

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE FINANCE COMMITTEE

**Savannah Hilton DeSoto
Savannah, Georgia**

March 6, 2014

SUMMARY MINUTES

Executive Finance Committee:

Ben Hartig, Chair
David Cupka
Charlie Phillips

Dr. Michelle Duval, Vice-Chair
Jessica McCawley

Council Members:

Jack Cox
Dr. Roy Crabtree
Doug Haymans
Anna Beckwith
Dr. Wilson Laney

Mel Bell
Lt. Morgan Fowler
John Jolley
Chris Conklin
Zack Bowen

Council Staff:

Bob Mahood
Mike Collins
Dr. Kari MacLauchlin
Kim Iverson
Julie O'Dell
Anna Martin
Myra Brouwer

Gregg Waugh
John Carmichael
Amber Von Harten
Dr. Mike Errigo
Roger Pugliese
Dr. Brian Chevront

Observers/Participants:

Monica Smit-Brunello
Dr. Bonnie Ponwith
Doug Boyd
Tracy Dunn

Dr. Jack McGovern
Phil Steele
Pres Pate

Additional Observers Attached

The Executive Finance Collection Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened in the Madison Ballroom of the Savannah Hilton DeSoto, March 6, 2014, and was called to order at 11:15 o'clock a.m. by Chairman Ben Hartig.

MR. HARTIG: We'll start the Executive Finance Committee. The Executive Committee is in session. The first order of business is approval of the agenda. Are there any changes to the agenda?

MR. MAHOOD: Yes; we'd like to change the order of presentations. The council follow-up is scheduled for Number 5; and we're going to swap that with the update on the Joint Committee on South Florida Management Issues. Jessica will lead us in that; and she will go before the follow-up and priorities in case there are some things in there we might want to consider in the follow-up and priorities, if that is okay, Mr. Chairman.

MR. HARTIG: That's certainly fine. Are there any other changes to the agenda? Is there any objection to approving the agenda? Seeing none; the agenda is approved. The next item of business is approval of the December 2013 Executive Finance Committee Minutes. Are there any changes, deletions or corrections to the minutes? Is there any objection to approving the minutes? Seeing none; the minutes are approved. That brings to the report on the actual council 2014 funding levels. Bob.

MR. MAHOOD: All right, I think Mike just sent an e-mail to everybody with the FY 2014 Council Funding Table that we just received at the most recent CCC meeting. I think most of you have seen this type of format before; but this lays out what each council gets and what category it comes out of.

The line item in the congressional budget for the councils is the Regional Council PPA, the first line. If you look at that and then over to the South Atlantic and on down, you will see what we get out of the other categories that fall within the National Marine Fisheries Service Budget. That is NEPA; ACLs; regulatory streamlining; SSC stipends; council peer review which is a category that helps fund our SEDAR Program; expand the annual stock assessments, that is the major money we get to administer the SEDAR Program; and then the northeast gets the money out that additional line. We did pretty well in 2014,

We as the councils and the CCC had hoped to be funded back at the 2012 level; and we didn't quite make that. If you look at the very bottom two lines, you will see approximately what we got in 2013; and then the line right above that shows you what we will get for 2014. Now, it looks we got an increase of a little more than \$200,000; but actually the numbers in the 2013 line are a little off; and we got a little bit more than that this past year. Our total increase is only about 112K from what we had last year.

If you look at it, it is interesting that about 72 percent of the money we operate on comes out of our line item the congress puts in the NOAA Budget. About 28 percent of our operations are funded by other line items out of the National Marine Fisheries Service. It is kind of like hard money and soft money. The 28 percent can be taken away I guess at any given time; and congress determines how much that 72 percent is.

It is important and I think it shows the cooperative partnership between NMFS and the councils in meeting some of these other mandates that are included in the NOAA Fisheries Budget. One of the key things in there that we look at; we administer the SEDAR Program and in 2012 we got about \$607,000 for the program. In 2013 it dropped to \$544,000; and this year it is back up to about \$573,000.

Last year because we were at a low level, we actually used about \$27,000 of our administrative grant to help offset what we didn't have in SEDAR to operate the SEDAR Program. This year we're up about \$28,000 in that area. It would be basically level funding from last year for the SEDAR Program; and we will have to adjust to that accordingly. Mr. Chairman, unless somebody has any questions about our 2014 funding, that is what I have.

MR. HARTIG: Are there any questions of Bob about the budget? One thing I would add is that there was some – well, some of the councils were upset about the funding levels and wanted to write a pretty heated letter, but I think Bob reined them back in and reminded them that we are partners in this process. It is just the respect that everybody has for Bob and the way Bob is able to work in that arena is pretty cool; so thanks.

MR. MAHOOD: Well, Bob won for a while, but part of the plan was there was a draft letter – and basically it was a pretty nice letter. It was just asked that this be reconsidered to bring us back to the 2012 levels. I think I told you at the last meeting – I was looking at the minutes – we had been told that we may receive about a 16 or 17 percent reduction as overhead against our budget, but it wouldn't be applied until 2015.

They pulled a little bait and switch on us at this last meeting where they came to us and said, "Well, we were wrong; we were required by what the Inspector General said to take it out this year, but we're only going to take 3.9 percent." It is like guess what, we're giving you a deal, we're not taking 16 or 17 percent; we're only taking 3.9; we're just taking it a year earlier.

I think that was one of the things that some of the councils were a little upset about because they felt like we were told nothing would happen until 2015. It just happens that 3.9 percent, if it was not taken out, would have put back at 2012 levels. In the letter it basically said we under you're required to tax us 3.9 percent, but please make it up somewhere else so it is kind of neutral.

We were not going to send the letter until some meetings went on with Eileen Sobeck, who is the new AA for the National Marine Fisheries Service. Those meetings went on and NMFS said we're not going to be able to do anything else and so now the letter has been sent. They said send the letter and get on record. That is where we are, but it was still very amenable.

I think the tone is a little different than what it has been in past years. I got a chance to meet Eileen and talked to her. I think she has got a steep learning curve, but I think she is going to do a good job. She has got some really good people around her to advise her. I expect that she will do well.

MR. HARTIG: Okay, that brings us to status of our 2014 budget; and that is behind Attachment 1?

MR. MAHOOD: Correct, behind Attachment 1. As you all know, when we put this this budget together, we didn't a target number knowing what our funding would be; and we haven't had for the last several years. Generally what we do is we look at the best case scenario with doing everything we want to do fully funded and this type of thing, and we came up with about a \$2.4 or \$2.3 million budget.

As it turns out, we're only going to get about 3.4 or 3.3. Unfortunately, that shorts us about \$933,000, but fortunately we got carried over about \$644,000. In the shortfall area we're only about \$288,000 short, which will be pretty easy for us to make up as we go through the year. What we will do is Mike and I will down and will make the revisions necessary and we will come back to you in June with a budget you can actually approve. We will do that, Mr. Chairman, and we will have a little better idea of where all this falls out; but we don't expect any real problems.

MR. HARTIG: I would be remiss if I didn't mention Mike Collins and his work in saving the council money. He looks at areas where probably none of us would look, and he has saved some money and saved the council some money on some amazing things. Thank you, Mike, I appreciate that effort. Are there any questions of the budget for Bob? Seeing none; we will move ahead to the South Florida – I don't have my agenda before me.

MR. MAHOOD: Yes; Update on Joint Committee on South Florida Management Issues.

MS. McCAWLEY: You have a summary, Attachment 3, a summary report of what happened at this meeting, and I'll just hit some highlights of this meeting. This was a joint meeting of both council committees on South Florida Issues and Goliath Grouper Issues. It met in Key Largo January 7th through 9th.

You can see the purpose and the goal on the summary in Attachment 3; but just to hit a few highlights, you can see that committee chairs were elected for the South Florida Committee. Martha is the chair for the Gulf; I'm the chair for the South Atlantic. Carrie Simmons is the chair for the Goliath Grouper Committee.

We talked a lot about boundary discussions and the overlap of the jurisdictions that are occurring in South Florida. We talked about what some of the solutions would be. Some of the solutions that we talked about were things like taking fisheries that were primarily – the species that were primarily found and landed in Florida and maybe turning over the management of those species to the state of Florida.

We also talked about delegating management of some species to the state or carving out or allocating a part of the ACLs for a particular species to create some kind of regional management plan for South Florida. We spent time talking about specific species, and you can see in the summary for Warsaw grouper and speckled hind that there was a motion to form a subcommittee from both the council SSCs to explore methods to determine stock status of these species and try to make a list of suggestions for a path forward as well as education programs to help people distinguish snowy grouper from Warsaw grouper.

Another item that came up was how the Gulf Council had taken dog snapper, schoolmaster, mahogany, and black snapper and removed them from the management plan and turned over the management of those species to the state of Florida. A motion was made for the South Atlantic to consider doing the same thing.

Then the South Florida Committee talked about specific species where they would like to see consistent regulations between the South Atlantic and the Gulf. You can see there are some items in there about everything from circle hooks to shallow water grouper closure months and things of that nature.

That was about the first day and a half of the meeting; and then the rest of the meeting was about Goliath grouper. There were a lot of PowerPoint presentations given at the meeting. There was one very interesting and lengthy PowerPoint given by Kai Lorenzen, who has done a very extensive stakeholder survey on Goliath grouper. This is not just a Florida survey; it is throughout the entire Gulf and South Atlantic.

I believe the Gulf Council has received the PowerPoint at their meeting from Kai; and I guess then can decide if he wants to eventually have Kai come to one of our meetings so that you guys can see that very extensive stakeholder survey that he conducted. It was very interesting. The committee talked a lot about if there is enough new information to do a stock assessment, another stock assessment.

The committee also talked about the utility of some sort of limited harvest that would be for scientific purposes and talked about how informative that would be, how much new information would be added.

The committee kind of decided that there would probably would be some utility in doing that, but it needed to be well organized and needed to be over a large enough geographic range; and it would need to be conducted in both state and federal waters.

Ultimately the committee wanted to go try to do the stock assessment first. Basically the committee made a motion that is requesting scientists to provide their data; and the FWC, the Southeast Fisheries Science Center and SSC folks are going to get together and evaluate if there is adequate information to conduct this new stock assessment; and if there is, then FWC has volunteered to take the lead on the stock assessment and move it through the SEDAR Process.

If the data isn't adequate to conduct the stock assessment, then this group of folks would provide a coordinated scientific sampling program to address any missing data needs. The plan at this point is to have these two committees come back together in July of this year. I believe that either Gregg or Bob are going to go over some detailed next steps that we're working on between now and the next meeting. Thank you.

MR. HARTIG: Thank you, Jessica, that was a good synopsis of that workgroup. Are there any questions of Jessica? Zack.

MR. BOWEN: Jessica, can you elaborate if you remember or recall about the circle hook – talking about the circle hooks. I'm here on the page but it doesn't really go into detail. I'd just like a little more detail on it.

MS. McCAWLEY: Yes; in fact we can give the detailed transcript from the meeting because at the end of transcript was all the testimony from all the members of the public that were there. There was a considerable number of people from the public, and this was something that was brought up – I believe Bill Kelly brought it up; and it was about how on one coast I believe there is a line where circle hooks are not required below that line.

It is for yellowtail because it is believed that yellowtail is actually less release mortality with the J-hooks, so he is wanting that line extended across the whole state so that circle hooks are not required below that line at all is what he is really looking for. That motion came from a response to Bill Kelly's testimony.

MR. BOWEN: Was there any talk about rescinding or the desire to rescind the circle hook rule above the 28 degree line at all?

MS. McCAWLEY: There really wasn't but I also think it was because the stakeholders that were at that meeting were really just concerned about what is happening in South Florida or very specific to Goliath grouper, so they didn't really talk about that.

MR. HARTIG: Are there any other questions? Thank you, Jessica. We're going to go through the specific recommendations that came out of the joint workshops.

MR. WAUGH: There is an IPT appointed to work with this group, and I'll show you who is on that in a minute. Based on the outputs from the meeting of the Joint South Florida Management Issues Committee and the IPT meeting, Bob and I put together this document. Some of this was surfaced with the IPT, and the idea is this will formulate how we take the directions from that joint meeting and lay out our work items to be done.

We'll walk through and the intent would be there may be one area that we want to deal with a motion as we're going through, but others get a motion to – as we're going through, you can modify this and then get one motion to approve this as sort of how we would see this operating and the timing. I think yesterday Mike sent this around in an e-mail saying it was an attachment for Executive Finance.

The first item is Goliath grouper. The SSC – an assessment group is to determine if sufficient data exists for another assessment. Carrie is the lead with Luiz. If it is yes, then the Florida staff has volunteered to lead on the stock assessment. If no, the group would provide a coordinated scientific sampling plan to address any missing data needs.

The SEDAR representative, if it moves forward and comes under consideration for review by SEDAR, would be Julie Neer. Carrie and Luiz are working out the timing for setting up meetings to review that information. Are there any questions about those items under Goliath grouper? Okay, the next is speckled hind and Warsaw grouper; and here the direction is for the

South Atlantic and Gulf SSC Subcommittee to explore methods to determine stock status of speckled hind and Warsaw grouper and suggest a path forward.

John Carmichael is our lead working with Luiz and Carrie to organize a meeting. They may need to meet several times. The question that is being posed to that group is can they meet and provide some guidance prior to the next July 22 through 24 Joint South Florida Committee Meeting. There is also interest in pursuing through each council's normal I&E Outreach and Education Program to help people distinguish snowy grouper from Warsaw grouper. That's the action items coming out for speckled hind and Warsaw. Are there any questions?

Okay, then looking at items and the next two sort of separate how we deal with all of the different species-specific items. We're suggesting we group one of them that would be just a South Atlantic Council Snapper Grouper Amendment. I would be our staff lead on that. This would do two things; remove several species from the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit. Those species were removed from the Gulf Reef Fish Fishery Management Unit in 2011.

That would be Nassau grouper, dog snapper, schoolmaster, mahogany snapper and black snapper. That would allow the state of Florida to manage those species. The second item in that amendment would be vermilion snapper, to change the minimum size limit to 10 inches total length so that it tracks the Gulf, and then Florida would take their own action to adopt that same size limit.

MS. McCAWLEY: I was wanting to talk about the timing for Item A, the South Atlantic Council item to remove these species. I can tell you that the state of Florida was going to go forward with rulemaking since these were removed in 2011 on the Gulf; but we're waiting now to go forward with rulemaking on the South Atlantic, so I was wondering if Gregg could talk a little bit about the timing. I was hoping that this could go out in the August scoping hearings; that these items could go out then.

MR. WAUGH: Yes, we have a round of hearings scheduled in August; and certainly putting something together to go out to scoping, mainly what we're doing is identifying the issue and getting public input; so it doesn't involve a lot of analysis. Getting this ready for scoping I don't see as a big issue.

Then if the intent – we need to talk a little bit about what the timing is after that. If you want then to look at those comments at September, then look at a draft options paper and approve something to go out to public hearing December to hit the January public hearings or are you looking for more time later to hit the August public hearings.

Carrie has provided me with the Gulf amendment so we have a good outline on how to deal with removing these species. The information to compile wouldn't be that great; so if it is your desire to do scoping in August and then have an amendment ready to approve for public hearings in December to go out in January for just these items, I think that is doable.

MS. McCAWLEY: Yes, that's what I'd like to see. Do you need a motion to that effect or is direction enough? Okay, I will make a motion to take Nassau grouper, dog snapper,

schoolmaster, mahogany snapper and black snapper out to scoping in August and then bring back an item to the council in September.

MR. HARTIT: Second by Michelle. Bob.

MR. MAHOOD: Okay, it is more than just take them out with the intent of removing them – okay, you might want to put that in the motion.

MS. McCAWLEY: Yes, would you add that to the motion, please.

MR. HARTIG: **The motion is to take an action to remove Nassau grouper, dog snapper, schoolmaster, mahogany snapper and black snapper from the Snapper Grouper FMU and to scoping in August.**

MS. McCAWLEY: Do we need to specify that we wanted it to come back to the council in September; does that need to be specified.

MR. WAUGH: No, I don't think so. The rest of it can sort of direction to staff that the intent would be that you would review those comments in September, give us guidance, and then have something analyzed for you to look at in December and hopefully to approve for public hearings. One question; are you excluding vermilion or are you going to deal with that in a separate motion?

MS. McCAWLEY: I had excluded it.

DR. CRABTREE: I'd feel a whole lot better about that list if it did not include Nassau grouper. That was taken out by the Gulf in order to allow the South Atlantic to extend management; and given all of the concerns about Nassau grouper, I don't think that is going to be a productive path for you to look at removing.

MS. McCAWLEY: The committee I believe discussed and made a motion for the South Atlantic to consider Nassau grouper from the FMP and designate management to the state of Florida.

MR. WAUGH: I think the concerns that have been raised would be something that would come out in the scoping process and as we look at this, and that would certainly be something to look at. My recollection on the Atlantic side, I don't know that there are any landings north of Florida, but that would certainly be the first thing to look at is the distribution of landings by state. I would suspect that Florida is going to be the area in the past have seen landings; and if that resource is rebuilt, that is where you'd see the population occur again. All that would be looked at through the scoping process.

MR. HARTIG: Okay, we've got a motion and a second. Is there anymore discussion? Is there objection to this motion? Seeing none; **that motion is approved.**

MR. WAUGH: The next item is kind of a big one. This is where we deal with a joint amendment with the Gulf to address all the other species and all the other actions. The first two

items there on the bottom of Page 1 and projected on the screen talk about how this group would operate. It is suggested that the document would be prepared by the Joint Council Committee on South Florida Issues. Obviously, the IPT would do a lot of the work going into this, but that committee would be responsible for document preparation, actions and alternatives, analysis, and then recommendations on preferred alternatives.

This is gets at what Bob mentioned before that then that draft amendment as it is approved by that Joint Council Committee it is exactly similar to our Mackerel Committee when we met jointly before in spiny lobster; but then the recommendations from the Joint Council Committee would go straight to the Gulf Council and straight to the South Atlantic Council. It wouldn't come through our Snapper Grouper Committee and wouldn't go through the Gulf Reef Fish Committee. That's something that the Gulf staff will discuss with their council at their next meeting.

That's our suggestion on how this group would operate. The IPT as shown there, Bob and myself from the South Atlantic, Doug and Carrie from the Gulf, Jack McGovern from the region, Monica; and then from Florida, Jessica, Martha, Luiz and John Hunt. There are already efforts on the way to compile data to go into this; and we'll talk in a minute about the actions and alternatives to give you an idea of what we're looking at. We just wanted to get your thoughts and guidance on how that committee would operate.

MR. HARTIG: Is there any discussion about – it's a bit different. Does anyone have any problems with that? Jessica.

MS. McCAWLEY: Do you need a motion to approve the process and how this would operate?

MR. WAUGH: Yes; and we could either deal with that right now or wait until we go through the options. Maybe it is cleaner just to do it right now.

MS. McCAWLEY: I would make a motion to approve the process for how the South Florida and Goliath grouper joint committees work.

MR. HARTIG: Okay, the motion is to approve the process described for how the Joint South Florida Management Issues Committee would operate. Second by David. Discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion is approved.

MR. WAUGH: Okay, to give you an idea of what we're looking at preliminary guidance from the committee for actions that would be included – and obviously these are subject to modifications as the IPT looks at it in preparation for the next committee meeting and certainly once the joint committee looks at it in July.

But to sort of focus the discussions, Action 1 would be modifications to the fishery management unit or to ACLs. Option 1 would be no action. Option 2 would delegate management of yellowtail snapper, mutton snapper, black grouper, hogfish and gray or mangrove snapper to the state of Florida either throughout the council jurisdiction as a suboption or in the EEZ just off Florida. Then the third option would be to allocate a portion of the commercial and recreational

ACLs for those same species to the state of Florida. That's the range of alternatives that would be looked at.

MR. CUPKA: Gregg, I guess some of those options would depend on the data we're going to get in the meantime which looks at the distribution of these species and whatnot that you're supposed to bring back at our July meeting, correct?

MR. WAUGH: That is correct. If there is little to no catch in states outside of Florida, you might be more inclined to delegate. If there are some catches in other areas, then you may want to just look at allocating a portion of the ACL.

HARTIG: Are you good with that? Doug.

MR. HAYMANS: I was just going to mention up to this point I was pretty comfortable with where we were going, but then I thought that the committee was really going to look at ways to align bag limits and seasons and whatnot to avoid the AIA issues. I didn't realize we were going to wind up delegating Florida a large percentage of the management. For those species that only occur there; I'm okay with that; but when we're talking about hogfish and gray snapper and stuff like that which occur in other places, I'm not so comfortable with that as we move forward.

MR. HARTIG: I think it would help if you saw what the breakdown was and things of that nature; it would help. Jessica.

MS. McCAWLEY: I'm hoping that at some point you can see more of what happened at the committee; because in talking about the jurisdictional issues, this was one of the ways to try to fix that problem. Right now you've got three different entities that essentially have to go through some sort of rulemaking to pass the rules so you have the Gulf Council, the South Atlantic Council and the FWC trying to enact the same regulations.

We know what kind of timeline that takes to do that; and ultimately those three different bodies might not be able to adopt the same regulation. After much discussion about that, these were some of the options that they came up with to say, okay, well, let's find a way to allow one entity to try to adopt consistent regulations because of the amount of time that would take and how the greater likelihood that the consistent regulation could be adopted by one entity. That's how this came up.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Our office hasn't really been able to spend much time on all the different kinds of various options that you have that would be consistent with the Magnuson Act and other laws as to how you would address some of these concerns. We're going to, after this meeting, get into that more and perhaps there might even be some other kinds of options or different ways to deal with some of these things.

Jack just pointed out, for example, under I guess it would be like Option 3, allocate a portion of the commercial and recreational ACLs and then it lists a number of species; you would be dealing with it on a fish-by-fish basis. It is not like a take it or leave it for some or all, I would

think. You would have the option to deal with different species. The gist of this was that our office hasn't had much time to spend on this so far.

MR. HARTIG: Yes; Bob just pointed out this is the very beginning of this process and we're not sure exactly where all this is heading specifically at this time.

MR. WAUGH: Okay, next is mutton snapper. This is a big issue in Florida dealing with the recreational bag limit. Option 1 would be no action. We just point out there if Options 2 or 3 were chosen for Action 1 – as an example, if we allocated a portion of the mutton snapper ACL to Florida, then Florida could do the management on that and set the appropriate bag limit that they thought for Florida; similar to what we do for king mackerel in the northern zone on the Florida East Coast; the Gulf allocation portion of the ACL there and we set the management measures.

Option 2, we could set a bag limit for mutton snapper during the regular season of five per person; and during a spawning season, May through June, of two per person. That is an option that was discussed by the joint committee, and obviously there could be others that come forward as well. I think right now the bag limit is ten per person. Any questions or comments on mutton?

Okay, then 3 is review of the shallow water grouper closure length among species for both Gulf and South Atlantic. Option 1, no action; Option 2, remove the closure; Option 3, modify the closure. Some of the discussion was you will remember when we established that four-month closure, there was a lot of concern in the Keys that it really impacted them differentially. That was before we had our ACLs; so now that we have ALCs, is there ability to look at modifications to that closure. Any questions or comments there?

Okay, and then Action 4 gets to the issue Zack raised, removing the circle hood requirement in the Gulf; no action; remove circle hook requirement for yellowtail snapper in the entire Gulf; or, 3, remove circle hook requirement for all reef fish south of 28 degrees north latitude in the Gulf.

DR. DUVAL: Just to speak to a point that Zack brought up earlier, I know this is specific to South Florida, but there has definitely been interest expressed throughout the region in reexamining the circle hook requirement. I would say let's just be cognizant of that as we address this issue in the South Florida Committee.

MR. WAUGH: Okay, are there any questions or comments on the circle hook?

MR. HAYMANS: Well, I guess my question on Action 4 is why wouldn't the Gulf Council just go ahead and do that? Why is that an action before the joint committee?

MS. McCAWLEY: At this point I think that they're needing analysis so this IPT-like group that made up of both councils would help gather the information to try to even determine if this is something that is Gulf only or just to try to figure out what the next steps are. We don't even have all the available information to figure out the next steps.

MR. BOWEN: Kind of to that point, again I don't know if I'm out of order here by mentioning this at this time or not, but it would be nice to have some data collection on the removing of the circle hook regulations. From what I see on the water, the circle hook rule is a disaster. I'm having fish gut-hooked a lot more with circle hooks than I ever had with J-hooks.

MR. WAUGH: So then is there interest in expanding this – since this is a joint amendment and if we're going to be looking for it down there, do you all want us to expand this and to reexamine the use of circle hooks in the Atlantic as well; add that as another option?

MR. JOLLEY: I would like to ask Zack a question if was okay, Mr. Chairman. Do you think that you're seeing some of this gut-hooking as a result of a new methodology, a new hook that maybe people aren't familiar with how to best hook these fish?

MR. BOWEN: No; before the requirement I used both. It is harder for the deckhands; it is harder for the guys that work on the back of the boat to take the circle hook out of the fish. Prior to this regulation, I used a longer shanked J-hook where the deckhands could just basically pop the hook. They were really getting hooked for the most part – there are exceptions to everything; but for the most part the deckhands could just take that long-shanked J-hook and pop the hook and we didn't see many gut-hooked fish with J-hooks.

When this law came about, of course, we were abiding by it and I mean from sea bass to vermilion to red snapper to amberjack, just about every fish that we catch, the percentage of gut-hooked fish, I mean it went through the roof. It is harder to extract that circle hook from a throat-hooked fish than it is a J-hook. I'm not in agreement with it; I follow it; I abide by the law; but from what I see on the water, it is increasing the mortality of a hooked fish.

MR. JOLLEY: I'm sure we don't want to do that. I just wondered if the fishermen in your area maybe are using in their technique of hooking those fish are doing something different than we might be doing in other areas where we don't have the same results on similar species. I'm not up thoroughly on all of this, but some of us are using circle hooks on other snapper grouper species and having pretty good luck with not gut-hooking.

MR. BOWEN: Well, again, on the charterboat it is hard to teach an old dog new tricks. Most of the customers that I carry, I've been carrying for years and years and years; and their natural instinct is when they feel that bite of the fish to immediately yank back and to, quote-unquote, set the hook. I've tried to explain and tried to explain it, but again it's just hard for them to get out of that habit, if you will. Again, the gut-hooked fish with the circle hooks is happening more and more and more than it ever did with a J-hook in my experience.

MR. COX: I was just going to say that for our bigger fish, our groupers, our jacks, we're having some success with the circle hook; but for the vermilion and triggerfish it is just something that we're not seeing that it has helped a whole lot. As far as catching fish and as far as gut-hooking those fish, there is not much difference, but the catch ratio is much better with the J-hooks.

MS. McCAWLEY: I was just going to say I don't know if what Gregg is looking for is just some direction to look at it through a larger area, including the South Atlantic, or if that is out of

order here since we're talking about the South Florida stuff. Do you need a motion to look at it through a broader range? I'm just not sure what is needed at this time.

MR. WAUGH: Yes; just a consensus to add a – what I would suggest is a new Option 4 to remove the circle hook requirement in the Atlantic, and that would get it analyzed. I don't think it gets outside of the purview of this joint committee because that would affect the Atlantic side of Florida as well. You already have an option in here that would remove the circle hook for yellowtail snapper in the entire Gulf. We could include that as an alternative and then you'd have the analysis and see what you think.

DR. CRABTREE: That requirement I think just applies to snapper grouper, right? It was put in when we were doing red snapper. It seems to me if you want to look at removing the circle hook requirement throughout the area; that ought to be done through the Snapper Grouper Committee. If you're just looking at trying to exempt yellowtail snapper – because I know the way they fish down there, they have this little dehooking thing and it doesn't work well with circle hooks. That has been most of the issue. It seems to me if you want to look at it region-wide, that ought to go through the Snapper Grouper Committee and not the South Florida Committee.

MR. HARTIG: Okay, we've had a lot of discussion about the circle hooks. There is some concern on the council about them, differential concern. Michelle.

DR. DUVAL: Maybe a way out of this because, clearly this is an issue that the folks in South Florida would like to address. As to we all are gathering the information to help inform those different alternatives; can we not just bring that same information to the full Snapper Grouper Committee? I'm sure some of that would apply throughout the jurisdiction and incorporate the information that is gathered for the South Florida Group into some region-wide information that the Snapper Grouper Committee as a whole could consider.

MR. HARTIG: I think my concern through this is that we have gotten away from the South Florida issues in the circle hook in particular. To me, I think Roy is right; I think I'd be more comfortable as well bringing it before the Snapper Grouper Committee. Basically if we could have a white paper explaining the research that has been done on all the different species as far as the advantage of using circle hooks. There is a lot of data, Zack.

There is a lot of data that has been in Gulf. Karen Burns did a lot of work in the Gulf as well as some other research on how circle hooks improve over J-hooks significantly in red snapper. When we did this, we did it in the purview of the red snapper assessment and what we had to do in trying to save red snapper and trying to make sure that our discard mortality was low on red snapper.

Having said that, certainly your comments are different than my experience is, but you deal with a different clientele; so obviously you might have some differences in your experiences. I think we should bring all the data before the council and let them evaluate what we have and then go from there and see if we want to go to scoping or public hearing on the issue. If that is okay; does that sound like a reasonable way to move forward?

MR. BOWEN: Sure, I'm for anything. I would even go on record as to volunteer my time and my boat and my tackle to anyone that wanted to collect some data for the circle hooks versus the non-circle hook use. Anything would help at this point. Thank you.

MR. HARTIG: Yes; and anywhere we can get data or from any observer studies that have been done recently in the Atlantic observing circle hook catches, any information that we can get.

MR. JOLLEY: And it just points out the fact that there may be a learning curve here and there is an educational quotient that we could be thinking about in terms – I mean, we've learned through billfishing and some other things when these things first came on line. There is an excellent article in Sportfishing Magazine – I was reading it this morning – about hooking fish and how at least the conclusion of the author was how winding up slowly and not setting the hook winds up being a better way to hook and keep some of these fish. Of course, there are a lot of different ideas about this stuff, but I think we're in an era when new gear requires us to have a new education about how to use all these things.

MR. HARTIG: Is that enough guidance for you on how to move forward on the circle hooks issues?

MR. WAUGH: Yes; so we'll just leave these three options. Any information that is gathered on circle hooks from the South Florida Group will be provided to the Snapper Grouper Committee. Then there is interest in having for the Snapper Grouper Committee a white paper, if you will, on the use of circle hooks, but that would be handled through our Snapper Grouper Committee outside of this group.

All right, the final item is permit requirements. Obviously making some of these changes and looking at delegation in particular impacts the permits. That is a very complex issue so what we're just outline here is no action and making some change. That will be developed by the IPT and the group. That is the final action that we're looking at.

MR. HARTIG: All right, are there any other questions of Gregg? Seeing none, thank you, Gregg, for that presentation.

MR. WAUGH: There is a couple more to go; just two more additional items. Future modifications as assessments are completed; there was interest expressed as we get assessments for these five species and we're looking at modifications to management, that the three groups try and coordinate their regulations at that time.

MR. HARTIG: That makes sense.

MR. WAUGH: And then the final item has to do with preliminary timing. We're looking at data compilations, actions and alternatives. The Florida staff and the IPT are putting that together. The next meeting of the Joint Council Committee will be July 22 through 24 in Key West. They will review that material and provide guidance.

You have continued analysis and the hope would be that the Joint Council Committee would meet prior to the South Atlantic Council's December 2014 meeting and I think the last meeting of the year for the Gulf is the October 20 through 24 meeting; before those two to get some more guidance, if possible.

It may not need to be an in-person meeting; but to get some guidance – and here we say to approve this for public hearings. That may be too fast. We're just looking at going out to scoping for those specific items; so it may be that we want to look at scoping, but the IPT is going to look at this a little more and determine the timing.

Sort of the endpoint would be to target June 2015 for final approval. There are plans being discussed for having a joint council meeting in June of 2015; so we'd want to have public hearings done by then and bring that to that joint council session for final approval.

MR. HARTIG: Are there any questions about how Gregg has the timeline laid out? Jessica.

MS. McCRAWLEY: I'd make a motion to approve the timeline that Gregg has discussed as well as the action items for this IPT Group.

MR. HARTIG: Motion by Jessica; seconded by Charlie. **The motion is to approve the timeline and draft actions and alternatives as presented. Any discussion on that motion? Is there any objection to that motion? Seeing none; that motion is approved.** Okay, that completes the South Florida Workgroup items. That brings us to council follow-up and priorities.

MR. WAUGH: You have the approved follow-up that has gone through our internal review and the region's review. I just call your attention to the series of advisory panel meetings that begins on Page 56. We've got a number of advisory panel meetings coming up. Again, just to remind people, you can look in here at your specific committee and see what the timing is for particular items for a particular amendment.

I wanted to just call your attention to the draft June meeting. I skipped over the extensive series of visioning workshops that we have. Those are ongoing and Amber covered that earlier. Again, we try and look a couple of meetings ahead in here. Just for your attention in June, there is a rough draft in here so you can see what committees are planning to meet.

We start off with the Visioning Workshop. Some of the draft agendas are in here. We have to add AP reports and so forth. That will give you an idea what to expect coming up in June. There is one modification in terms of what items we would be looking at final approval. There was a possibility we might try and move Regulatory Amendment 20 up.

That did not happen; so that will be an item that we approve to go out to public hearings in June. We would look to be finalizing Snapper Grouper Amendment 29 at June. The last page shows your priorities and timing. What the Executive Finance Committee has recommended adding to this is a Snapper Grouper Amendment looking at removing some species and approving that for scoping for the August round of hearings. We will add that to this timeline.

You can look here to see our overall schedule; and these are your priorities as of December 2013. There is nothing that sort of jumps out that we have any suggestions for changing the priority at this stage. I'll be glad to answer any questions.

MR. HARTIG: Are there any comments on our priorities? I think we're good, Gregg. That brings us to the report on the CCC Meeting. Bob.

MR. MAHOOD: Like I said earlier, I think it was a very good meeting, one of the better ones we've had. Eileen Sobeck was there and she made her remarks. She made one little faux pas that kind of stood people up in that when she started to talk to the councils she pointed out that we were one of their most important stakeholders.

A couple of us had a chance to talk to her later in private and pointed that we're a little bit more than stakeholders. She was very apologetic about that and is still learning who everybody is. Again, she had only been on the job two weeks and certainly had not had time to get up to speed on everything.

She is an attorney and she was with NOAA way back when, but then she most recently and for a number of years has been with the Department of Interior and the Justice Department. She is very knowledgeable on litigation and things like that, I'm sure. She is a very personable lady and I think she is going to do well in that job.

We had a number of items. I'm not going to go over every one individually. Sam Rauch kind of gave an update on some of the NMFS priorities and some of the NEPA and National Standard 1 issues, the IG Report we're all reacting to. We had our normal round robin council presentations. I think our top three priorities this time was the theme; so everybody talked about their top three priorities.

We got a management and budget report; and again I have talked about that in depth. For 2015 they're still not sure what that is going to bring; but least we should have a budget because I think they passed a two-year budget bill. Also, 2015 will start our next five-year grant program for our budget that Mike and I and the other EDs and their staffs will be working on.

One of the key issues within the National Marine Fisheries Service that Roy and Doug mentioned today is fisheries allocation. There is a big move to reexamine our allocations across the board; and there is somewhat a resistance I think from a number of the councils because allocation issues were settled early on.

The battles were bloody; there was a lot of animosity created and people have settled into these allocations. Especially they pick on the Gulf when they talk about allocations and they point to Doug and say, "allocations"! That has become an important message that we got at the meeting. Richard Merrick is the head scientist with the National Marine Fisheries Service and he gave a presentation. He is a pretty knowledgeable fellow and interesting to talk to. He and Ben have developed a rapport.

Dorothy Lowman reported on the Electronic Monitoring Workshop that took place out in Seattle. We had two council members attend, Mel Bell and Michelle. From all the reports I got from everybody, it was a pretty good effort. They talked a little bit about the next steps and where they're going with that.

A number of the EDs, working with the NOAA Silver Spring staff, have been working on the revision of the operational guidelines. My understanding is we now have our ROA signed by all parties so we're in tune. I would like to get a copy, Phil. I don't have a totally signed copy if you have one.

We had Dave Whaley from the House Natural Resources staff there who talked about the bills that are out there and the one primary bill that everybody is looking at in the House. We had a Senate staffer there that will be helping to develop the Senate version of the bill. That seems to be moving along. I was of the opinion and felt like there was going to be something done. Exactly how it will all come out; I'm not sure.

We had a little bit of information provided about the National Fish Habitat Board and some of the partnership boards dealing with habitat. That was pretty much it. Our annual CCC meeting is going to be in Delaware somewhere. I don't recall where they said it was going to be. Ben or Michelle, does that pretty much cover it or is there anything else?

MR. HARTIG: No, I think you did a good job, Bob. You hit the high points and that was fine. Of course, the reauthorization was front and center; and I made my push as usual to try and include some of our staff. I think the way we handled snowy and black sea bass, allowing three years to phase in the overfishing and being able to bring both of those species out of the overfished and overfishing condition within the rebuilding plan, I think that is pretty strong evidence that you could possibly use that. We brought that before them again and we have the evidence so try and consider this; so we'll see. The Hastings Bill was a wish list of everything I wanted in Magnuson basically, but we'll see what happens.

MR. MAHOOD: We tried to make a strong point on red snapper that something is wrong there. There is just something wrong that we can't have a red snapper fishery under the current law. I think people took that to heart. I talked to Dave Whaley a little bit after the meeting and I said, "You know, we're hoping you guys are going to do something." There has got to be more flexibility in management under some circumstances; because in some places even though it has worked and it has us rebuild our fisheries from the overfished status and ended overfishing, something is wrong in the red snapper situation and that type of thing has to be corrected.

MR. HARTIG: In that regard we talked about a moratorium; and that was the key issue is try and avoid moratoriums at all cost. I mean if you're making progress in your rebuilding, if you could demonstrate that you're making progress, we shouldn't close those fisheries. Are there any questions about the CCC meeting? Seeing none; address other issues as appropriate; are there any other issues to come before the Executive Finance Committee? Seeing none; the Executive Finance Committee is adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 12:25 o'clock p.m., March 6, 2014.)

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By:
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April 1, 2014

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South Atlantic Fishery Management Council March 2014 Meeting – Savannah, GA

Executive Finance Committee Meeting: Thursday, March 6, 2014

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MARCH MTC DAY 4

80	L, I	captaindrifter@bellsouth...	424 min
76	klostermann, joe	grkifk@comcast.net	378 min
67	O'Shaughnessy, Pat...	patrick.oshaughnessy@noaa...	88 min
65	DeHart, Hayley	hayley.mills.dehart@gmail...	415 min
64	MacLauchlin, Bill	billmac@adtrends.com	468 min
64	Mealey, Christophe...	cmealey13@gmail.com	165 min
63	Fey, Kasey	info@keyskeeper.org	225 min
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49	Frede, Robin	rifrede@gmail.com	177 min
49	Mehta, Nikhil	nikhil.mehta@noaa.gov	476 min
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26	Abeels, Holly	habeels@ufl.edu	509 min
26	Baker, Scott	bakers@uncw.edu	384 min
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20	Giguere, Cate	cathleen.a.giguere@uscg.m...	1 min