needs to have verbiage that includes that in the aggregate of the either vessel limit or per person limit, so that it doesn't get basically snipped out of what the motion is, because, if they look at something, and this amendment gets put on one bill that passes, and the other one

doesn't, and that's all we get, there's going to be a whole hell of a lot of packed rooms and town halls over dolphin fishing, because we didn't have the words right.

MR. MOSS: You're exactly right, Paul. I wonder if, at the end, you could just add on "as part of the vessel aggregate".

MR. REYNOLDS: All right, and we have to wrap this up really quick, you guys, and so I'm going to move on, as quickly as we can, here to the next motion, and so this would modify the recreational -- Hold on, and let me let John paste. Okay, and this would modify the daily recreational bag limit to five per vessel, and six on charter vessels, no change for headboats. However -- Okay. I see he's got private vessels. Okay, so these are two totally different -- The choice of either or. Okay, and so is there any support for Draft Action 2? Does anyone want to second the Draft Action 2? Okay. It doesn't look like there's support. Okay, and Richard seconds that.

We are going to take it to a vote, and so the Draft Action 2 that Bob -- It got seconded, and now we would like to show have a vote for a show of hands for any other support of Draft Action 2. Those in favor? Those opposed?

Okay, and the next motion is Draft Action 3 and 4, vessel limit of thirty fish for private vessels, thirty-six for charter vessels, and captain and crew may retain recreational bag limits onboard charters, which would make it a total of forty-eight fish if -- You know, with a six-person max, is this motion. So can I have a second on this? We can have a discussion on this motion.

MR. WHITAKER: Just so I'm clear on this, this is six fish less than I'm allowed now, fifty-four, but, just so I'm perfectly clear on it, if I have three people on my boat, and I've got a captain and mate, and that's five, that means I can catch thirty dolphins. If I have six -- Or four people on the boat, I can catch thirty-six dolphins. If I've got six people on the boat, I can catch forty-eight dolphins.

MR. REYNOLDS: I mean, not customers. You would still retain a captain and crew limit, and, right now, without a change in bag limit, your limit is actually still ten per person, fifty-four max, and so, technically, if you had four people onboard, you could still keep forty-eight fish, because you would have a vessel limit of forty-eight, but a bag limit of ten per, and so, technically, with four people, with no change in bag limit, and only vessel limit, you could still retain forty-eight fish, with four people onboard, on a charter.

MR. WHITAKER: Wow. That's even better. Yes, and, well, absolutely. I just assume now, you know, when we have fifty-four fish, I just kind of assume the limit is nine a person, but, anyway, yes, I could go for that. I think I'm understanding it correctly now.

MR. REYNOLDS: If everyone is clear, those in favor, please raise their hand. Any opposed? All right, guys, and I think we are wrapping it up. Thank you so much for your time and everyone coming. Thank you, staff. Thank you, everyone, for your participation. One more thing from John.

MR. HADLEY: So one more thing, before we wrap up here. I do want to remind everyone that some of you are up for reappointment, and so certainly we hope that to have you back. I believe you all should have gotten an email to that effect, and so I just wanted to encourage everyone to

get their applications in for reappointment. The council will be reviewing those at the June meeting that's coming up, and so I believe there's five or so, and you should have received an email, but, if not, let me know, and thank you very much.

AP MEMBER: When does this take effect that we voted on?

MR. HADLEY: That's an open-ended question, but the council will be reviewing this in June.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on April 23, 2025.)

- - -

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
June 23, 2025

DW AP
Tue 4/22

Dolphin Wahoo Advisory Panel

First	Last	Suffix	Position	Seat
✓ Jon	Reynolds		Chair	Charter/Commercial
✓ Rom	Whittaker	III	Vice Chair	Charter
Brian	Bacon			Charter
Brice	Barr			Recreational/Charter
✓ James "Chi"	Berry			Recreational
✓ Richard	DeLizza			Recreational
web Robert	Frevert			Recreational
✓ Richard	Harris			Charter
Earl	Harris	Jr.		Recreational/Charter
web Glen	Hopkins			Commercial
✓ Jay	Kavanagh			Charter
Randall	Morgan			Commercial
✓ David	Moss			Recreational
John	Nappo			Recreational
✓ Daniel	Owsley			Recreational
✓ Paul	Pancake			Recreational
✓ Bill	Richardson			Charter
✓ Tim	Scalise			Charter

Cassidy Peterson

DW AP
Tue 4/22

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Tue 4/22

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Revised January 1, 2025

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DW AP
Wed 4/23

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DW AP
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4/23

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Report Generated:

04/23/2025 01:20 PM EDT

Webinar ID

435-251-979

Actual Start Date/Time

04/22/2025 11:43 AM EDT

Staff Details

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Yes

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Attendee Details

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Sydney

Bianchi

Alan

Brouwer

Myra

Davis

Conor

Degan

Jacqui

Dukes

Amy

Foor

Brandon

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Bob

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Marhefka

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Frank

April 2025 Dolphin Wahoo

Attendee Report: AP Meeting

Report Generated:

04/23/2025 01:18 PM EDT

Webinar ID

435-251-979

Actual Start Date/Time

04/22/2025 11:43 AM EDT

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Attendee Details

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