

# **SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

## **COUNCIL SESSION I**

**Lumina Holiday Inn  
Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina**

**December 2-3, 2024**

### **Council Members**

Trish Murphey, Chair  
Jessica McCawley, Vice Chair  
Dr. Caroly Belcher  
Amy W. Dukes  
Gary Borland  
Time Griner  
Judy Helmey  
James G. Hull, Jr.

Kerry Marhefka  
Charlie Phillips  
Tom Roller  
Robert Spottswood, Jr.  
Andy Strelcheck  
Robert Beal  
LT Tom Pease

### **Council Staff**

John Carmichael  
Myra Brouwer  
Dr. Chip Collier  
Julia Byrd  
Dr. Judd Curtis  
John Hadley  
Kathleen Howington  
Allie Iberle  
Kim Iverson

Kelly Klasnick  
Ashley Oliver  
Emily Ott  
Dr. Mike Shmidtke  
Rachael Silvas  
Nicholas Smillie  
Suzanna Thomas  
Christina Wiegand  
Meg Withers

### **Attendees and Invited Participants**

Monica Smit-Brunello  
Dr. Marcel Reichert  
Sonny Gwin  
Dr. John Walter  
Karyl Brewster-Geisz  
David Carrodegaus  
Cliff Hunt  
Miles Dover  
Kathy Knowlton

Rick DeVictor  
Shepard Grimes  
Jason Didden  
John Sanchez  
Jessica Stephen  
Cisco Werner  
Tracy Smart  
Rob Cheshire  
Kristin Foss

### **Observers and Participants**

Other observers and participants attached.

The Council Session I of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Lumina Holiday Inn, Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina, on Monday, December 2, 2024, and was called to order by Chairman Trish Murphey.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Hi, everyone. Welcome to our December council meeting. I'll call it to order. First, I would like to introduce our Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council liaison, John Sanchez. Hi, John. Also, our Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council Liaison, Sonny Gwin, and so thanks, you guys, for being here. We also have Cisco Werner, from NOAA, who will be here all week, and he'll be talking to us a little bit.

We'll go ahead and look at approving the agenda. Anybody have any objections, or additions, to the agenda? Hearing none, we'll call the agenda approved, and, also, the minutes from September 2024. Does anybody have any edits, or comments, on the September 2024 minutes? Seeing none, we'll call those approved. All right. I will open up to Monica for a litigation brief.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: It's mostly no change on the -- Which is a welcome thing, right, on the council's cases, but I'll just go over those real, quickly, and so there's this -- What we usually give, or I call it, the first plaintiff that's named in the lawsuit, and I'm just going to refer to that name, for these cases.

For the Slash Creek Waterworks case, those were challenges to the 2023 red snapper season and the interim rule for the 2024 red snapper season, and so those cases have been briefed, and we're awaiting the court's decision. We may get an oral argument set from the court, but the last brief was filed on September 27<sup>th</sup>.

Then there's the Tillman Gray case, and that concerns the Fisheries Service not -- Allegations that the Fisheries Service did not end overfishing of red snapper, and so the parties entered into a settlement agreement, which the judge approved on August 22<sup>nd</sup> of this year, and, pursuant to that agreement, NMFS is working on a secretarial amendment to end overfishing of red snapper. The agreement requires the final rule to implement that amendment be sent to the Federal Register by June 6, 2025.

Then there's another case that involves a challenge to the Snapper Grouper Amendment 51 for snowy grouper. Again, in that case, there's no change, and so there's some similar arguments made in the Slash Creek Waterworks case and in this case, the North Carolina Fisheries Association case, and so the parties agreed, and the judge approved that there would just be a delay in briefing the arguments until the judge made a decision in the red snapper cases.

I'm sure you're aware there are several cases around the country in which claims have been raised about the council's authority to do certain things under the Magnuson Act, and we kind of call those Appointment Clause cases, because they stem from the Appointment Clause in the Constitution, and different courts have reached different decisions, and those cases are ongoing, and so, right now, I don't have any direction for you to do anything differently. Maybe in March there will be an update that I can give you regarding that. I suspect that those cases, in some fashion, will end up before the Supreme Court, and then there would probably be some sort of definitive decision, but, right now, I would just tell you to stay the course and do business as usual, and that's all I have at this time.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Monica. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Monica. One question, Monica. On the Tilman Gray case, did the plaintiffs make a motion for fees?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: The plaintiffs will make a motion for fees. They have, right now, until December 20<sup>th</sup> to do that, and so I'm certain that they will make a motion for fees.

MR. GRINER: Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other questions for Monica? All right. Thank you, Monica. Next on the agenda is Cisco Werner, and so if you would like to come up and give your remarks to the council.

DR. WERNER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning, council members. I'm Cisco Werner. It's really a pleasure to be here. I think the last time I was at the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council was about six years ago, and so my apologies for so long before coming back and spending a little time with you. I also wanted to take the opportunity to say I hope you all had a very good Thanksgiving and a restful and peaceful holidays.

I want to take the opportunity, again, to thank you for allowing me to just offer a few thoughts, and a few points, on science updates, focus perhaps on things that are happening in the South Atlantic, but also perhaps more generally, in terms of the kind of activities that we're taking on more broadly.

The outline that I'm going to almost follow is that I'll talk a little bit about data collection considerations, in particular between the Northeast and the Southeast Fisheries Science Centers and plans and developments that are taking place there. Then a little bit on the surveys and assessments in the South Atlantic, and then I'm going to switch order. I'm actually going to talk a little bit about the CEFI, which is the Climate, Ecosystem, and Fisheries Initiative, updates and interactions and developments with the council, and then I'm going to come back and talk about the Fisheries Integrated Modeling System, which is a way of connecting some of the things together.

I think we all know, you know, at a national, and even a more broad level, that we're facing challenges associated with environmental changes, and some of them climate driven, and, if you look at that top-right picture, which is, you know, about the last seventy years or so, of temperature in different parts of the world, and one of them is a global line, and another one is for the South Atlantic, and another one is for the Gulf of Mexico.

You know, the message, the uniform message, that emerges from these lines is that, you know, up until about 1980 or so, there were fluctuations, you know, ups and downs of whatever variable you were looking at, or tendencies that you were looking at, but, since about 1980, it's been a pretty, you know, constant trend, if you will, in this case looking at surface temperature anomalies in various parts of the oceans.

That trend is what we refer to as entering what we refer to as a nonstationary component of the signals that we're looking at, meaning that we're not looking at averages, and we're looking at things that are changing with a particular direction, and we also know that things are not just

changing their tendency, if you will, or their trends, but also we see things that perhaps happen more frequently, or they can happen, you know, with more extreme signals associated with them, and that brings a series of challenges that we have to incorporate, not just in the science itself, but also in the advice to management and, obviously, in the decisions that are made, and these are manifested locally.

You know, there's -- We've seen, you know, shifting distributions, of course, changing recruitment patterns, coral die-offs, others, and the picture in the bottom-right, you know, is a picture of the black sea bass, and, in this case, showing, you know, decreases, or changes, in spawning stock biomass, as well as some of the age-zero abundances, or indices of abundance, and so we know that these things are happening.

We know that, because of these changes, and tendencies, and nonstationarity, things are shifting, and so this exacerbates, perhaps, or underscores, perhaps, the importance of understanding how overlapping management and jurisdictions take place. This is a figure, and it's a schematic of, you know, the various agencies, and bodies, that consider, you know, management aspects of various species and their overlaps.

This is a picture from 2021, from a workshop summary that really concluded that, even back then, that, you know, that we were seeing these species distributions, and creating further overlap, let's say, in black sea bass, cobia, king mackerel, and others, and this led to the formation of the East Coast Climate Coordination Committee, also the Climate Coordination Group, the E3CG, which is beginning to look at and address science and management challenges caused by these changes, the changing distributions, and so we've known about this, and it's always been there, but, again, you know, this nonstationary aspect of the information is, and of the conditions, is perhaps adding more importance to how do we understand this interconnectivity.

The response to that observation was that, well, the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, and Southeast Fisheries Science Center, held a workshop to address, you know, the survey coordination. The first aspect was, well, how do we measure this jointly, how do we understand this new distribution jointly, and these are three examples, and I'll show, in a slide right after this, that some of the surveys have been extended north.

The longline survey is extended into the Northeast. We're planning to extend the video trap survey also into the Northeast, and collect data in around, you know, the wind development areas, and we're also then extending south their EcoMon, their ecosystem monitoring program, to the Southeast, and that will be dependent on having ship time and such, but there's an attempt then of looking -- Following, you know, what we're seeing northward, but also extending southward, so that we have data sets, and observations, that perhaps are more interoperable, and intercomparable, if you will.

This is roughly the same slide, but with a little bit more information, and talking about where the trap video surveys will be. In 2024, there's already been a northward expansion, from Cape Hatteras, around Cape Hatteras. The map on the right, those little red dots, are examples of where the video trap sampling has happened. In 2025, we're looking, with state partners, to perform sampling in that area with the ellipse, to extend into the areas of Cape Canaveral and the Tortugas.

As I mentioned, the deepwater longline survey has gone northward, and the ichthyoplankton survey, which is the EcoMon, and so looking at the larval fish and other zooplanktonic species, and the ichthyoplankton survey is moving into the South Atlantic and then completing, really, a sampling, in our understanding, anywhere from the Gulf of Mexico through the South Atlantic into the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast, and so to really provide an integrated view of what actually is happening from various species, various life stages, and various components, you know, coastwide.

These are things that we need to do. in order to understand, you know, what these changes are that we're seeing, and so I think this is where I'm going to jump a little bit, and I'm sorry, but I'm going to jump ahead three slides, and then I'm going to come back to it, and so it was my mistake, but it really -- Then, continuing on the same theme of the connectivity, you know, between the various regions, whether it's the Gulf, South Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic, Northeast, we have to begin to understand, you know, the changes, and the interactions, of the regions that we're looking at on the shelf and such, with variations that are happening at large scale, sort of, in this case, this particular case, looking at the position of the Gulf Stream.

As you know, the Gulf Stream is important, for various reasons. It can be a way in which there's connectivity across, let's say, the Gulf of Mexico to the Middle Atlantic, and through the South Atlantic, and so it can act as a way of dispersing and connecting species. It can also be a source of temperature, or nutrients, and other things, depending on where the Gulf Stream is. If it's close to shore, it might bring a certain temperature and nutrient signal than if it were further offshore.

The models that we're looking at, and this is under the Climate, Ecosystem, and Fisheries Initiative, are beginning to look forward, in terms of what is the Gulf Stream conditions, or what are the Gulf Stream conditions, going to be like.

We're currently in what's called an onshore position of the Gulf Stream, and so, if you look at the slide, right in the middle of the figure, that wiggly line, it shows that, for the past five or six years or so, it's been in an onshore position, which, again, you know, might actually favor, perhaps, some of that connectivity between the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic, which might result in perhaps input, or bringing in red snapper and other species, and/or it might actually affect, again, the different nutrient and feeding environment, right, and so trying to understand how this position of the Gulf Stream impacts in various ways, whether it's just simply moving things around or affecting the feeding environment is important, particularly as we look forward, again, thinking about the fact that we are moving into this nonstationary environment.

Curiously, and oddly, perhaps, in the Northeast, what is being forecast is perhaps that the Gulf Stream might be entering, or tending towards, an offshore position, and so, where we're going from a currently onshore position, it might go into an offshore position, which, again, brings this importance of connecting the various parts along the east coast, to really begin to see how the systems are connected.

This, of course, you know, will result in how we develop our climate indices, you know, our ecosystem status reports, and stock assessments and such. Another example, again, and I'm going to be quick on this one, is the whole aspect of species distributions, which I just talked about, and we need to understand why these species are shifting, and, again, can we anticipate, or predict, or project what these species distributions might be.

Along the West Coast, there's an example here on a project called EcoCast. The focus there was to try to see if we can predict species distributions to minimize interactions with other species, in terms of bycatch. The same idea can be applied not just to distributions along our coast, but also -- Meaning here, but also, you know, in any kind of potential interactions with protected species and such.

With this arsenal, if you will, this new knowledge, and these capabilities that we're developing, you know, understanding the science a little bit better, being able to provide a little more robust way -- Looking ahead, you know, we do get to the point of perhaps joint challenges on the science and management, in terms of how do we manage these fisheries in a changing climate, you know, and I think it's an important conversation to have, and we are already having it, we in a broader sense, of, you know, what is it that we need to prioritize, you know, what taxa, and species, do we want to consider and focus on, and some of the questions that we might ask, you know, include, you know, how adjusting permitting processes, change ACLs, or status determination criteria, and also mitigation options, you know, to perhaps look at the suite of taxa that are in their distribution in any one region.

The figure in the top-right, which is that the double loop there, you know, it really talks about how the science that -- The science to management aspect, and the science to management aspect is, by design, interconnected through this loop, and so it's not a one-way science passing down to say, you know, information, and then in terms of management, but there has to be a feedback, because some of the answers that we might be providing are not exactly the ones that are helpful to the management.

For example, we have in our -- What's called a decision support team, as part of the CEFI, which is the Climate Ecosystem Fisheries Initiative, and we have council members integrated into those support teams, decision support teams, so that we can have these conversations immediately, and clearly, as opposed to, you know, down the line, and also provide feedback.

The examples of how we are, you know, working together with councils within CEFI, again the Climate Ecosystems and Fisheries Initiative, is -- I'm focusing now on South Atlantic regions, or examples, and we have -- As I said, the CEFI team, you know, is coordinating with the council IRA projects, through the development and implementation phases of these projects. Council staff are part of the CEFI decision support team. You know, of course, the East Coast Climate Coordination Group, the EC3G, oversees implementation, as such, of the climate scenario plannings, and we have also demonstration projects that are part of this that are actual active examples that are moving forward.

I think, perhaps tomorrow, you're going to hear on the dolphin MSE, from John Walter. The Shrimp Futures is looking at, you know, how the whole shrimp fishery is changing, and the impacts, in response to environmental and other changes, but also the social and socioeconomic aspects of it, and there's really a host of opportunities, in terms of working with stakeholders, through seminar series, invitations to stakeholder input, you know, at ports and piers and such, and so there's this idea of working with the council, so that it's an integrated conversation, and it's one that is really remarkable, in terms of what the South Atlantic is doing, even compared to many of the other countries, I mean, many other regions in the nation, and so it's a very healthy conversation, and important conversation.

I'm going to jump back to the ones I did wrong, and this is going to be really quick, because the last thing I wanted to say is I've talked about data, and I've talked about, you know, how do you provide advice, and we're also thinking about how do we integrate all of these different systems, and knowledge, that is being developed, say throughout the country, various regions, whether it's the Northeast, the West Coast, Alaska, and so on.

Then there's this effort called the Fisheries Integrated Modeling System. Kyle Shertzer, from here, from the South Atlantic, is a key member of this, and the idea is to bring together all of these tools that have been developed to -- You know, with the idea of improving stock assessment at the core, including all of these different components that we now need to be explicit about and connecting to ecosystem, climate, socioeconomics, et cetera.

This is an effort that started maybe in 2020 or so, and, you know, it's at a point where we have moved towards this integrated interdisciplinary approach to modeling, and to providing management advice, and it's a way of people coming together, and scientists coming together, you know, to provide, you know, these tools that, again, are not intended to replace any one tool, or any one process that's happening in one place, but to augment it, in terms of maybe I can borrow something from someone else in a way that allows for some of that updated transition, or enhanced transition, to happen, or advice to happen.

The timeline, as I said, and this is my last slide, in 2024, we've added additional features to FIMS, which includes, for example, catches, indices, ages, and so on, and also time variability. Again, remember that nonstationarity is a fundamental shift, in terms of how we think about things, and, in 2025 and forward, we're adding more things that we have not included before, discards, reference points, and such, and, hopefully, in 2026 and further, we can begin to do the outreach training and transitioning some of these elements into operations, and so, with that, Madam Chair, I would like to thank you for the opportunity and I'm happy to entertain questions, or I will be here for the rest of the week, and I'm happy to talk offline as well. Thank you so much.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Cisco. Does anybody have any quick questions for Cisco? Cisco said he will be around all week, and so if you -- You can engage him in all sorts of conversations all week long, but, if anybody has any quick questions, we can do those, or go ahead in the interest of time, and move on. All right. Well, I'm sure everybody is going to grab you this week, all week long. Thank you. All right, and I guess we will move into agency reports, and so I might as well start out with the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement. Do we have NOAA here? There you are.

MR. DOVER: Good morning, everybody. Officer Miles Dover, National Marine Fisheries. I'm stationed here in North Carolina. I'm happy to be with you all this morning. It's been a while since I've been with the council. Getting to the law enforcement update for our December meeting, since the last meeting, we've had 148 opened incidents in the South Atlantic.

Of those incidents, and there's 331 total across NMFS, but, in the South Atlantic, in our area down here, we've done 148. Twelve of those cases referred to General Counsel, or U.S. DOJ, mainly involving the right whale speed rule, sanctuary-related cases, seafood, IUU, and sampling ports. We've done sixty-three summary settlements, that have ranged anywhere between \$150,000 and \$3,000, relating to gear violations, permit violations, retentions during closure, like when we had to gag a group of closure earlier in the year, stuff like that.

Sanctuary-related cases, when we did the operation, the Keys operation, earlier this year, and the Bahamas-U.S. fishing operations, vessels going to the Bahamas and transferring fish and/or coming back to the U.S., and 277 patrols overall is what he's got in here. Again, like I've told you all in the past, looking up how many patrols these officers done is kind of difficult with our new case management system. You've got to go into each one, to see, was it Magnuson, or was it something else, and so what we've got right now is 277 patrols since the last council meeting.

30 percent of those incidents that were open were either no violations or compliance assistance, basically us going and doing boardings, and did we find anything or not? Compliance assistance being something very small, that you wouldn't write a full summary settlement on. On my notes, GC cases, they had, like I said, right whale speed management, sanctuary violations, and fishing in closed areas.

Some enforcement highlights, we did a bunch of training, and patrols. You can see on some of the pictures on here that we had outreach events. The bottom picture, on the left-hand side, is me actually going out with North Carolina Marine Patrol. Even though there's not a JEA with North Carolina, we still work together doing -- Those were shrimp boardings that we did in Pamlico Sound, checking TEDs, making sure that everybody was good to go there.

I had outreach in Florida with the Key West Florida Special Agent and Jacksonville Florida Special Agent. I traveled to Brevard County to give Lacey Act training for FWC. There were approximately twenty-five participants for FWC. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife and Brevard County Sheriff's Offices all attended.

An outreach was event was also completed at a marina, in a marina restaurant, in Merritt Island. Topics that were covered included the Bahamian Laws, Lacey Act, what triggers Lacey, and customs laws, and also members from CBP, Air Marine, the U.S. Coast Guard, and FWC were also in attendance for those training sessions that we held.

We continue holding workshops for different -- For FWC and fishermen out there, doing outreach, where we can, to make sure all these different agencies are onboard with federal laws and regulations. We always have new officers coming onboard, whether they're officers with NMFS or FWC, Georgia DNR, South Carolina DNR, and so we try to do as many training sessions as we can. Here in North Carolina, I do a lot with the U.S. Coast Guard, doing training sessions for them on fisheries and what they need to be looking for when they're working with us.

For enforcement partnerships and referrals, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council enforcement partners, we have all the DNR partners, FDA, U.S. Coast Guard, FWC, Georgia DNR, South Carolina DNR, and we 105 overall enforcement referrals over the third quarter, and that encompasses all of the SED. You can see, on the PowerPoint, or not on the PowerPoint, but, on the chart on the right-hand side, the little dots of kind of where they are, all over FWC, Georgia DNR, and South Carolina DNR, where their referrals have gone. We don't have any in North Carolina. There were a couple of U.S. Coast Guard referrals, but they were south of North Carolina, and so we don't have any positions up there.

As you see, the hotbed of them seems to be from Jacksonville, Florida, down through the Keys, on the east coast of Florida, and I'm not saying that the west coast of Florida doesn't send in



referrals, but, over this third quarter, the east coast of Florida had a lot more than anywhere else for our referrals.

Some targeted operations that we have, one of the big ones is IUU and SIMP, and you may be asking why do we have Guam up here, and we have Guam up here on this list because we felt it needed to be passed to the South Atlantic Council that the SED, the Southeast Division of National Marine Fisheries, we do a lot of IUU and SIMP, and our guys that do it so much were actually requested to go to Guam, over to PID, and help them out to start investigating some of their IUU and SIMP cases.

Our officer from Miami went to Guam, and spent quite a bit of time over there, and actually got some good cases while he was over there in Guam helping those guys out, trying to figure out what -- Or see what they should be finding, and so I thought it was a good -- He needed to be shouted at, to give him a good shoutout, saying, hey, we're SED, but we're willing to travel anywhere to go help out to get this and to complete this mission. He also, while he was also over there in Guam, he also conducted training for the local officers over there, gave education and outreach to the port agents that are there. Some of the cases they found were canned tuna from the Philippines, shrimp without proper documentation, while he was in Guam, and personnel playing -- The ESA green turtle meat, which was seized and sent to a facility to be tested.

During the Palm Beach operation, we had inspections going on in Palm Beach. The total value of the inspected imports in Palm Beach, when they did it, was 80,389 kilos. The total amount of seafood that was inspected while I was down there was \$1.577 million dollars' worth of seafood that was inspected in the Palm Beach area during that operation.

Other operations that we have going on are the Florida Keys ops, that we always do down there, the lobster mini season, inspecting the SPAs, to make sure nobody's fishing in the SPAs down there. That's always a big operation for us yearly.

Current spotlights, we have the right whale speed rule enforcement that's going on right now, and it's going on year-round, and we just had our first right whales last week seen off North Carolina, and I got a call, this morning, that first one was actually seen off of Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, or between Myrtle Beach and Charleston this morning, and so right whales are moving down, and so we make sure that we're out doing right whale speed enforcement. The little QR code that's on there, if anybody wants to scan it, or I'll have it on my computer later, and the council will also have it, and you scan that, and it gives you a lot of our information on the right whale speed rule and what we're doing on there.

We've also had our seasonal closures, and gags have been closed, and red snapper, and we had the one day that was open. Tilefish has been closed, and so we're always working around the seasonal closures, trying to get the word out, making sure our fishermen know what's open and what's closed, and we've passing, as much as we can, the Fish Rules app, to make sure the guys know when they can and can't fish and when they can and can't catch them.

I'm also doing all this work with being down two officers right now. For those of you in South Carolina that knew Mike Lind, and he was our officer in Charleston, and he's now taking a position as a special agent, and he will be the special agent in Jacksonville, Florida now, and so Mike Lind

has moved there, and we're trying to get a new officer hired for South Carolina, and our officer for the U.S. Virgin Islands has moved to Savannah, Georgia.

The officer in Savannah, Georgia has moved as National Training Coordinator at FLETC, and so the U.S. Virgin Islands is also open, and we're trying to get somebody in the queue to take the U.S. Virgin Islands positions, and so we're a little bit shorthanded right now, but we're working around it, and we're still doing the patrols, with me in North Carolina, covering from the Virginia line down towards Charleston, and so we're trying to still cover everywhere that we need to, even though we're short on a couple guys.

Again, this is our law enforcement hotline, and we always put it up there, if anybody doesn't have it, and needs to copy it down. Give us a call if you see something. Say something. Like I said, we're shorthanded, and I heavily rely on my Coast Guard and state partners. Anybody that can send us in the right direction, I really appreciate it. There's a lot of territory out there to cover, with a few people, and so, if you see it, please give us a holler and let us know what's going on, and give us a description of the activity, what happened, date, time, description of the boat, name of the vessel, if you can possibly get it, and somebody -- You don't have to, but, if you can give us a contact number, where we can expand on some of the information, we would greatly appreciate it. With that, any questions for me? Yes, sir.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you for your report, officer. I have a few questions regarding SEFHIER, as well as open-access permits, if you don't mind. So, I guess, just -- We've rehashed this in the past, but I just want to refresh everybody on this, and so how long have you been enforcing SEFHIER, and how do you go about that?

MR. DOVER: So, for SEFHIER, we're going on four years now that I've been doing SEFHIER, and there's -- To go about it, if -- For the officer level, if you're just going in there, we do have a list of seeing where everybody is reporting, and how often they're reporting, to go along with your regular patrolling, regular boardings during the day. So I can't go in there and look at a list and say, all right, Boats A, through how many ever, haven't been reporting and how delinquent they are.

Typically, we get a report sent to us by SERO, every month, saying, all right, these are the worst of your worst boats that haven't reported, and how many weeks, or months, or years. We start going down that list, and start making calls to the captains, especially if it's captains that I haven't talked to before, or we haven't -- Whoever the officer is hasn't talked to before. We go down the list and call the captain and say, all right, I see that you are six weeks behind, or you're eight weeks behind, or you're a year-and-a-half behind, and why are you not reporting on SEFHIER.

We, you know, find everything from I have the app, and I thought I was reporting on the app, but it was the original reporting app that they've still been reporting on, and never updated to eTRIPS 2, Mobile 2, and it's eTRIPS 1, and so it doesn't work, to I just forgot. I talked to a captain, last week in fact, that was -- His boat has been on the hill since April. He moved to Florida to be a contractor, because his charter business was not making anything, and he's like my boat has been on the hill, and I just forgot to start making my reports.

We just go down the list and say, all right, what is the reason you're not reporting, and try to get them up there, and, you know, to tell the guys in the future, you know, given that you all had the

control date, that you all passed a couple, or two or three council meetings ago, or, actually, I bet it's been about a year ago, when you all did the report date.

Right now, they're open access, but, in the future, they could go limited-access. I'm not saying that they will or not, but, if you're not reporting, then that's something, you know, on there, and there is a summary settlement for it. We try to give everybody, at least the first time, the benefit of doubt, and maybe it was you just forgot, or maybe, you know, you weren't good with computers, and work through them through that, and I've sat down with numerous captains, you know, getting their eTRIPS/mobile up, showing them -- Going to their boat, on their phone, or their computer, whatever, and saying, all right, this is how you report.

I will make sure that I know that they know how to report a trip, and, after that point, I'm like, all right, you've got from week one to week whatever to get it cleaned up, and I'll give them a few days to get it cleaned up. If it keeps being egregious, then we go down the summary settlement schedule, but it's just -- I think, on this last report, North Carolina -- I had over sixty, in North Carolina, that were delinquent on reporting, so it's -- You know, I try to help them out as much as I can, but it's -- You know, give them the tools that they need, but, if they choose to not report them --

MR. ROLLER: So thank you. That was very thorough, and what I was looking for. I also saw, looking at the summary settlement, that you have summary settlements in -- I saw South Carolina, North Carolina, and Florida east, for unpermitted charter operations. Could you touch on those a little bit, or how you would go about enforcing those permits?

MR. DOVER: So, for the unreported charter operations, if we have one of those cases, that is not one that we can prove at the dock. If you're going to -- For somebody that's running a charter, we all know that you can run a charter in state waters or federal waters, and, if you're in federal waters, you got to be federally-permitted. To prove that they were running a charter in federal waters, unpermitted, we have to find them on the scene in federal waters running a charter.

Of course, you always run into that we're just out here fishing as buddies, and this isn't a charter, and then we've got to prove that, but I can't prove at it when I'm sitting at the dock, you know, unless it's -- You know, unless it's, say, for instance, like swordfish in North Carolina. I know a swordfish, in North Carolina, is not going to be in state waters. You're not going to catch one in thirty to fifty feet of water, but, most fish, there is a chance you can catch, even, off the Atlantic beach, red snapper.

Red snapper are moved into the beach of North Carolina. We have them, if anybody's familiar with Cape Lookout area, in the subnets. It's a mile-and-a-half off the beach, and they're catching red snapper off the subnets now, and so proving it on the dock is hard, and so you've got to be out there, and, with me, I'm the only officer in North Carolina.

I work with the Coast Guard, and I work with Marine Patrol, but you've got to find those guys out there fishing with a charter onboard in federal waters, when they're doing it. A lot of -- You know, a lot of guys you see will ride that line in state waters, and not have federal permits, and are they going out in federal waters, or are they not? Unless I'm out there, I can't really prove it.

MR. ROLLER: Yes, and, I mean, so this has been a frustration with me, as someone in the for-hire industry who is complying with SEFHIER, who is putting our reports in, and, you know, I've been discussing this on my duties on my state fisheries, on the Marine Fisheries Commission in North Carolina, of how can North Carolina better enforce these permits, being that North Carolina is the only state, or territory, in the U.S. that doesn't have a joint enforcement agreement, because I know the industry. I can go onto the SERO site, and I can download the spreadsheet, and I can see who, and what boats, have these permits, and I see competitors of mine who don't have them, and they know they don't have them, and they just don't want to do SEFHIER. I just offer this for feedback for the council, because that's very frustrating, when we can't seem to do much about that.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tom. Anybody have any other questions? All right. I don't see any. Thank you.

MR. DOVER: Thank you for the opportunity. I appreciate it.

MS. MURPHEY: All right, I think, next, we have the Coast Guard report from Lieutenant Tom Pease.

LT. PEASE: Thank you. All right. Good morning. Thank you for having me, again. Lieutenant Tom Pease, and I'm the 7<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District's LMR Officer. I appreciate you having me, again. So, moving to our first slide, I'm just going to go through some highlights since the last meeting that I attended in September, starting with EEZ enforcement.

I'm not going to read the summary, and I'll just go through it, and so we had two vessels detected, intercepted and interdicted, for possible EEZ violation down in Puerto Rico. The Coast Guard Cutter Joseph Napier did conduct a right-of-visit boarding and determined nationality on these two vessels was Dominican Republic, fishing in U.S. EEZ by one-half of a nautical mile. There was no navigation equipment onboard. Both vessels thought they were in the U.S. EEZ, and they did have a small amount of catch onboard. However, between the commanding officer and Sector San Juan, it was determined the best course of action, being that they were only one-half of a mile inside the EEZ, was just to escort them back into the DR EEZ and issue them a warning.

Moving on to domestic fisheries, a total of twenty-five boardings were conducted, with one significant violation case and one catch seizure happening in the Sector Key West area of responsibility, twelve miles north of Marquesas, Florida. An Alabama-based shrimp boat was fishing without a permit. The federal fisheries permit was to have expired one year previous to this boarding.

They did have 45,000 pounds of catch onboard. That vessel was detained, and the catch was seized. The vessel was allowed to return to Bayou La Batre, which was their homeport, where a NMFS agent was to meet them at the dock, and then they actually seize the catch, and so that was pretty significant.

That happened right at the end of -- I think that might have happened the week after I got back from the September meeting that we had this case come up, and so Sector Key West, and Station Key West in particular, are doing a great job down there with their boardings, and this is the quad slide for the boarding that I was just talking about, and so 9/19 was the date of the boarding, and

then you have a picture of the catch, there in the top-right-hand corner, and the vessel actively engaged in fishing, and then where the boarding took place.

Then, moving on to marine protected resources enforcement, we did have three enforcement cases in Port Canaveral, manatee speed zone violations. It seems to be both in the Port Canaveral area responsibility, and I know St. Pete -- This is an issue in their AOR as well, just speed zone violations, and then, down in Key West, we assisted the sea turtle hospital by transporting some scientists and a green turtle, via Coast Guard boat, and releasing the animal offshore.

Then the future outlook for 2025, and I -- Since taking over October 1<sup>st</sup> officially for this job, I've made it very clear, to the six sectors in the 7<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District, that my goal is to increase the number of boardings up from previous years. It is no secret that the 7<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District's fisheries boardings have lacked in the past years.

You know, we do have a heavy focus on counternarcotic and counter-migrant operations in the Florida, you know, the Miami, Key West, and San Juan AOR, in addition to our counternarcotic operations in the central Caribbean. However, fisheries enforcement is one of the Coast Guard's eleven statutory missions, and we do perform it in the 7<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District.

Having been a LMR boarding officer for twelve years up in New England, this is something that is very important to me. The sectors, the six sectors we have in the 7<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District, are now well aware of my stance on fisheries enforcement, and my goal to increase those numbers, particularly in the high and medium-precedent fisheries in the 7<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District, and so that's goal number one, is to increase the number of boardings throughout the district in FY25.

Then we do that by, you know, working with our regional fisheries training centers that we have in Charleston and New Orleans, where our boarding officers go, depending on where they're assigned in the district, for our Gulf of Mexico, Southeast, and Caribbean fisheries boarding officers, and increasing pulse operations across all sectors. You know, the sectors know what they have in their AOR, and they know their fleets, and they know their fisheries, and they know when they're able to pulse in to have targeted operations, and then, across the district, promoting the commercial fishing vessel safety decal program.

You know, we were able to really hone-in on this up in the 1<sup>st</sup> Coast Guard District, when I was up there. Almost every fishing vessel that I boarded personally had one of these stickers, and it really makes the boarding process go by a lot faster, you know, and it allows them to get back to work, and so we are promoting that now actively across the district, where more fishing vessel captains can participate in this program, and, you know, it makes everybody's lives a little bit easier, and it gets the -- You know, I know the number -- The chief complaint from fishing crews, in my experience, was how long the boarding takes. Well, if you have a decal, it speeds that process up a little bit.

Most importantly, we want to make sure the vessels in the 7<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District are operating safely, and so hopefully I have some numbers that are bolstered for you in March, when we get together again. I'm using some techniques, at my level, to maybe incentivize the sectors to bolster their fishing enforcement a little bit better, because I'm now tracking what sectors are doing what, and I'm making it public, in my monthly reports, you know, so they can -- So everybody in the Coast Guard districts can see what sectors are actively doing fisheries enforcement, and what

sectors aren't, and so hopefully the sector commanders see that, and, you know, they don't have a big zero next to their sector every month, and so just, you know, little ways to do it.

You know, we are -- I've made it very well known that I plan to make fisheries enforcement relevant again in the 7<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District, and so I really hope that we can, you know, produce some more numbers for the district, and then this is my contact information. I am based out of Miami. I am leaving after we adjourn here at lunch. I have to -- The shop I'm in, I'm in International Engagements and Foreign Policy. That is my day-to-day job at the 7<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District, and I'm actually -- It's a real tough life, but I'm heading down to Turks and Caicos here later this week.

I know it's pretty rough, but so I do have to leave, but this is my contact information, if you have any questions, and I know Myra has my information as well, but you can email me, call me on either of these numbers, on Microsoft Teams or WhatsApp. That WhatsApp number is also my cell phone, and so, if there are any questions that anyone has for me, or needs to get ahold of me after I depart, these three methods are the best, and, with that, I will pause and take any questions anyone may have.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Lieutenant. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Lieutenant. I appreciate the presentation. I just have one quick question. I've been watching media, and it sounds like there's been some increased recruitment, and capacity building, for the U.S. Coast Guard, and I just didn't know if you had any comments about that and if you could provide any information on it.

LT. PEASE: Sure, and so resources and people still tend to be our chief detriment. I know I did just come from Coast Guard Headquarters in July, and I spent four years there, at the Office of Boat Forces, but we did, you know, work closely together with enlisted personnel and management, officer personnel management. The numbers of recruits, and the throughput at Training Center Cape May, where boot camp is, is increasing. I think we are on pace to meet our annual quota. The throughput of Training Center Cape May, I believe, is 5,000 recruits a year. I think we are set to meet that this year, and so that's a good sign.

Then so, as far as people go, you know, those numbers are going to, you know, hopefully bolster here, but, again, that's kind of a trickle effect. You get a brand-new recruit out of boot camp, and then you spend a year training them up, and then getting them out to fill these vacant billets that we have across the Coast Guard, but the second part of that is our resources. You know, we do have an older fleet, as far as our Coast Guard cutters are concerned.

We do have newer cutters. Our 154-foot fleet are newer. We do have, you know, ten or twelve-year-old FRCs, and, you know, we still have new ones coming off the production line, and then, with stations closing, and, you know, cutters continuing to decommission, our eight-seven-foot fleet is continuing to decommission, with the FRCs replacing them, and then our 210-foot fleet is being replaced by the 360-foot offshore patrol cutter, with a lot of those going to the west coast.

We don't really feel that here on the east coast and the Southeast yet, but, with people coming in, more people coming in, and new equipment coming online, I foresee, over the next couple of years, our fleet, you know, being, you know, increasing, and so, with the more cutters, and

infrastructure, that we have coming online, we'll be able to patrol more often, and so we do -- Especially in the 7<sup>th</sup> Coast Guard District, we do take a hit, because a lot of cutters will come down to the Miami, Key West, and San Juan AORs, and then go down to the Caribbean, to do those other missions that we have, and so, up in the Sector Charleston, Jacksonville, and St. Petersburg AOR, we are stretched pretty thin, and so we do rely on our boat stations to do a lot of these fisheries enforcement for us, and so I feel it getting better over the next couple of years.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other questions? All right. Well, thank you, Lieutenant.

LT. PEASE: Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: So we'll go ahead and go to our council liaisons. John Sanchez, would you like to give your report first, and then we'll have Sonny?

MR. SANCHEZ: Yes. Good morning, everyone. We recently had our Gulf meeting, in St. Pete, November 4 through 7. The council adopted council committee assignments for the following year and presented the 2023 Law Enforcement Team of the Year Award to Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Northwest Offshore Patrol Vessel Team.

The following is a list, a summary, of the council actions. Wahoo, some struggles there, and the council heard a presentation on the consideration of wahoo for federal management. The council, the National Marine Sanctuaries, and the Gulf states are going to consider some management, and we're wrestling with which direction we go in. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission regulates wahoo with a two-fish bag limit for the recreational sector.

The council requested that the remaining Gulf states consider the appropriateness of developing state wahoo regulations that would apply to federal waters, because there are currently no federal regulations in the Gulf of Mexico. The states committed to evaluate state management of wahoo, and the council plans to discuss the issue further, and so to be continued.

The council continued work on a framework action that aims to transition the federally-permitted Gulf shrimp fleet to a new platform for vessel position, data collection, and transmission. This will replace the cellular electronic logbook program, which stopped transmitting vessel data at the end of 2020, due to the expiration of 3G network.

The council reviewed and approved updates to the document, which included allowing for satellite-based monitoring systems. The council decided to convene its Shrimp Advisory Panel to discuss these changes to the document before the January 2025 meeting, and so we basically polled -- We took a doodle poll, and the advisory panel, the Shrimp Advisory Panel, will be able to meet before, and so we'll get the benefit of their input before we proceed with these logbook requirements.

The deepwater grouper complex is comprised of warsaw, snowy, yellowedge, and speckled hind, and it's currently managed as a single annual catch limit for the complex. The most recent assessment on yellowedge determined that, while yellowedge is not overfished, it is experiencing overfishing. Based on the stock assessment results, the SSC recommended an overall decrease in allowable harvest.

Yellowedge is the most frequently-landed species in the deepwater complex, compared to the others. Thus, the SSC recommended updated catches, based on average historical landings, for the other deepwater groupers in the complex. The council is considering management alternatives for the deepwater grouper complex, which include modifying the status determination criteria, establishing sector allocations, and updating catch limits and accountability measures.

The council discussed, and expressed concern for, setting catch limits and accountability measures based on the recreational landings data, which are highly uncertain. if not rare for -- A rare event for these deepwater species. The council modified the range of alternatives considered for setting sector specific allocations and catch limits. The council also decided to expand the range of alternatives that would modify recreational accountability measures to account for the uncertainty in landing estimates and evaluate multiyear approaches for triggering accountability measures. The council plans to continue working on this document at the January 2025 meeting. It promises to be a hot topic.

Shallow-water grouper, the shallow-water grouper complex is comprised of scamp, yellowmouth, black, and yellowfin grouper, and is currently managed with a single annual catch limit for the complex. The complex can no longer be managed this way, because the stock assessment and catch recommendations were completed for scamp and yellowmouth separate from the remaining species. The catch limit recommendations for scamp and yellowmouth represent a considerable decrease in allowable harvest, while catch limit recommendations for black and yellowfin remain unchanged.

The council reviewed Amendment 58A, which considers splitting the complex, establishing criteria used to determine the new subcomplexes if they are overfished or experiencing overfishing, and setting allowable catch and accountability measures for each new subcomplex. The amendment considers a recreational season and establishes new commercial IFQ program share categories, allocations, and accountability measures for each subcomplex. Due to the timing of the development and implementation of 58A, the council decided to begin work on a separate framework action that would revise catch limits for the shallow-water grouper complex for a short period of time in 2026 while the council works to finalize and implement 58A.

Lane snapper, we've been experiencing overfishing the previous three years, resulting in early season closures, despite recent council actions to increase lane snapper catch limits in 2021 and again in January of 2024. Stakeholders have expressed interest in reducing late-season closures. The council is obligated to assess current management measures and considering making changes to reduce the probability of overfishing.

The council reviewed a presentation of draft actions that would increase the minimum size and revise the recreational bag limit to constrain harvest to stock annual catch limit and extend the fishing season duration. The council requested further analysis be completed to compare how changes to the size limit and recreational bag were expected to impact landings and season duration. The council expects to continue to work on this document at its January 2025 meeting.

Commercial IFQ program, the council heard a presentation on Draft Reef Fish Amendment 60, which addresses the distribution of shares and annual allocations in the red snapper and grouper-tilefish IFQ programs. The council decided to convene its Ad Hoc IFQ Advisory Panel to review



this amendment, and Amendment 59, which considers requirements for participation in IFQ programs.

Federal for-hire fishing data collection, the council continued to work on a draft amendment that considers developing a new for-hire data collection program. The council focused on the approach for collecting economic information from a portion of the participating vessels, rather than for each trip. The council requested an evaluation of the costs associated with various alternatives and plans to continue work on the document during the January 2025 meeting.

Red snapper season, the council reviewed a document that considered moving the federal for-hire red snapper season opening earlier in the year. After reviewing the analysis evaluating how season duration would be impacted by opening the season earlier, and listening to public testimony, the council selected a preferred alternative that would open the federal for-hire fishing year on the Friday before Memorial Day. The council will solicit public input before taking final action on this document in 2025. The changes are expected to be implemented before the 2026 federal for-hire fishing season.

Greater amberjack, the council directed its staff to begin work on a flow chart to explore decision points necessary for considering state and/or regional management of greater amberjack for the recreational sector. This decision flow chart will include a comparison of outcomes with and without sector separation. The council also requested an update on the greater amberjack count for its January 2025 meeting, including projected timeline for completion.

Exempted fishing permit, the council recommended that NOAA Fisheries approve an exempted fishing permit proposed by Texas Sea Grant that will allow new bycatch reduction device designs to be tested in the commercial shrimp fishery in the federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Madam Chair, that concludes our liaison report.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John. Any questions for John? All right. We'll go ahead and go to Sonny.

MR. GWIN: Thank you. The council met, the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council met, in October, in Dewey Beach, Delaware, and, during this meeting, we reviewed and approved a strategic plan for 2025 through 2029. We adopted butterflyfish specifications for 2025 through 2026. We recommended status quo 2025 specifications for Atlantic mackerel. We deferred action on 2025 spiny dogfish specifications, pending further consideration by the SSC committee.

We received an update on the private recreational tilefish permitting and reporting program and considered recommendations for improving angler awareness and compliance. We recommended that NOAA Fisheries pause soliciting for new monkfish RSA projects until the program's underlying economic and problematic issues are addressed.

We received a presentation on a proposed rule to modify and/or expand reporting requirements for Atlantic HMS and received an overview of draft outcomes, recommendations, and possible action items for the eighth national Scientific Coordination Subcommittee workshop.

We received presentations on several topics related to offshore wind energy development, which included a fish kill off the Virginia wind operation of approximately 17,000 croakers, and some

red hake, and that's still an ongoing investigation. They don't know if the wind energy killed them or what the problem was with that. We approved several changes to guidelines for the council's three awards and reviewed and provided feedback on proposed actions and deliverables for the 2025 implementation plan, and, if there's any questions, I'll be glad to answer them.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Sonny. Anything for Sonny? All right. I know we're coming up on lunch, and I wonder -- If everybody is good, we could go ahead and get through our state reports and then break for lunch. I know Jessica's going to be doing a presentation on the EFPs. I'm not sure how long that will be, but do you want to -- Do you all want to just shoot that, after Jessica is done, we just break for lunch then? Is everybody good with that? Okay, and so I'm going to go ahead and start north, and work our way south, so then we finish with Jessica, and so I'll go ahead and give the North Carolina report. It's pretty short.

The division held public hearings on our false albacore management rule, and this is a rule that gives the director authority to issue proclamation to manage false albacore if landings exceed a predetermined threshold, and this is to be put in place to establish management, in case the fishery expands.

We also received a new ESA Section 10 incidental take permit from NMFS. This is for sea turtles and sturgeon and internal coastal and joint fishing waters for our gillnet fisheries, and this permit will be valid for ten years.

Our commission met last month and selected preferred management measures for spotted seatrout, and this was for both the recreational and commercial fisheries. These include slot limits, a three-fish bag limit, weekend closures for the commercial fishery, and also some cold stun management. The commission also approved our oyster and hard clam FMPs for public comment and approved potential nominees for our South Atlantic Council obligatory seat.

The division also updated the commission on our southern flounder management plan. We'll be working on a focused amendment concerning allocations, which will bring it up 50-50, commercial-recreational, a year earlier than previously planned, and then we'll also be working on a more comprehensive amendment to focus on other management considerations.

Last, but not least, last week, the division did sink a fifty-five-foot fishing trawler for an artificial reef off Cape Lookout, and that's all I've really got for North Carolina, if anybody has any questions. Then I will move on to South Carolina. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll try to keep them brief as well. As I mentioned at our September meeting, the Department of Natural Resources Director, Robert Boyles, did announce his retirement in early 2025. Our DNR Board of Directors has selected Tom Milliken to replace Robert Boyles.

That will still have to be confirmed by the senate in early 2025, but we look forward to working with Mr. Milliken. He has been involved in the South Carolina Floodwater Commission, which was an appointed position by Governor Henry McMaster. He is also an environmental attorney, who has studied environmental issues worldwide, and he also is a joint professor at the University of South Carolina and Coastal Carolina University, both in their environmental section, and so we look forward to having him, as he is an avid outdoorsman.

The R/V Palmetto and the first season Lady Lillian ended up with all successful trips this past season for our fishery-independent monitoring. The Palmetto will be going to the yard, just for some regular maintenance, while the Lillian will actually not be going into the yard, but will be having some new electronics installed, as well as some transmission repairs. It's kind of imperative that the boat goes in reverse at times, when pulling that net back. I'm very grateful for the council, because the funds to be able to not only purchase the Lillian, but retrofit her, will be able to allow us to be able to finish all of this out by the end of the year.

Speaking of funds, we are still awaiting FY24 funds from NOAA Fisheries in support of MARMAP and SEAMAP. That start date was in July, and it's December 2<sup>nd</sup>, and so we're definitely in a little bit of a crunch for those funds to be allocated quickly. We did receive the SADLS funds, and were able to get a short season of deepwater long lining, earlier this season, which was great. We are still doing quite a bit of ongoing work with Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, with cobia, red drum, and a croaker assessment. South Carolina is actually doing our own red drum assessment as well, and so hopefully that outcome will be able to be provided here shortly.

As I mentioned earlier, we also moved to a limited-entry blue crab fishery. Letters to our commercial blue crabbers, for those who were eligible to be able to continue to have a limited blue crab license, were sent out last week. There will be a process for anyone that was not eligible to show proof that they've actually been landing blue crabs, both from a fisherman perspective and a dealer perspective.

We also have some ongoing work at our Waddell hatchery, in support of our flounder research stocking program. We needed to do quite a bit of renovations to our ponds, and replace some pump house equipment, and so that is exciting, that we'll be able to work with our flounder, moving forward.

Last, in case you were not aware Representative Nancy Mace introduced a bill called the Protect Our Fisheries Act. It is to set changes to the Magnuson-Stevens Act for inclusion of economic loss from foreign imports as a considered fisheries disaster. Of course, it will still require the Secretary of Commerce to declare it as a disaster, and this is in specific regards to our shrimp fishery, and, with that, that will complete my report.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Amy. Any questions for Amy? John.

DR. WALTER: Not a question, but thanks for working with us, on particularly getting the South Atlantic Deepwater Longline survey going, in the promise that the funds are on the way. I'm not sure where they are exactly, but we do intend to distribute them, but thanks for working with us in kind of a little bit of a challenging environment for both us and you.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, John. We appreciate it, and the state did take action, because we do understand that the funds are coming, and we also received some support from the council as well, for those contracts to be executed and for that sampling to be conducted. We did not want to have a year gap.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. We'll move over to Georgia and Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: We're going to be pretty short and sweet. Similar situation in red drum and croaker. C.J. Schlick, who worked with South Carolina, is jointly working with Georgia on stock assessments as well, and so it's great to be able to have a person to put in in those situations where we're kind of tapped short on folks. Sorry for North Carolina's losses, but it's our gain.

Beyond that, I mean we tend to be status quo. We haven't really had any big changes. Probably the one big thing that hit the department as a whole -- Well, we've had two pieces of news. Recently, Joe Tanner passed away, who was the first commissioner for the Department of Natural Resources, and so he was responsible for pulling a great number of state agencies together to form DNR, back in 1972. He just passed away this week, and so there's a big recognition for him and what he has done for different avenues of conservation throughout the state of Georgia, and so that was a great loss.

The other thing that hit us pretty hard was Sapelo Dock, for those of you who I'm sure were aware. It's still under investigation, and it probably will be for quite a while, but, unfortunately, we had a loss of seven lives that day. We're not really sure what happened with the failure, and so they're looking into that, and they're doing independent views as well, because it was state structure, and so our law enforcement was boots on the ground, and it's amazing how much they can pull forward, and the Coast Guard. I mean they've had -- Pretty much, the helicopter was up and over that site about as quick as anything could be, and I greatly appreciate everybody who jumped, literally jumped, in to help get as many people out of the water as they could, but the state is going to be grappling with that for quite a while.

Our fisheries keep chugging along. We lost a couple of boats, with some of the hurricanes, and so now our understanding of infrastructure is going to be even more critical, relative to that fleet, because some of those docks are also taking hits, as boats are impacting them on their way down. We know of three boats that probably will not be coming back into service, for certain, just because of damages from the storms, and that's all I have for Georgia.

MS. MURPHEY: Any questions for Carolyn, and, Carolyn our condolences for the loss of life at Sapelo. We're all thinking of you guys. Next, we'll go to Jessica and Florida.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Trish. I'll give the updates first, and then I'll go into the EFP presentation, and so next week is our December FWC Commission meeting, and just some updates on what we're taking to that meeting. We're taking an Atlantic black and gag grouper recreational regulation changes federal consistency action, based on what the council finalized, and I believe it was at our last meeting.

We'll also be taking what we call a review and discussion, and so pre-rulemaking, for stone crab and lobster trap endorsement programs, and so there's some updates that are needed. This is specifically looking at things like the share cap, and vessel leasing, and things of that nature. We intend -- Assuming that the commission is okay with it, we intend to bring regulatory changes in 2025 on those two fisheries, and then, also, we're taking final action on our marine special activity license program.

This program hasn't been updated in fifteen-plus years, and things like coral restoration, and things like that, are not in this SAL program now and so we've divided these changes into two phases, and this is final action on phase one of these special activity license changes.

With that, I'll dive into the update that you guys asked for on our FWC Atlantic red snapper exempted fishing permit project, and Kristen Foss is not here yet, but C.J. Sweetman, another one of our principal investigators, is on the webinar and can help answer questions, depending on what questions you guys have.

All right, and so I'm just going to give you some reminders on what all we're doing in this Atlantic red snapper EFP, and so we have three unique projects. At this point, they're planning on running from August of 2024 through July of next year, and you can see the goals there. We have many goals for these projects, to collaborate with anglers to obtain catch and discard information, test innovative strategies to reduce discards, allow additional red snapper harvest, develop a reporting app, and an educational course, as well as evaluating angler satisfaction.

These are the study areas for the three projects, and so two of the projects are occurring in northeast Florida, and then one of them is occurring in southeast Florida, and so this is split in the Canaveral area, at the NASA Vehicle Assembly Building.

I'm going to show you a chart that looks at these three projects side-by-side, and then I'll come back and give you some details on some of the items that are on the chart, and so I mentioned that there are two projects in northeast Florida. The study fleet, and so the study fleet is vessel-based, and it is looking at private and for-hire vessels. There are forty total participants per year, but each one of these projects are divided into quarters, and so it is taking ten participants per quarter, five private vessels and five for-hire vessels, and what they're doing is they're testing the fifteen-fish snapper grouper aggregate bag limit, and then they have full retention of red snapper, up to thirty-six per vessel, and each participant in this study fleet can take four trips per quarter.

Then you can see some of the angler requirements that are for all three projects, across all three projects, that I'll get into more on the coming slides, but everybody is required to take an education course. You have a trip declaration, which is basically like a hail-in and hail-out. We're doing dockside data validation. We have developed a customized phone app for reporting. We're doing angler satisfaction surveys before and after these studies, and then we're providing angler incentives, once people report the data.

Then here are the other two fleets, the hotspot fleet, also in northeast Florida, and then southeast Florida snapper grouper fleet. These two fleets, people apply through our Go Outdoors Florida licensing system, and they are selected via a lottery, and this is only private anglers. For-hire is not involved in these other two fleets. There will be 800 total people, over the course of the year. 200 are selected per quarter, and, of those 200, then you have people that are in a control group and then people that are taking this fifteen-fish aggregate bag limit. They're allowed to keep red snapper, et cetera.

There are -- Looking at the chart there, one of the fleets, the hotspot fleet, the anglers can take three trips per quarter. The southeast Florida fleet is two trips per quarter, and people can keep red snapper, if you're in the experimental group, and then all of those angler requirements, along the bottom, apply to these two fleets as well.

All right, and so I mentioned a little bit about the control group and the experimental group, and so the experimental group does allow -- They're allowed to take these red snapper harvest opportunities. They're angler-based, and so, each angler that is selected through the lottery, they can take their trip on their private vessel, or they could get on a headboat, or they could get on a charter boat, in order to conduct this, once they're selected.

We're asking them to fish for a fifteen-fish snapper grouper aggregate. I'll show you the species that are in the aggregate on another slide. Then, the control group that I talked about, they don't get red snapper harvest opportunities. They don't have to abide by the fifteen-fish snapper grouper aggregate. They fish as normal, but they do report on these trips in the app. They have to take the educational courses. They're doing surveys, these angler attitude surveys, and then, if they submit all of their information during their quarter, then they receive priority -- Like what we call preference points in our licensing system, and so think -- If you know anything about Florida's quota hunt program, on the hunting side, it would be preference points to be selected for the experimental fleet, if you apply in the following quarter.

Then the fifteen-fish aggregate bag limit, it's kind of small there, but you also have a copy of this presentation in the briefing book, so that you can look at all the different species. The species have usually a cap within the fifteen-fish aggregate, and so, for example, only one fish could be gag, black, or scamp grouper, but up to ten fish can be grunts, or up to five fish can be gray triggerfish, and so this is designed to have people hit this bag limit relatively quick, and then stop bottom fishing, thereby reducing discards, and people can take red snapper while they are trying to get this snapper grouper -- This fifteen-fish snapper grouper bag limit.

It works a little bit differently in the study fleet. You either stop once you've hit the fifteen-fish aggregate or when the vessel obtains the thirty-six red snapper, whichever one comes first. The different federal regulations, and the status of the species, dictate what their individual limits are within the fifteen-fish, and just a note, and so we did an analysis, per season, on what the overall per-person bag limit could be for the snapper grouper complex, everything that the council is regulating, and so, depending on the quarter, or the season, of the year, it could be anywhere from like forty-four to forty-eight fish per person, on one of these trips, and so that's why we selected a fifteen-fish aggregate, to see, if you hit this, you know, what does that do to discards, how do discards change, in trying to get to this bag limit, in all seasons of the year, and what species -- Depending on where you are along the coast, kind of what species make up your aggregate bag limit.

People are asked to report on this, and they're also asked to report on sizes and numbers of discards, and I can tell you -- So we're learning a lot of things during this EFP, and so one of the things that we're learning is that people are very confused about what species are in the snapper grouper complex, how many species, the fifty-five species that are in the fishery management unit.

We find ourselves arguing, on the phone, and explaining to people that, no, these species, like grunts, have always been in the council's fishery management unit, and people are like, no, this is just for the EFP. No, this is part of it, and so there's a lot of confusion, I would say, about things like grunts, about the jacks, about a number of species, that indicate that people have been confused for some time about what species are even in the fishery management unit that the council is managing.

It just seems that we've got too many species, and even trying to cut it down to the fifteen fish, and people are confused about what they're supposed to be doing, relative to what's in the complex, and it's been a very interesting experiment so far.

All right, and so I mentioned that everybody is required to take an educational course. FWC already had some online educational courses, that were required for other permits, and so we have a shore-based shark fishing permit that has an educational course requirement. Also, recently, we implemented an education requirement for fishing on Skyway Fishing Pier, that's on the Gulf coast.

Even though this course is required for all participants, and it's actually three modules, and one is a little bit of background on why we're doing these exempted fishing permit permits, best fishing practices, and then an extensive one that's on fish ID, that I think is maybe even about twenty minutes long, and it's very lengthy, and I would say that, when you are on one of those for-hire trips, five for-hire trips, in the study fleet, each person on that vessel is not required to log-in separately.

The captain logs in, and we actually send them a packet, in the mail, and they have hard copies of these presentations, and it's up to the captain, on those for-hire trips, to help explain, to all people onboard, what are in these PowerPoints, and so, as they're orienting people to the boat, to the safety equipment, et cetera, they are also orienting them with these PowerPoints, printed-out copies of these PowerPoints.

We also have a reporting app, that we designed specifically for these exempted fishing permits. It's actually a web application, but you can access it on your phone, and it looks like an app. All participants are required to declare trips, before they leave the dock, and then, at the end of the trip, they input information.

This would include details about fishing location, weather condition, the species that they caught, discards, et cetera, and so we actually give people that are participating in these programs -- They get like a write-in-the-rain -- Like a logbook, so that they know all the information that they're going to be required to be input into the app. They have these little logbooks, that they can fill out while on the boat, and they don't have to try to input the information on their phone, while they're fishing. They can do it when they get back to the dock.

We also have angler incentives, and so, after you complete a certain number of fishing trips, and you've successfully entered all of the data that we're asking for, and you've taken the education courses, and you've done all the things, then you're eligible to receive incentives for successfully completing these trips, and submitting all the data, and so it includes everything from EFP shirts, packs of circle hooks, descending devices, and then we have people that select -- That have successfully completed these trips, and submitted the data, are then randomly selected for drawing opportunities. We've purchased some of these items, but also some of these items are also donated as well, and you can see a couple examples there, a reel and an Engel backpack cooler there.

We also have -- So there is a social scientist, that's part of our FWC social science team, that's a PI on all of these projects, and they are responsible for conducting these angler satisfaction surveys. The hotspot fleet and the southeast florida fleet -- They are doing these pre and post-surveys, and, once again, that's angler-based. If you're in the study fleet, in addition to these pre and post-surveys

of folks on those vessels, we're also conducting semi-structured interviews, to ask additional follow-up questions of the anglers that are onboard those trips.

We're really trying to understand angler satisfaction, and so remember that there are people in the control group that we're trying to understand how satisfied they are with the current regulations, versus the people that are in the experimental group and what they think about things like the fifteen-fish aggregate, the ability to take red snapper outside of the season, how they feel about reporting on the app, taking the education course, all of those different things.

We also have dockside validation of these projects, and so we have five people that were hired. This is led by FWRI, and they meet the vessels at the dock, and so the study fleet is actually 100 percent dockside validation. We're sampling all of those fish. We take DNA samples, that go to the Patterson next-of-kin study for red snapper, and then you can actually see, in the bottom corner there, that, also, if you're in the study fleet, and you're on a private trip -- For insurance purposes, we're not allowed to board those vessels, and so they have videos.

You can see a video, and that's actually from the study fleet, on a for-hire trip, and so the private vessels don't have an observer. The for-hire vessels in the study fleet do have an observer, and you can see the observer there, on the video taken on that trip, helping to measure some of the fish and help fill out the logbook. The other two fleets do not have cameras, and they do not have observers. They're only -- We're only validating that information when those trips come to the dock, and it's a subset of those trips, and not all of them.

I've mentioned that this is a four-quarter-based project, and we have application windows prior to each quarter, a two-week time period when you when you can apply to be part of this. Two of the projects, you apply through the Go Outdoors Florida licensing system, and then, the study fleet, there's a separate application online. We also created videos about how to apply, especially for the Go Outdoors Florida licensing system, because it's under our quota hunt portion of the FWC licensing system pages.

You can also see -- So the participants that are selected -- It's the same number each quarter, but you can see that the amount of applications is changing over time. We had almost 8,000 applicants in the first quarter, and then we had, you know, about 3,500 in Quarter 2. We try to put out a press release, and send out other materials, as each application period opens, so that people are aware.'

All right, and so here's some -- A little bit of the stats for Quarter 1, that people were fishing August to October. You can see how many people completed the pre-survey, how many people completed the education course, how many completed the different trips, how many dockside intercepts, how many red snapper were harvested, and sampled, and, in this photo here, you can see that, if you're part of the study fleet, then you fly that flag, that yellow flag that you can see there, so law enforcement can tell, from a distance, that you're on a study fleet trip, as they're, you know, hauling red snapper over the side of the boat outside of the season.

There's a little bit more there about kind of what we've learned so far. This has been a huge agency effort, everything from licensing and permitting, our IT folks, FWRI, DMFM, the mailroom. I mean, you name it, and there were so many challenges. There were also challenges with delays in the funding coming from NOAA, in that FWC fronted the money, before NOAA was able to provide the money, so we could get these underway.



There's a lot of interest in participation by anglers. I mean, there's a lot more people applying than we have spots for these programs, and, overall, I would say that we've gotten a lot of positive feedback, including people that are really excited to submit their data. There's things, like the education course, that people find fairly useful. We're getting a lot of feedback on what it's like to fill out the app, what it's like to do the logbook and then fill out the app, and so lots of data coming in on this. We're continuing to build relationships and trust.

I can tell you that, just in the last week or so, we have received some -- We'll call it negative publicity on these projects, particularly around the study fleet, that is not a lottery, and, you know, there's only ten spots per quarter, and there are some people that have gone to Congressman Rutherford, and their local news station, because they're upset, because they were not selected to participate in the study fleet.

We have a lot of resources out there. If people want to see more information, see the original proposals, et cetera, you can look at our website. We have a specific email for this project, and then we have tons of promotional items. You can see a little card that we were handing out, right there, during the one-day season, that said, want to keep more Atlantic red snapper, and you can see a QR code there, so people could log-in, learn about the projects, and get prepared to apply during that first quarter. That's it. With that, I'll take any questions about this project.

MS. MURPHEY: Anybody have a couple of short questions for Jessica? Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Jessica. I fully support this, obviously, as an innovative way to change management, to allow more harvest, and reduce dead discards. It may be too early for this information, but one question I would have is how many of the trips, and I guess it would be the study fleet, reached their fifteen-fish aggregate and had to stop fishing? Do we have any of that information? Then one more, at the same time. How many of them reached their red snapper choke number, which would also end fishing, at least in first quarter, if we have any of those numbers.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and C.J. is online, and so he just sent a message that only a few so far, but, C.J., do you want to offer some added information to answer Jimmy's question?

DR. SWEETMAN: Absolutely. Jimmy, I would say only a handful, so far, have reached their fifteen-fish snapper grouper aggregate bag limit, and, relative to meeting that choke species on the study fleet for red snapper, that has been more prevalent than actually meeting that fifteen-fish aggregate. It seems like there's a lot of red snapper out there.

MR. HULL: Thank you for that, because I would -- You know, out of my inlet, that's what is going to happen to you, is you're just going to choke out on snapper, before you'll ever get close to your other species. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thanks. In the interest of time, we'll go ahead, and let's uh break for lunch. Jessica is around all week as well, if anybody has more questions about her study, and so is everybody good for a one-hour lunch, and get back here at 1:30? Is everybody -- Is that doable, or do we need to stick with an hour-and-a-half? Okay, and let's shoot for being back at 1:30. Try very hard, and we'll start back up with the SERFS report with Tracey.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MURPHEY: All right. We're going to get started. Thanks, everyone, for taking the shorter lunch, and so maybe we can start trying to get back on schedule a little bit. I think we've got -- Who do we have? We have Tracey Smart. She's going to do a presentation on the Southeast Reef Fish Survey and the Southeast Area Monitoring, the SEAMAP, program, and so thanks.

DR. SMART: Thank you all for having us. I know you guys have a really busy schedule this week, and a lot of things to get through, and so I appreciate you carving out some time for the SERFS-plus presentation. We have rebranded it, over time, to add some things, and some elements, and so I'm going to talk specifically about our 2023 updates, through 2023, in particular relative abundance trends for variety of species.

I want to acknowledge my coauthors, Walley, Julie, Amy, Christina, Nate, and others who have worked really hard on -- Oh no. I think I gave you the wrong presentation. This is the SSC one. Let me check on it. Sorry. Yes, this is the wrong one. Hold on.

Sorry about that. We're going to run without animations and videos, but I promise I can send them all to you later, and so, as I mentioned, I want to acknowledge my coauthors, Wally, Julie, Amy, and Nate. They're the ones who have taken on the lion's share of the analyses that are in the current presentation. This is morphed over several years, and so you'll see some additional species that you haven't seen before, members of the Snapper Grouper FMP, the Coastal Migratory Pelagics FMP, as well as the Shrimp FMP.

Because we have added more species, I'm going to talk very briefly about the survey design both for SERFS and our coastal trawl survey, and then I'll get into the details on species for each of those surveys, and these are all both of our big sort of region-wide fishery-independent surveys.

I do want to start with sort of some caveats. This is not, in any way, shape, or form, an update of stock status. Typically, these are single inputs into stock assessments, indices of abundance, but we do have things like length compositions and age compositions to go along with those, and so, you know, it's really just a portion of what it would take to update stock status, but it will give you an idea of what we're seeing out on the water and how it compares to where things have been previously.

We might have things that are a little bit different, in terms of formulation from what you may have seen in SEDAR stock assessments, in terms of time series, structure of the standardization, and that's partially because we do a lot of these as canned analyses, in order to get them out as quickly as we can, and not all of these species have actually been looked at, in terms of an assessment, whether it's SEDAR or otherwise.

The Southeast Reef Fish Survey, or SERFS, is currently funded through the MARMAP, SEAMAP South Atlantic, and SEFIS programs. MARMAP and SEAMAP are primarily at South Carolina DNR, and SEFIS up at the Science Center. Historically, this was referred to as the MARMAP survey, because the only funding source from was from MARMAP, and so I just wanted to get that out of the way, in case you've heard the multiple different names that we've had over the years.

I'll talk today about our chevron video trap sampling, or CVT sampling. This is specifically to target low to medium-relief hardbottom habitats in depths of about fifteen to 110 meters of water. That translates to about forty-five to three-hundred-plus feet, and we sample from April to October each year, and the trap has been used consistently, and in a standardized method, since 1990.

It's a baited trap, and so it attracts fish from the general area, and we leave it on the bottom for about ninety minutes, and, since 2011, all traps have been equipped with at least two video cameras, facing in opposite directions. That way, we get a view of not only fish that don't enter the traps, as well as the habitat types that are that we're sampling.

This is a general overview of what the sampling looks like, what the station universe looked like in 2023. We sampled, and we target sampling from a little south of central Florida to central North Carolina. It's a simple random selection from a universe of stations of known hardbottom, and so it's a slightly different design than something like a stratified random sampling, but we use what I'm referring to as a commonsense distribution of effort, to make sure that we are covering that full spatial range, regional weight range, as well as a depth range.

For example, if we've had a couple of trips that have gone down to Florida, we'll make sure a trip goes up to North Carolina, or South Carolina, to distribute the effort, and so we have about 4,300 or so stations currently, and, in 2023, we targeted about 1,500. You can see the distribution of samples actually completed here in 2023, and so we did cover that full range, both in terms of the north-south range as well as shallow to deep.

I'll primarily talk about relative abundance today, in two ways. Our catch index, which is from 1990 to 2023, and so these are the fish that actually enter the traps, that we have our hands on, and then the video index, which is from 2011 through 2023. Because we're presenting sort of late in the year, we actually have both time series on the exact same scale this time around, through the terminal year.

The indices were standardized through a zero-inflated negative binomial model, which is the one that we've used in most of the recent SEDAR stock assessments, and so our catch is a number of fish per hour of soak time, and the video is done through a sum count method, which is started, and it's reading one snapshot every thirty seconds, for twenty minutes, for the number of fish on the screen, about ten minutes after the trap lands on the bottom, to allow things to sort of settle out and start behaving more or less normally.

We'll also provide distributions, such as the one here on the right. This is based only on our catch, currently, and it's represented in quintiles, and so, really, it's just relative from anything low in cool colors, in terms of number of fish, to high, in the bright red colors, and this is our most recent years of sampling, usually our five most recent years, and I do want to remind everybody we don't have data from 2020, because of COVID.

I also do want to say that these are more or less the spatial footprint of the survey, but it's exaggerated a little bit, because, if you go with just the size of a trap on this map, it's really hard to see the colors. Blank areas, in white, are where we don't have sampling, so our indices will look like this.

We'll have, on the top left-hand, side the catch index, with that full time series, and then the overlapping video index, when it exists, on the bottom, and it's kind of highlighting that overlap in 2011 through 2023, and so our chevron -- The trap catch is going to -- I want you to focus on the red line, actually in both of them, and that will be your standardized index of abundance. I lost an animation there, and I apologize.

I do want to note that it's sort of a skewed scale, above and below the long-term average, which is shown at the one line, that dashed line, where two is two-times long-term average number of fish, and 0.5 is one-half, or one over two, long-term average, and so it's a little bit shrunken, on the bottom, relative to the top.

We also have some length compositions to show you all today, based on the catch, because, again, these are the fish that were in hand. This is in maximum total length, in inches, in one-inch length bins, and the bubble size is relative to the number of fish per length bin in that year that were measured.

We also have a red line, to show you sort of where the average total length has gone over time, and then, if it exists, a green arrow, to show the commercial minimum size limit, so you can kind of see where those catches are relative to at least some metric of fishing regulations, and then a pink arrow, if we know it, for -- If we have an estimate of the total length at 50 percent maturity for females, and so you can kind of see, again, where that trap catch is relative to the size of reproduction for our fish.

You might see some sort of blank, or missing, length bins, in some graphs, but that's not really missing data, or that fish never existed in those bins, and it was just the result of converting between fork length and total length and then rounding our data.

All right, and so, for the catch and video indices, when we have them both, I'm going to show you basically these species, with the exception of tomtate and *Stenotomus*. We only have a catch index right now, but these are our eight most common species, as well as, you know, four that we thought would be really useful for you all to see, including a jack and a couple of groupers.

I do want to not that, you know, these are sort of our typical, you know, most common species, that we've had for years and years, with the addition that red snapper is our fourth-most common now, and, back in the day, it would be a quite an event if we ever caught one .

All right, and so, starting with tomtate, and this is one of our sort of forage fish in the region, just to give you an idea of sort of what an ecosystem species might be looking like, and so our distribution of tomtate -- They're fairly widely distributed. They are primarily more abundant in shallow water, and in the middle shelf, relative to really deeper water, and then our index, for the catch of tomtate, has been sitting right around the long-term mean, for the last five or so years. Currently, we don't have a video index, because they're just really difficult to catch, or to count in the videos. I always joke about the fact that tomtate could be used as a unit of measure, if we wanted to they, and are very consistent, in terms of their sizes encountered by the survey.

Vermilion snapper is another really widely-distributed species for the survey. It's primarily found in the center of the region, with a little bit of tailing-off, in terms of abundance of the two ends, off of Florida and North Carolina. It's very common in the more shallower, all the way out to the

deeper areas, and so really widely distributed, and our long-term catch index has sat right around the long-term mean, for the last five or so years, with the most recent year being just above it, and the video index has actually seen that same thing, since 2011, and so they mirror quite nicely.

The length distribution of vermilion snapper has increased over time, and it has sort of leveled-out right around the commercial minimum size limit, in the most recent five years, and it is well above the size at maturity for females. They mature very, very small, and early, and are so small that they actually aren't even retained in the traps.

Black sea bass has historically been one of our big-five, or, actually, even our big-four species. They historically were very widely distributed for the survey. I do want to note that, currently, we have hotspots, for black sea bass, basically from Georgia to North Carolina in shallow water, whereas, off of Florida, our numbers are actually relatively quite down. The long-term index, and I'm sure you all are not terribly surprised to see this, but, through 2023, it's well below the long-term mean, and the video index corroborates that.

What about our length distributions for sea bass? It has increased, in the last fifteen to twenty years, leveling off, in the trap catches, just below the minimum size limit for commercial, but it is -- The catches are generally well above the size at female maturity, and, again, that's a sort of a retention in the traps. The mesh size is just big enough that a one-year-old black sea bass can get its head through and escape out of the traps, so to give you an idea of what the trap mesh size looks like.

Red snapper is one of our more southerly species, with the hotspots off of northeast Florida, as you would expect, into Georgia, with some hotspots off of South Carolina and North Carolina a little bit more limited. It's more shallow water than some of our other species, and no surprise that our long-term trends in the catch are well above normal, and the video index also is seen well above normal since 2011.

Our size distributions for red snapper look a little bit different than the previous species, because they were so infrequently encountered early in the time series, and so a lot of variability, in terms of size, but it's probably not so much about the population, versus just the catch in the traps. However, we've really filled out that link distribution, in the last fifteen years or so, primarily with that expansion of the survey sampling, more off of Florida, in particular, and the one thing that's really lovely about red snapper is, if you follow these sort of sizes of the bubbles through, you can see some really nice indications of your classes that have moved through the population. There's currently no commercial minimum size limit, but we do know the size of female maturity, and our catches are well above that.

Gray triggerfish is another really broadly-distributed species, primarily sort of in the middle-shelf region, throughout the range, and, again, are very similar to sort of, you know, tomtate and vermilion snapper. Mostly, in the last ten years, they've been right around the long-term mean, with a little bit of a decrease in the last couple of years, and that little bit of a decrease has been seen in the videos as well as the catches. All right, and the sizes of great triggerfish have stayed pretty steady for the last ten to fifteen years, well above both the size of maturity and the minimum size limit.

Red porgy is one of our more deeper-water species. They do tend to be a little bit more concentrated off of South Carolina, versus the other states that the survey samples off of, and our long-term trend, from the catch as well as the video survey, indicates the last several years have been below average. Our length compositions have increased over the last ten to fifteen years, and so they're sitting sort of right around the minimum size limit for the commercial, and also averaging above the size of maturity.

Stenotomus, another sort of more ecosystem species, just to give you an idea of what some of the, you know, less-exploited species look like, they tend to be more shallow water, a little bit more restricted distribution throughout the survey region, and their numbers have been well below normal in the last ten to fifteen years. The sizes have increased, since about 2011 or so, and they -- Currently, there is no size limit, and we don't know much about their maturity in this region right now.

White grunt is one of our more northerly species for the survey, and you can see that hotspot very distinct off of North Carolina and northern South Carolina, but they do tend to be broadly distributed, once you get into that hotspot, and our white grunt have been below average, for the last three years, and that's been seen on both the catches as well as the video.

The average sizes for white grunt have been pretty steady, in the last ten to fifteen years, well above the size of maturity. I did want to add in almaco jack this year. Historically, almaco were not encountered frequently enough to do much in terms of data analysis. They've been growing, in terms of abundance, as well as our encounter rates for the survey. They tend to be a little bit more deeper water, sort of centered off of Georgia and South Carolina, and, not surprisingly, now that we can actually run an index for them, they show up as higher than normal, or higher than the long-term average, for both the traps and the videos.

Again, very similar to red snapper, there's a lot of variability in the early time series with the lengths, and that has really filled out as they've become more common in the survey, and, the last couple of years they -- Their average sizes have been right around that commercial minimum size limit.

Red grouper is relatively isolated, typically, and you catch them maybe one or two at a time, if you're lucky, and so they have some really sort of distinct hotspots down off of Florida, as well as North Carolina, with not much in either Georgia or South Carolina.

They do tend to be sort of mid-shelf, to a little bit deeper, and their numbers have been well below normal, in the catch index, and you can see that sort of long-term trend is really important for red grouper, because, historically, they were quite a bit higher, and so it gives you a really good contrast, whereas the video index has been sort of flat over time, because the video started right at -- You know, after we were already sort of in this low position for the number of red grouper, but there has been a little bit of uptick, in the last couple of years, and so maybe there's some good news coming down.

Our sizes are really variable for red grouper, because they are sort of few and far between in some years, but, again, very similar to red snapper, this is a really nice dataset to sort of demonstrate when you can see your classes moving through the system, and coming in, in various years, and

so, right now, you can see that, in 2023 in particular, we had a lot of small red grouper, and so I am going to be optimistic about that.

Gag is one of our more shallow-water grouper species. They tend to be a little bit more common off in North Carolina and northern South Carolina than other areas where the survey samples, and it's been pretty flat, in the last like six or seven years, after a little bit of uptick in 2011 or so, with a little bit of uptick in 2023, in the most recent year, and that uptick in 2023, in particular, is these small fish that have come in. I think a lot of folks helped report small gag grouper in estuaries, in 2022 I think it was, and so we also encountered quite a bit few small ones, in a lot of places that we didn't expect to that year.

Scamp is one of our sort of mid-shelf to outer-shelf grouper species, and, again, a little bit more isolated, but distributed from Florida to North Carolina in the survey. Numbers have been below the long-term mean, for the last ten to fifteen years, and, again, this is sort of an important one to see that contrast in the long-term time series, whereas the video index is kind of flat, because it was already in that low-abundance sort of phase, but, again, for scamp, we had a fair number of small scamp show up in the survey, in 2023, and so maybe there's some grouper optimism out there. I promise nothing though.

All right, and let's go into some species that we really only see on the videos. These will be new species for you all this year. I think the Snapper Grouper AP saw them recently, and so I'll talk about hogfish, mutton snapper, gray snapper, and greater amberjack. All right. This is the video index for hogfish since 2011. There's a little bit of noise here, and you can see those error bars, which are the dashed lines, were relatively large in 2011 and 2012, and then again in 2017, but it's been bouncing around the long-term mean since the video portion of the survey began. We don't have any lengths for these, because we didn't have them in-hand, and we currently do not have a systematic way to measure lengths of fish that don't go into traps.

All right. Mutton snapper, our folks have seen them, more and more frequently, on hook-and-line fishing, and that is certainly reflected in the video index as well, since about 2017. Gray snapper is another one where we've seen a bit of an increase, in the last three or four years, and, for greater amberjack, there's been a bit of an increase, in the last two or three years, as well. We do occasionally get greater amberjack in the traps, but they're really few and far between, and so we only have video data for those.

All right, and then the final set of species, and our coastal trawl survey has been running since 1990, in a standardized way, and so a very similar time series to the chevron trap catch time series. It's primarily funded through the SEAMAP South Atlantic program. It's a stratified random sampling design, where it's divvied up amongst latitude-based strata. We have fixed stations of trawlable habitats that we can select from, annually, in a random manner.

Up until 2022, we sampled across three seasons, spring, summer, and fall. Starting in 2023, we had to drop down to two seasons, spring and fall, just because of funding and other logistical issues, and we typically target about 102 stations per season, in the last most recent years, and we really try to select stations, allocate stations, based on reducing variability for our most common species.

All right and, again, this is a survey that runs from central Florida to central North Carolina, and so a very similar footprint, but very shallow, relative to SERFS. We use seventy-foot Mongoose

type falcon nets, and, again, I mentioned this is shallow water, only trawlable habitats, and it's primarily soft-bottom habitats. There are some pavement areas that are sampled by the survey, in particular in Long Bay. We had no sampling in 2020, and 2021 was a partial sampling year, because of -- The survey starts early enough that we still couldn't deal with COVID restrictions from the agency.

Then I'll present abundance today in number per hectare sampled. All right, and I've got two mackerel species, king and Spanish for you all. The survey primarily encounters age-zero and age-one mackerel, although we will get twos, threes, and fours occasionally, but the vast majority of the data that we can provide for mackerel is really related to year-class strength and those early -- Those couple of early ages. The distribution, and the survey, for king mackerel is on the left-hand side, with hotspots represented really pretty well off of northern Florida, and then North Carolina as well, with very, you know, similar color distribution as the SERFS maps as well.

Then our relative abundance, and, again, I want you to focus on that red line. That's that standardized index, and, the most recent years for mackerel, we had -- Or the most recent two years have been right around the long-term mean, with one -- A couple years, on the five-year time series, kind of up above the long-term mean.

Spanish mackerel, they're a bit more widely distributed, with sort of a broader variety of hotspots, relative to king mackerel, and maybe a little bit more abundant off of South Carolina and North Carolina than other places, and they really sort of disappear once you get into Raleigh, Bay, and, again, these are primarily age-zeroes and age-ones, and so these are early-age fish, sort of indicative of year class strength, with our most recent -- Two of our most recent years above the long-term mean.

I'll move on into our three penaeid shrimp species that we catch pretty regularly in the survey, and white shrimp are our most common species. They're primarily abundant off of Florida, and sort of North Carolina, but they're really broadly distributed throughout the range, and we've seen an increasing trend in white shrimp over the last ten or so years.

Brown shrimp are sort of our next most common species, and a little bit more limited in their distribution, with a few hotspots off of Florida, South Carolina, and, again, in North Carolina. A little bit of uptick in the last ten to fifteen years, the last couple of years in particular being a little bit higher above the long-term mean, and then our third species is pink shrimp.

I do want to caution about using the trawl survey data for pink shrimp. They are our most infrequently encountered of the three shrimp species. They can also be pretty sporadic in the survey, and we're really not quite sure why, and their distribution, in the survey, is also pretty limited, primarily off of North Carolina. You know, from what I've been told, the fishery is primarily south of where the survey occurs, and then there's probably -- There's a survey in Pamlico Sound that actually has a much better sort of encounter rate of pink shrimp than we do in the offshore -- In that coastal region. Our data is below the long-term mean, for the last, you know, seven or eight years.

All right, and so that is the whirlwind tour of all of the species that we have data with, and where they were at in 2023, and we should have the 2024 species in the next couple of months, and we'll



start working on updating those analyses, and so, with that, I'm happy to take questions, and I would like to thank everybody who has worked on this. It's a lot of work.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks so much, Tracey. Has anybody got questions for Tracey? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks, Tracey. As always, it's a lot of good information that comes out of it, and so one of the questions I had was I know your sampling, in the trawl survey, is pretty much based to shallow depths, but it looks like the contour along the coast doesn't vary far -- Like what's the farthest away from the beach you are when you're doing the survey?

DR. SMART: There is a dock that was built in northern Florida, that we almost hit every single year, for the last like six or seven years, since it was -- So it is very close, and so the -- You know, five meters is about our shallowest, but that does kind of depend on the tidal cycle. It can, you know -- I think I saw a data point that was three meters, that I know is purely based on it being low tide, and so you are definitely within sight of the beach, and, if something happened, you could swim to it pretty easily.

DR. BELCHER: So, I mean, so the twenty-four strata, that outer band is -- Like I said, in looking at the maps, it looks like you're pretty consistently -- The farthest out you would go is pretty consistent, and do you know what that farthest is?

DR. SMART: Yes, and so there is -- There are shoals off of southern Georgia, and then Frying Pan Shoals, and then Cape Lookout I think is the other one, and so those are not quite far enough out. I'm trying to think about the distance is. It's still in state waters, and so those are the only ones that sort of stick out, but there are also ones that are close to -- You know, as long as we're in that that depth band, we are as close to shore as we can get.

DR. BELCHER: Okay, but you are in federal waters, as well as state waters, and it's not just all within three miles, correct?

DR. SMART: I'm trying to -- I'll have to look, to see whether or not those shoals hit in state waters or federal waters, and I don't remember off the top of my head. That that sort of strip on those maps is, again, sort of exaggerated, compared to the footprint of the survey, because, if you really go on the footprint survey, you can't even see what those colors are.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. All right. It's just helpful, because, relative to brown shrimp, it's interesting to see the numbers there, because the state-water survey, at least for Georgia, we're not seeing brown shrimp, with any kind of frequency, like we did in years past, and so I was just curious to see where that overlap was. We are inside of our three miles, generally not more than a mile off of the beach, when we're doing our nearshore, but so thanks for that.

The other question I had was relative to the trap survey, and so, where we've been talking about things with black sea bass, do you feel that the data could be used to help evaluate the issues of shrinking habitat over the years, because these -- I know you have them collapsed, with the hotspots, from 2018 to 2023, and do you do annual ones, and do you do it seasonally, to kind of see how that's changing out, as we talk about discussions of is the stock shifting north, or south, or contracting, and does the data have that kind of resolution to help answer those questions?

DR. SMART: On an annual basis, yes. Because there is no sort of season to the SERFS survey, and it's just sort of one big long continuous, you know, spring into summer, or early fall, we couldn't break out any more than annually, but we certainly can do that, and especially -- We had started those maps as five years, because we had some variability, in terms of our coverage, and we've really gotten rid of that, in the last ten to fifteen years, and so I think we could get to that in more detail.

We do actually have a manuscript that we're working on, and trying to get through review, looking specifically at the change in the spatial distribution of black sea bass in both the SERFS survey as well as in the coastal trawl survey, because the coastal trawl survey will pick up age-zero black sea bass, and not nearly as frequently as would be really, really useful, but there is -- We basically look to see whether or not there's a signal there. There's not much of one.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other questions for Tracey? All right. Well, thanks so much, Tracey, and I think, next up, is we've got Highly Migratory Species Update on the Electronic Reporting with Karyl Brewster-Geisz and Cliff Hunt. You guys are here? Okay.

Mr. HUNT: Thank you, everybody. My name is Clifford Hunt, and I am going to be presenting our proposed rule for electronic reporting for Atlantic HMS. I'll start out and provide a little background as to why we're considering this rule, and we'll go over alternatives on our reporting.

We'll start out looking at some proposed alternatives for our commercial limited-access permits. This deals with logbook reporting for primarily our pelagic longline and swordfish hand-gear fisheries. Then we'll look into a proposal for some new logbook requirements for our open-access commercial and for-hire permit holders. Here, we're talking about our Atlantic tunas general fishery, rod-and-reel-fishery, and our harpoon category, our swordfish general commercial fishery, and our HMS charter/headboat fishery, which for us is both kind of a for-hire and charter permit. We also have some alternatives we're considering to modify our electronic reporting requirements for our HMS angling permit holders and our dealer permit holders.

So, as background, we published an advance notice of proposed rulemaking back in May of 2023. This was presented to our advisory panel meeting that May, and, over that summer, we were on the roadshow presenting to the councils and commissions, and we held five in-person hearings and two webinars. The comment period for the ANPR closed in August of last summer, and we received a total of eight written comments, from various groups, which we considered as we -- In addition to the various oral comments we got at all those meetings, which we considered as we put together our proposed rule, which came out this September.

The purpose of this rulemaking was to streamline and modernize our reporting, through electronic reporting means, and consolidate some of our reporting deadlines. Also, as I said, considering expanding electronic logbook reporting requirements to some of our additional commercial and charter/headboat vessel owners.

We want to collect additional information from dealers, through their existing electronic reporting mechanisms, and, basically, establish recording requirements to create greater consistency within NOAA Fisheries efforts in other fisheries and augment data necessary for science and management, and, through all of this, we're looking to advance the one-stop reporting initiative, you know, get some of these programs to the point where a single vessel trip report basically meets

all their different reporting requirements from us, the different councils, and get away from this pattern of having to submit multiple reports for the same trip.

I'll start out with uh the alternatives we're considering for our commercial limited-access permit holders. Currently, this group is required to submit paper logbook reports, either through the Atlantic HMS logbook, commercial logbook, or the coastal fisheries logbook, as many of these are dual reported with the Southeast councils.

In the Atlantic HMS logbook, they are required to submit both trip and set-level reports, and so, if they set a pelagic longline gear, they have to put together a separate report for each set of that gear. They also include -- Are required to include their weigh-out slips that they get from their dealer. They have requirements to submit no-fishing reports, on a monthly basis, when they aren't engaged in fishing, and selected vessel owners are also required to submit cost and earnings reports, both for at the trip level and an annual expenditure form.

We are proposing that vessel -- Our preferred alternative is that these vessel owners would shift from reporting via paper to an electronic logbook report that would basically kind of consolidate the HMS logbook with the Southeast Coastal Fisheries Logbook. They would still be required to submit, for HMS purposes, an uploaded file of their weigh-out slip, based on an electronic copy of it, with their logbook submission. We would provide a voluntary kind of standardized form for that, but it wouldn't be mandatory.

As for timing requirements, for the HMS logbook, they're currently required, for the paper logbook, to fill out their day's activities within forty-eight hours and then to submit their logbooks within seven days of offloading the trip, and, if selected for cost and earnings reporting, they have thirty days after offloading to submit the trip-level cost and earnings report. With the switch to electronic, we are proposing to consolidate all those deadlines to seven days after offloading, for the commercial limited-access permit holders.

This graph kind of shows a comparison of what HMS is proposing, versus what is being considered for the Gulf and South Atlantic commercial electronic logbook and what's currently required by GARFO for their commercial vessel trip reports. For reporting information, you see, for HMS, we would require reporting all species caught, including amount kept and discarded, and discard condition. For ICCAT reporting, we need information on discarded dead.

This is similar to what's required in the Gulf and South Atlantic, although, here, discards are only required -- Reporting is only required of selected vessels, and GARFO requires reporting of all kept and discarded fish in pounds, but they don't require them to distinguish the disposition of the discards.

For location information, we would require at the set or trip-level fishing location, at lat/long for set-level, and reporting areas for trip-level. In the Gulf and South Atlantic for trip-level, they're looking at reporting area, for location, and GARFO requires the catch and effort be reported for each area fished.

For reporting frequency, the seven days of offloading would be consistent with what's being considered by the Gulf and South Atlantic, whereas GARFO requires forty-eight hours after entering port. Both us and the Southeast councils are proposing monthly no-fishing reports,

whereas GARFO has no requirement for that, and we have basically similar reporting requirements being considered for the economic cost and earnings data between us and the Southeast councils, whereas GARFO does not collect cost and earnings data via their VTR program.

Now I'll get into the alternatives we're considering for our open-access permit holders, both those commercial, like the general category tuna fishermen, and our for-hire charter/headboat permit holders. Now, currently, all of these permits have catch reporting requirements. For all of them, they're required to support report any kind of bluefin tuna landings, or dead discards, within twenty-four hours after completion of the trip, and, for our charter/headboat permit holders, they're required to report non-tournament landings of swordfish and billfish, whereas swordfish and billfish landed in tournaments are reported by the tournament operator.

They have the option to report these via an electronic reporting system, by telephone, or via state catch card programs, which currently exist in North Carolina and Maryland, although North Carolina is going to be sunsetting their catch card program at the end of March of next year, and so those HMS permit holders will have to revert to reporting directly through one of the federal reporting options.

Our preferred alternative here is to expand the reporting requirements for these various permit holders to electronic logbook reports, where they would be required to report all trips, regardless of whether fish are caught, all species caught, which is consistent with all other logbook reporting requirements of the agency, their fishing location information per trip, and have a requirement for monthly no-fishing reports.

Here, looking at what the other -- You know the other various programs for the -- Particularly for what the for-hire vessels are requiring, and so we've got a comparison here for HMS, what they are considering in the Gulf, what's currently required here in the South Atlantic, under SEFHIER, the Southeast Regional Headboat Survey, and what's required in GARFO.

All of these programs are fairly consistent, when it comes to the requiring of catch, both kept and discarded. The one difference here is we are looking to collect on discard condition, and so we want -- At least for the HMS, we want them to report whether discarded fish are dead or alive, and this would be consistent with the data that's collected by MRIP, and it would meet our needs to report dead discards to ICCAT.

For location information, we would be looking for lat/long data, and this is consistent with what's being proposed in the Gulf, what's currently required in the South Atlantic SEFHIER, what the Southeast Regional Headboat Survey requires. Again, GARFO, in their vessel trip reports, they require catch and effort reported for each area fished. We are proposing to have monthly no-fishing reports. This is somewhat consistent with at least one of the alternatives the Gulf is considering.

Currently, in the South Atlantic and the headboat survey, it's essentially a weekly no-fishing report, and that just is kind of functional out of the weekly reporting requirement that comes in those programs, where they basically have to submit a report each week on either they were fishing the previous week or whether they didn't fish at all. GARFO does not have any kind of a no-fishing report requirement.

Regarding timing requirements for this new proposed electronic logbook, our preferred alternative was to require a submission of these reports within twenty-four hours of the end of the trip. That is consistent with their current catch reporting requirements for bluefin tuna, swordfish, and billfish, and so it provides ease of kind of outreach on explanation of those timing requirements, and, compared to the current logbooks in place, you know, for the for-hire fisheries in the various regions, this would be a more stringent requirement, compared to what's currently in place in other regions.

We also considered forty-eight hours, or some combination of different timings, depending on whether they had HMS catch or were fishing for other species, but we felt we needed the twenty-four hours for our bluefin tuna quota monitoring, and we felt having different timing requirements, depending on what they were targeting, would just over complicate compliance monitoring.

Compared to what's currently out there, or being considered, you know SEFHIER in the Gulf is considering requiring reporting prior to offload. Currently, in the South Atlantic, they have a weekly reporting requirement, which is consistent with the headboat survey, and GARFO is within forty-eight hours you have to report.

Regarding cost and earnings reporting for this group, our preferred alternative was to require trip-level cost and earnings reporting information for each trip in the electronic logbook, for all vessel owners, on all trips, and then we would have an additional annual expenditure survey that would be sent out to a selected number of vessels each year. We did not specify, in that alternative, what that selection rate would be. It might vary from region to region, based on what we felt would be needed to meet adequate sample sizes.

Compared to other programs out there, currently SEFHIER, here in the South Atlantic, also requires cost and earnings for each trip, as does the Regional Headboat Survey. GARFO does not collect cost and earnings, and the Gulf is considering cost and earnings data collection for selected vessels, or selected trips, and they were discussing the idea of randomly choosing trips, with the system for cost and earnings reporting, but there are some concerns that the existing programs out there, like ACCSP's eTRIPS, and VESL, Bluefin Data's VESL program, would not be compatible with that kind of design, or at least currently they are not.

Some of our alternatives for what we're considering for angling permit holders, similar to the previous group we discussed, this group is required to report landings of bluefin tuna, and dead discards of bluefin tuna, as well as non-tournament landings of billfish and swordfish. They have all the same reporting options that the for-hire group does.

Our preferred alternative here is to remove the option to report via telephone. We feel like this is a kind of -- We don't have as many, very many, permit holders that still use this as their primary means of reporting. It's kind of a leftover from the days when all we had was reporting by phone, or fax, and most folks who do report this way -- We usually have to track them down, to get additional information that they didn't leave on their initial call, and so it's not the most efficient way of collecting this data and the best use of, you know, staff time. We think would be a lot more efficient to collect this data if they switch to doing so electronically, either via our catch reporting app or our website, our permit website.

We also considered expanding catch reporting requirements to other HMS species, such as sharks and the various temperate tuna species. When we did the ANPR, we kind of started considering these, because there was stirrings that there might be actions taken at ICCAT that might lead to us needing this data, but, as of yet, those actions have not happened, have not come to fruition at ICCAT, and so we didn't feel the need to expand the reporting for this permit category to those other species.

Finally, what we're considering for our dealer reporting options, currently, they are required to report individual fish weights for bluefin tuna, and other species can be reported individually, or in aggregate, and they submit biweekly bluefin tuna reports. Our preferred alternatives here are to expand the reporting requirement for individual carcass weights to swordfish, the BAYS tuna species, bigeye, albacore, yellowfin, and skipjack, and to pelagic shark species, which, at this point, would primarily be thresher, blue shark, and porbeagle, with mako closed. These would be required to report individually on all federal dealer reports.

We're also proposing to remove the required submission of biweekly bluefin tuna reports, as that data is effectively being captured elsewhere, and, with that, the public comment period on this rule currently extends until January 6. At this point, we had our last public hearing webinar this morning. However, we have said we will consider requests for additional in-person public hearings, although we haven't really gotten those, as of yet, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you. Does anybody have any questions? No questions? Okay. I guess it was easy, but I think -- Okay. Amy.

MR. HUNT: I think Amy has got questions.

MS. DUKES: It's just taking my brain a minute to process, and so, you know, it was quick. Just a couple of things. One question I've asked before, and I'm still not getting a 100 percent clear understanding of what's going on, is this idea of your rulemaking purpose was centered around one-stop reporting, but are there any SOPPs, or a standardized process written down, where the different divisions of NOAA are talking, in order to maybe have a synthesized plan of attack, when we're starting to try this one-stop reporting, because, as you indicated, and showcased in your tables, which were very helpful, and so thank you for adding those, you show where we match and where we don't match, and so I was just curious as to -- There's a lot of mismatch here, and, if we're trying to get to a one-stop reporting, what kind of thought process was put in for that? That was lengthy, and I have a follow-up, but I'll let you go first.

MR. HUNT: We have been working cooperatively with our different regional partners, and, particularly, right now, the one reporting app that is considered to be a one-stop reporting app, for the existing programs, is ACCSP SAFIS eTRIPS. Basically, all the data that would be needed for the existing for-hire logbook programs, all the data that would be needed for what we're considering for an HMS logbook, would be captured, could be captured, there with a single report.

One-stop reporting really isn't so much about the timing aspects. Basically, they would be required to -- You know, whatever permit you have, that has the most stringent timing requirement, that's when you would have to have your logbook reported. If you've got one that says -- You know, if you've got an HMS permit, and we implement this, you know, you've got twenty-four hours. If

you've got a Gulf permit, and they go with you've got to report before offload, then you've got a report before you offload.

The key thing, for one-stop reporting, would be that the application that they would be using would capture all the different data elements needed by that program. As I said, right now, SAFIS eTRIPS meets that requirement, and we are actively working with Bluefin Data on their VESL app. They anticipate having that, you know, the HMS data elements integrated into that, fairly shortly, if not as soon as, you know, the beginning of next year.

MS. DUKES: Thank you. I appreciate that information. Also, just to make sure I'm getting this right, so, under Alternative A for your HMC commercial, and so they -- Vessel owners are going to provide an upload of their weight-out sheets for the individual fish, and then the dealers will also be doing that same thing, under your preferred action of 2d, and so that is a validation tool, in essence?

MR. HUNT: Essentially, to start off with. I mean, there's potential consideration that we may, in the future, get rid of that upload, and just go with the dealer reporting, but it's -- That individual fish weight data is really important for our ICCAT reporting, and so we're considering a couple of different options on how we can make that work in the future, and, you know, in the future, if the dealer one works really well, we might just go with that, but, for initial -- You know, it's kind of like with the new MRIP surveys, where they have to do that side-by-side comparison and make sure, you know, things are working well and be able to calibrate.

MS. DUKES: I know that the commercial electronic logbook requirements for ACCSP and eTRIPS aren't quite there yet, and so I think a lot of that, that decision-making, will be after the proposed rule is published, as far as what your requirements are going to be, and so --

MR. HUNT: Are we talking about the proposed rules that the South Atlantic and the Gulf are working on or us?

MS. DUKES: The one that you're working on.

MR. HUNT: Our proposed rule is already out. We've largely got most of the work -- I mean, we've been working, for a long time, with the folks at SERO, and ACCSP, on integrating, you know, our logbook program with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, on getting both of those logbooks integrated into eTRIPS.

Most of the broader details are kind of done. We keep working on a lot of little minor details, but there are some, you know, final technical issues that are still left to be resolved, and we are coordinating with them on this, and you know, I mean, the goal there is kind of a combined logbook program, and so any kind of implementation would be done in concert with both programs.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you. I have Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I just had a question, and this table is very helpful, but so what has been the public feedback that you've received thus far, and have you reached out directly to all permit holders?

MR. HUNT: Are we talking broadly about all the alternatives?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, in general. I know that the Gulf Council had some concerns about the submission of the of the economic information, and so I guess I'm just curious what other feedback you've received, if you can share any of that at this point.

MR. HUNT: Sure. I mean, at this point, we've presented to all the other councils, and we did have a long discussion with the Gulf Council, at their meeting, and, I mean, anytime the agency proposes cost and earning data collection, there's pushback, and what they are considering, really, at this point now, is the idea of a sub-selection of vessel holders.

They were -- They had this very interesting innovative idea of randomly selecting trips in the program, where any vessel holder could be randomly selected to provide that data, at any time, and, statistically, it's great idea, but none of the existing applications are really set up to do that right now, and it would be a lot of work to get there, and so now they're more considering the idea of, you know, what is done with the commercial logbook, which is they randomly select a number of vessels at the beginning of the year, and they're like, okay, you've got to submit this for every trip.

They're considering a couple of different selection rates, where they were actually analyzing like a 10 percent selection rate, a 20 percent, and, if we went that way -- Like what we've always done with our commercial logbook is we randomly select a sample to begin the year, but we don't specify a specific percentage in our regs. We basically do an analysis to determine that, given the size of the fleet, and the activity we've seen in previous years, what kind of sample size are we going to need in different regions to do an effective analysis, so we'll just say, in our regs, if you're selected, and they'll receive notification of that at the beginning of the year.

If they're selected, they have to report cost and earnings, and so we could go that way in a final rule, but that is something, you know, we're considering, and we're very interested in what feedback the different councils have on that.

MS. BREWSTER-GEISZ: If I could jump in, I think, Jessica, you were also asking about generally what kind of public comments we're getting, and I would say, for the most part, pretty supportive. A lot of the fishermen do want to report, or at least want to be consistent across all the different sectors.

There are some concerns, with a lot of people not understanding how it would all work, the one-stop relatedness, and then we also have the -- A lot of dealers are pretty unhappy about the idea of reporting each fish individually, and that seems -- From my perspective, that seems to be mainly based on how the platforms work and their ability -- Like they can't just copy-and-paste from an Excel spreadsheet. They have to enter each one individually, and everything individually, and so we're working through it, but, for the most part, I think very supportive.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Karyl. I guess you were kind of getting to one of my other questions, and so the intent is not to have duplicative reporting, from like all the councils and the HMS, and the plan would be that there is a platform where you would be reporting all of this information, or are you guys suggesting that HMS has its own platform, and the councils have a different platform, and you're reporting in both places, and that's what's a little bit unclear.



MR. HUNT: So it would definitely be the former. You know, we would have, ultimately -- I think, by sometime early next year, we'll have at least two platforms that would be capable of -- eTRIPS and VESL that would be capable of -- You know, they would submit one report, and based on, you know, if fish were landed, it would trigger certain questions.

Like, for HMS, there are some additional questions that we are looking for for bluefin tuna, the swordfish, and billfish. If they're reporting those species, those would be triggered in eTRIPS, and those would be triggered in VESL, and so using those, you know, platforms that are identified as, you know, one-stop reporting platforms by the different programs, they could just submit one report, and it would meet all their different reporting requirements, where each partner would have access to that data.

Then it just becomes a question of they have to make sure they meet the timing requirements for whichever program has the most restrictive timing requirements, and that's that just comes down to outreach from all of us.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So then is the economic data kind of included in all that, and so, in other words, the economic information that you guys are seeking, and the economic information that say the Gulf and South Atlantic Council is seeking -- Not only would it not be duplicated, and you're going to subsample the same individuals, right, and that part about how the economic -- If you do it as a survey, and you're going to subsample, how that's going to work across the different areas, and that's a little -- It's still kind of a mystery to me.

MR. HUNT: The subsampling across different programs does create tricky situations, because, you know, like you might be required to report by one program, Program A, but not by Program B, or you might just be selected by both. I think the main thing there is it's going to be contingent on all of us to, you know, do the outreach, provide -- If we go with the if-selected type, you know, it's -- Under that scenario, it's up to each program to make sure they provide notification to who those selected vessels are at the beginning, or we send out certified letters to our selection list, for our commercial limited-access permit holders, and, you know, get a signature of receipt back from them, every year. We do that every fall, around November, for the subsequent year.

Part of the reason we haven't -- That we went with all trips for, you know, what we're proposing for our for-hire, is that's a much larger number of vessels. That's a lot of certified mail mailers to put together, and to track, whereas, if it's just like, okay, you have an HMS permit, and you've got to provide cost and earnings, period, it makes the outreach, and that communication, a lot simpler, but we know there's some pushback on that.

I think, you know, if the different programs could settle on something similar, a similar selection rate, and maybe we even coordinate in our selection process, where, you know, if you're selected by one, you're selected by both, but, I mean, that's the kind of coordination we can all, you know, talk about try to do on the backend, but it all just kind of depends on what, you know, the different programs decide to finalize on.

MS. MURPHEY: Andy, did you have your hand up? I have Andy, and then Amy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and so not really a question for HMS staff, but certainly I'm happy for them to weigh-in. I wanted to kind of tie a few things together. You know, the Gulf Council wanted HMS to speak to this because of concerns they had with consistency, and consistency with the various programs being stood up, and, Amy, you kind of got to it right out of the gate, in terms of one-stop reporting, versus alignment, right, and so those are two different things.

You know, one of the main concerns I have right now is we have an opportunity for both the Gulf and South Atlantic, but now HMS is overlaid on top of that, with trying to create some broader alignment within the agency for our stakeholders, right, and so how can we do that, and what can we do moving forward.

Some of the challenges I've found with apps, over time, and maybe this has gotten better, is, you know, with eTRIPS, you know, that's the one that's being used along the eastern seaboard the most, but they have an operations committee, and so it does take time to make those changes to the app, and get approval, right, and so there's a little bit more rigorous of a process for doing that, versus VESL, which is a private vendor, which we tend to have a quicker kind of response and ability to adapt the application, but that's neither here nor there. I think there's still opportunities to improve that.

What the Gulf Council did, and I guess I would provide the same recommendation to you, is they put together a letter to HMS, just kind of outlining any concerns you may have, and, just for your reference, for those that might not be aware of the Gulf conversation, they kind of outlined four things. One was concerns about lack of validation of the data, and two was inconsistencies with the Gulf program, and three was reporting of non-HMS species, and then the fourth was the economic reporting requirements.

I think the last one is not necessarily an issue for the South Atlantic, because you are still requiring economic data to be reported, whereas that was rescinded through the court decision previously, but I just wanted to kind of tie that together, because I think, when we get into the broader SEFHIER discussion coming up, we really do need to figure out how to improve alignment. We know that HMS is proceeding with their rulemaking, but where is there opportunities, not only working with HMS, but also the Gulf Council, to align the programs better. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Cliff, can you talk a little bit about the timeline for perhaps the finalized rulemaking, and then you hit on it a couple of times, with regards to outreach and education, and can you talk a little bit about your plan, and how you see that coordinating with the councils, and individual states, in order to get this message out to our fishermen?

MR. HUNT: Karyl is going to take the timing question, as the head of our rulemaking branch.

MS. BREWSTER-GEISZ: I mean, we're still working through all the timing, and so we don't have a good sense. I think we would love to have it in place by the beginning of next year, but who knows what's going to happen. We're still accepting -- 2026, and not 2025. The comment period doesn't end until January, and we are getting a lot of comments. We want to consider all the comments we're getting from all the councils. Andy's point about alignment and one-stop is a good one, and so we just don't know, right now, whether we would implement it all at once, in

pieces, whether we would go back out for public comment, if we have enough comments to request that. I'll let Cliff handle the rest.

MR. HUNT: You know, regarding Andy's comments about, you know, alignment and validation, I mean, those are things that I think are tremendous goals for us all to kind of aspire to. I think having a validation survey would be fantastic.

You know, HMS, our shop, we don't have the resources to implement something like that on our own, which is why we didn't propose kind of the various measures needed to be consistent with that, because, realistically, you know, for us to have a validation survey, we would need to basically piggyback off of our other regional partners, and I don't see there would be much point in having multiple different validation surveys working within the same region anyways.

It would be redundant, and overly confusing, and inefficient, and so, you know, if our various regional partners come together and develop, you know, a validation survey program, we would certainly consider implementing any kind of reporting requirements that would be needed to be consistent with that, but one thing to keep in mind is, you know, our permits range from Maine to Texas, and so that's the region over which we are considering here, because whatever we require is going to be the requirement for our permit holders from Maine to Texas, and so it's not just the South Atlantic and the Gulf that we need to align with.

We need to align with GARFO and the Mid-Atlantic and the New England Council, and some of those measures, that are kind of laid out, we could probably implement them wherever, but some things, like landing at only at -- Only at approved locations, I don't know how we implement that in say Massachusetts, if the New England Council isn't also implementing that.

I think that's something for the South Atlantic to consider too, especially with the Atlantic dolphin wahoo permit. You guys have got a lot of permit holders in the Mid-Atlantic, and even up into southern New England, with that permit, and so you know --

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have any other questions? I guess the question, from me to you guys, is do we want to consider providing comments to HMS on this, and, if we do -- I see heads shaking yes, and what do we want to comment on? I know Andy kind of laid out ideas on what to comment on already, such as non-HMS species, lack of validation, economic, and so is there any -- Is everybody good with kind of going with something similar, or is there anything else to add, as far as commenting? Is everybody -- Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I can't remember all the what's in the Gulf letter, but just, I guess, making sure that there's not duplicative reporting, or concerns, if there is duplicative reporting, and just -- I guess that needs to be clear.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: And validation.

MS. MURPHEY: And validation. Has anybody got anything else? I think we're going to send a letter, and it sounds like we have a list of what we would like to comment about. Has everybody you got the list? All right. Well, thank you very much, Cliff and Karyl. So it looks like we're

going to move into SEFHIER, and that's probably going to take up the rest of the day. Does anybody want -- Okay. Let's take a fifteen-minute break, guys.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MURPHEY: All right. If everybody is ready, we're going to start back up on the SEFHIER stuff, and first on the list is Marcel is going to be giving the recommendations from the SEP. Poor Jennifer I think is stuck in Uber, trying very hard to get here, and so bless her heart, but we'll go ahead and let Marcel do his thing and go from there.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, that's the latest I've heard, that she's still trying to get to the meeting. The SEP met via webinar in October, and they discussed the SEFHIER improvement amendment, and, since Jennifer is still traveling, I'll do the report of that webinar, and I may ask John and Christina to help me with some clarifications, or answering some questions that you may have.

In terms of incentivizing the reporting, there's several sticks, or requirements, but not many carrots, or incentives, being considered in the amendment. The SEP was wondering what outreach efforts were being made, or could be made, to the for-hire industry to explain the program and to alleviate any concerns they may have, and I'll come back to those concerns probably in a little bit.

The SEP suggested that, rather than simply labeling noncompliance, perhaps efforts could be made to identify the specific barriers, in order to identify relevant strategies to increase compliance. In other words, addressing the why-not question. The SEP suggests engaging the industry to identify people who are reporting, to understand their motivations, and to increase transparency on why data is collected and how it will be used. That information could be used to create compliance incentives for the future.

The industry expressed concerns about the intent of the data gathering and what will result from the data and the data collection effort. The SEP urges transparency in the process and outreach efforts to lessen industry concerns about data usage, in particular addressing that the IRS is not having access to Fisheries Science Center data, and vice versa.

The SEP further discussed the confidentiality of the data being collected and the fact that the collection information was used to try to estimate net revenue on trips and complete economic effects analysis. Outreach efforts could include explaining the baseline economic information from the industry is something that is needed in case of disasters. Management can only take for-hire into account if revenue is captured somewhere, and they need to have that revenue information for fisheries disasters declarations, and I think they mentioned the BP oil spill as an example. It was very helpful to have that information to identify and prove losses for the industry.

Still, the SEP noted that there remain concerns from the industry about government overreach, including the types of information being sought in these surveys and the before-mentioned potential for this information to be shared with the IRS. The SEP suggested that the potential solution could be by working with a neutral third party that is trusted by both the industry and the managers.

The SEP was also wondering why compliance is higher in the Gulf of Mexico, and they were informed that there were several potential reasons. One is that the cost of not reporting is that someone could lose the permit. The reporting is done prior to offload, and stakeholders buy-in was important, and they acted as ambassadors, and there's a strict validation survey, and this is all in the Gulf.

The SEP discussed sampling methods previously used in studies on commercial and recreational fisheries. One suggested methodology was to first determine the smallest subgroup of the target population. Once you determine that smallest subgroup, the size of the overall representative sample can be determined. They mentioned that literature on sampling methodologies can provide some guidance, and also some tools for determining a representative sample, but the SEP noted that researchers are often very surprised by the large sample size that's actually needed to achieve a 90 or 95 confidence interval.

In addition, determining the sample size is not often the biggest challenge. The problem is generating enough valid responses to be statistically defensible. The SEP noted that NMFS has never dictated a particular minimum sampling size, or sampling methodology, and this is mostly left up to the individual researchers' judgment.

It was also noted that subsampling does not occur within the for-hire sector, with respect to their permits and the fisheries they operate in. The SEP discussed that NMFS utilizes sampling of both active and inactive participants in the coastal logbook program, to better determine how vessel owners are utilizing their available capital. I think, at the meeting, the council staff explained that their goal was to produce a robust sample size, while trying to minimize the level of regulatory burden.

The SEP did not recommend any set percentage of trips that would be needed to be sampled. Rather, it recommended following accepted standard sampling procedures to determine the percentage needed to yield the desired confidence interval. For, example one can consider the smallest possible subgroup, for instance states, and aim for a 5 percent margin of error for each of these and then scale up, and as I mentioned earlier, the needed sample size may actually be a lot larger than one would think. The SEP recommends attempting to generate an accuracy similar to the logbook program.

The council could use lessons from the NMFS approach to gather economic information from the commercial sector. For example, the completion of one survey per year and then being exempt the following year, the target of 20 percent coverage, questions about a typical trip, instead of specific trips, to capture variable cost, and an annual survey to capture the fixed costs. The SEP also recommends that active and inactive vessels be sampled separately, similar to the logbook program.

In terms of strengths and weaknesses of a census, versus a sampling methodology, the SEP noted that randomization will reduce the overall reporting burden. However, this can incentivize nonreporting, due to the resulting infrequent contact with the people they survey. The sampling methodology might pose a greater overall administrative burden, because of the needed follow-ups and reminders that are frequently needed with sampling surveys.

The SEP concluded that a census is more appropriate, if not necessary, for landings. Census data on landings would provide more useful information for management purposes. On the other hand, a sampling method may be more appropriate for economic data collections, but, while census data will provide far better data, there is a need for additional compliance consequences, in order to facilitate responses.

When discussing the target compliance rate for logbook data, the SEP discussed that any compliance rate can be valid if it can be determined that the samples are representative. This can be done by doing nonresponse checks and identifying if the responses received are markedly different than these checks. The validation is clearly needed, something the SSC also highlighted when we were discussing the SEFHIER amendment, during our recent SSC meeting, and the methodology for this validation is clearly needed to -- It needs to be selected to determine if compliance is sufficient.

The SEP also mentioned that response rates are perhaps less important than the accuracy of the reported data, and whether or not truthful information is being submitted, rather than people simply submitting a report just to be able to renew the license. It was proposed that perhaps observers on vessels could help with this issue, and the SEP also noted that logbooks and dealer reports are used for regular regulatory analyses, and people seem to trust the commercial landings far more than the data from recreational fleets.

If the council does not make landings mandatory for all, then we should expect more of these arguments in the future, and the SSC was asked what information could be useful, if the data are used for management advice, and the committee mentioned that a comparison of compliance rates across surveys would be very useful. It would also be good to see if the timing of the reporting prior to landings, as in the Gulf of Mexico, affects the level of compliance and the efficacy of the validation program, and, also, we were wondering if the limited, versus open, access affects compliance.

The Mid and South Atlantic are in different NOAA organizational regions, and it was mentioned, by the SEP, that the -- It was mentioned that the agency is working on better integration across that divide, especially as stocks have started shifting north. Blueline tilefish is an example where a difference in data collection between the two regions can make management cooperation difficult, including setting ABCs and ACLs.

Reporting between the Northeast and the Gulf -- I think this is probably reporting differences between the Northeast and the Gulf don't necessarily need to have comparable requirements, and methodologies, but it's more useful, and possibly easier, to have that overlap with the Gulf and South Atlantic than between the South Atlantic and the Northeast.

This is in part because they have the highest overlap in the South Atlantic permits. Therefore, the SEP suggests looking at similarities and integration with the Gulf first and then looking at the Mid-Atlantic. The SEP agrees that having reporting requirements more in sync will be the best interest of the councils in the future and will support the development of a system that will compile data across regions, from Texas to Maine, and, Madam Chair, that completes my report. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Marcel. Does anybody have any questions for Marcel? All right. No questions for Marcel. Thank you, Marcel. I think next up is the presentation on eVTRs by Jason Didden for the Mid-Atlantic Council. I think he's online. Jason, are you there?

MR. DIDDEN: Yes.

MS. MURPHEY: Cool. Okay.

MR. DIDDEN: Great. Thank you. The South Atlantic staff thought it would be useful to get a little bit of input on what the Mid has been doing with its eVTRs, and it is limited -- I'm getting a background noise. I'm just going to turn -- I'll turn the speaker on my computer way down, hopefully that's okay. It's limited, but I'll describe what we have.

I mostly just included these if someone, you know, happens upon this presentation, and I think most folks are familiar with this, and so you can skip on to the next one. Okay, and so we've had vessel trip reports, or logbooks, in for-hire and commercial fisheries since roughly the mid-1990s. Implementation was phased a bit across some of the Greater Atlantic, and so New England and the Mid-Atlantic species, and it's really a sub-trip report. If a vessel switches gears, or switches statistical areas, technically they should start a new VTR, a new logbook, report.

I think the statistical areas are large enough that it doesn't happen that often, even for folks who may be fishing in different statistical areas, and we're not sure quite how often folks actually will start a new VTR, but, technically, whether it's -- I think there's more applies on the commercial side, in terms of gears, but it technically applies on the for-hire side, in terms of switching areas. They really should be starting a new vessel trip report, and so we're getting some area information, in terms of where most of their fishing occurred in each sub-trip, or in each statistical area, but a variety of analyses, over the years, have kind of indicated that the location information we get on the VTRs can be pretty rough.

Council action in 2016, and becoming effective in 2018, moved to requiring electronic VTRs in our charter and party fleet, and those are for vessels that hold a federal permit for the Mid-Atlantic species, and we have vessels in the South Atlantic, and more so in New England, that have federal permits for the Mid-Atlantic species, and, once they have, you know, at least one permit for one of our species, and FMPs, then this gets triggered, and, technically, they should then be reporting pretty much every trip they take on that vessel, whether it's a for-hire trip, or even a personal trip, once that permit gets associated with that trip.

We've gotten some input, over the years, that that is not always that well understood, that it's not just for the federal species, but, once you have that permit, you're supposed to be reporting any fish caught on that trip, but we definitely know that's not universally understood, or complied with, and so that this action was really just moving from vessel trip reports to electronic vessel trip reports, with the hope of setting it up and trying to reduce duplication across some of the different reporting schemes that the vessels may face on the east coast.

What do we use this data for? The primary use is that it is integrated by MRIP, when they're calculating for-hire effort. I just clipped out some language from the current MRIP methods handbook, and so, the vessels that have to report VTRs, they're still in the for-hire survey sample frame, but, if they're drawn, they're not called, and the VTR data that they submit is used for that

vessel's information, and then estimates, the final for-hire MRIP estimates, are calculated using the VTR data, as well as the for-hire survey, for the non-VTR vessels.

There is some dockside validation that occurs, through the dockside intercept survey, and a correction that's made, and I think there's been some discussion of whether or not that should continue, but that's how it -- There is a correction made for -- Based on the dockside intercept validation that's done.

That same MRIP data enters in our assessments, and I think that's the primary kind of path of travel of the eVTRs into assessments, although we have used that information more directly, in like the Delphi method, and we teased out tilefish catches out of the VTR data, and we kind of had a meeting with experts, although I think that use may be -- I don't know, and I was talking to Hannah here, who is our blueline tilefish lead, and it sounds like that that may be moving away from that, with blueline tilefish, but it has been used in the past.

Then, on the commercial side, the VTRs, and now eVTRs there too, on the commercial side, are paired with dealer data, to assign location information, and that's used in a variety of fisheries, whether it's bycatch, or binning the landings by stock area, and so the VTR location information does get picked up there, also.

Then, on the management side, again, it's entering management through MRIP's usage of it, and we also do have some limited more direct usages. It was used to analyze and set tilefish and Atlantic mackerel bag limits. I'm more familiar with the Atlantic mackerel use of it, more recently, and we just had such a dearth of for-hire Atlantic mackerel data that we use the vessel trip reports to try to get a sense of how impactful some different possession limits might be on the for-hire side, and that process was -- You know, we have technical staff, at the Regional Office and the Science Center, developing those measures, over, you know, an extended period of time.

You know, we kind of evaluated the information we had did, and did some initial analyses of, you know, what data was available in the VTRs, and that, ultimately, was kind of a core component of why we set the limits we did, and what we thought the impacts might be, but it was, again, a situation where we didn't really have much other data. Another example is we tweaked the black sea bass season, a while back, and it was in Wave 1, and we didn't have data for that, and so we used some of the VTR data to analyze that.

I think that's -- Going forward, I think ACCSP is trying to move us -- To kind of help organize the movement to where we might be able to use not just the effort data, but the catch data, in a more regular basis, and I just grabbed this from a presentation Geoff White had done for one of the groups up here, trying to get just -- We're looking, into 2025, at a certification for a methodology of how to use the catch information off the logbooks more.

One of the things that's come up, with that, is looking at -- You know, we used to have did-not fish reports, but NMFS removed it from the VTRs, in 2015, and I think they got a good bit of static back from OMB about, you know, why are you trying to make someone report something that they didn't do, and so that was dropped, and, you know, whether -- You know, how that supports compliance, and it sounds like ACCSP is, you know, recommending that, and maybe also trip declarations, as a mandatory way to assist with validation, and compliance monitoring, of being



able to use catch data off of logbooks, but there's still a lot of frame issues, and that APAIS adjustment calibration of how that how that might work is still up in the air.

This is just, as we've kind of struggled a bit with whether or not to reimplement the did-not fish reports, and, again, not picking on New York here, but we happened to have some email traffic that was useful to kind of tease out, and illustrate, one of the frame issues.

New York State has a bit over 500 state for-hire permits in 2023, and there's some overlap there with federal, but, of those 528, only 186 reported some fishing trips in 2023, to either GARFO or New York, and then that compares with MRIP's frame, that is pretty regularly updated, of just shy of 2,000 for-hire vessels active in New York in 2023. You know, again, a vessel only has to be reporting if they're actively fishing here. It seems like that there may be some compliance issues here, and frame issues, between New York and MRIP.

GARFO, our regional office, they did a white paper on a lot of concern of reinstating the did-not fish reports, just kind of the limited effect of them, and, you know, it pretty much just tells you that those vessels that were reporting were aware of the requirement, but you don't know anything about vessels that weren't aware, or weren't complying of the requirement, and then we still don't know if all the vessels that are reporting these did-not fish reports actually did not fish or not, and so, from GARFO's perspective, it's kind of not much utility in this product, but potentially a lot of time on their staff to track whether or not these vessels are submitting them.

We've kind of put it on pause a little bit. We have, on our draft 2025 implementation plan, which is kind of all the deliverables of the Mid-Atlantic Council for a year, we're contemplating initiating a working group on data reporting improvements, the idea that did-not fish reports may not be the end-all-be-all here, but it seems like we've got some issues to deal with that, you know, may warrant some ongoing attention, and I put kind of a link to a discussion of that kind of proposed idea into here as well, and that memo also has a link to the GARFO report on why they think that the did-not fish reports are not a great use of resources.

One part of that kind of working group was that, if we do go down that road, we need -- In trying to improve reporting overall, it doesn't really make sense to do it unless we have all the relevant parties involved, with ACCSP still trying to kind of figure out what a certified logbook program would be, that we could use the catch data off it, it's kind of -- We're kind of on pause right now, to kind of see how things work out through that process.

This is just flagging that we also have a another implementation plan item, and these are draft, because we probably won't finalize these until next week, but the council is considering some options for managing for-hire recreational fisheries separately from the rest of recreational, and some options, that are yet to be developed for that, include more catch accounting things, more private angler reporting, and we do have some private angler reporting for tilefish, and, our likely challenges with getting a lot of kind of compliance and awareness of that, is a whole separate topic, but the potential for some additional VTR requirements for for-hire vessels may come up as part of that, too.

You know, overall -- You know, I was chatting with Dr. Chris Moore, our executive director, and, I mean, I think that the key things that Mid-Atlantic is looking for is to kind of balance this. Yes, we want to improve data, but we would really like to reduce burden on, and balance that, on

whatever entities are having to report, and really trying to -- Both on the alignment and on the one-stop reporting across regions and HMS, to really minimize reporting burden, as much as possible, and I think that can be done with or without alignment, but alignment being important, also.

I mean, you know, there was outreach done up here, but it was -- It definitely caused some issues, when some cost info requirements started popping in for more Mid-Atlantic participants, and so, again, both -- We had to still have the one-stop alignment and good awareness of what everybody is doing, and so that causes problems, potentially.

Again, so it's a quick overview of kind of some of our uses of it, limited to-date, we'll have to kind of see how things play out with ACCSP, and the certification of that logbook program, but I'm happy to take questions, and answer them, or jot some notes down to follow-up. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jason. We've got a question from Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Jason. I have a question about Slide 10, regarding the New York for-hire vessels. I guess I'm just not understanding. I mean, you say that MRIP is 1,983 active New York for-hire vessels, but there's only 528 for-hire permits, and so are you saying the state has a bunch of unpermitted vessels? I guess I'm just confused by this.

MR. DIDDEN: I think we're confused by it a little bit also, but, you know, MRIP has a frame that use for surveying. Their folks who are out there canvassing the docks that update regularly, and that number is a lot larger than the permitted vessels that appear in New York, yes, and so I don't -- You know, either, one, the other, or both are wrong, and it's not totally clear to us what's going on there, but it does hint that there's some potential under-compliance there.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. Thank you for that. I have nothing else to add, other than, if that's true, that's not true everywhere.

MS. MURPHEY: Anyone else have any questions for Jason? I've got Amy.

MS. DUKES: Hi, Jason. Amy Dukes, from South Carolina DNR. Could you give us a magnitude of the number of federal for-hire federal permits that the Mid-Atlantic has?

MR. DIDDEN: I will have to follow-up on that. I don't know, off the top of my head, and I'll follow-up. I think it's a lot less than you all have, I'm guessing, but I'll double-check.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Anybody else? All right. Well, I don't see any other questions, Jason, and so thank you so much for your presentation.

MR. DIDDEN: Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: We are up to the SEFHIER presentation, with Jessica Stephen. There she is.

DR. STEPHEN: Good afternoon. I'm here to give a presentation on the SEFHIER program and answer a number of questions that were asked at the last council meeting, and so just a brief overview is I'm going to cover some MSA confidentiality, because that did come up at the SEP, and so I want to make sure that everyone was clear on what that is, and then I'll go into different

questions that were asked of SERO, such as talk about our declaration hybrids, the usefulness and effectiveness of landing locations, a review of compliance, looking at the validation estimation survey, and then where the agency is, in general, to working towards comprehensive reporting.

I'm not going to read through everything on this slide. This is the codified code that we have for MSA confidentiality. I just want to point out a couple of things about how data collected by the agency works, and so, in general, that data is considered confidential, but there are some exemptions of where we can disclose the data.

It's typically federal staff, as well as council staff, signs nondisclosure agreements that allows us access to the data. That often is very true of the commissions, and some state employees might enter into a discussion with us, and sign NDAs as well, to have access to that data. Other than that, some of the other exceptions relate to limited-access programs, as well as in requirement by a court order or by Homeland Security.

What does that all mean in a little bit more plain language? What it means is that, typically, the data submitted by a fisherman to the SEFHIER program really cannot be disclosed unless it falls under one of those exceptions. We do share our data with our law enforcement officers, for enforcement purposes, and, when we do release data, we release it under what we call the rule-of-three, and so, in order to keep that information confidential, we need at least three submissions, from different entities, in order to release the information in some summed-up manner. When we do that, we don't simply strip off identifiers for a fisherman, where someone can use that information to back enter to it. It is kept confidential, in all cases, when possible.

All right, and so, in this portion of the presentation, I'm going to talk about declarations and pre-landing notifications. We covered a lot of this during the wreckfish program, and so I want to kind of talk a little bit about both things, and how we've combined them together initially in the Gulf SEFHIER program.

Remember declarations are submitted prior to landing. They're saying I'm intending to go on this type of trip, and I'm intending to leave at this date and time, using this gear, maybe fishing for this targeted species. Typically, a declaration is submitted on the day of when you're intending to take the trip. Some parts, within the agency, require that submission within one hour, and some of them don't have a submission timeframe at all, and so there's a little bit of flexibility, depending on your fishery, when you would require that a declaration could be submitted.

The opposite side of that is a pre-landing notification, and so this is after you're done fishing, and you submit some type of notification prior to landing, or arriving back from your trip, that contains information such as when you expect to be back, where you might be landing, and it also sometimes includes information about what you caught.

Within these, the Gulf of Mexico, in their commercial fishery, does use notification of three to twenty-four hours prior to landing. Both types of notices are extremely helpful for monitoring programs, as well as for law enforcement. With the aspect of law enforcement, we get that data electronically, and we have it categorized to what zone it's in, and it can be automatically emailed to law enforcement officers, within minutes, or even sometimes seconds, of receiving that data, and so we have a near real-time communication with law enforcement.

For the declarations, that could allow for better and improved enforcement at-sea, and, for the pre-landing notifications, it does allow for better dockside monitoring. It also assists with any port samplers who might be wishing to intercept the vessel to get biological samples.

Where does this concept of kind of a declaration pre-landing hybrid come from? When we were working with the Gulf Headboat Collaborative Program, we did separate notifications, and one of the results that came from both the participants in the program, the port agents, and enforcement was, with these for-hire trips, it was a little bit difficult to handle a notification, or declaration, and a notification, and they thought maybe we could do one that combines attributes of both together.

What it came out to is that we ended up thinking, for the SEFHIER program, we can have for-hire trips can be very short. They can be half-day trips. That's really difficult to do pre-landing notification for that. The for-hire captains typically know where they're coming back. You have passengers, that you have a time when your trip is going to end, and where you're going to arrive at, and there's also an extremely limited ability for these for-hire fishermen to report while at-sea.

What this hybrid form does is it combines the best attributes that we need from both the declaration and the pre-landing notification into one notification that comes prior to the trip, and it still meets the needs of law enforcement and the port agents, as well as the managers.

The information we have done on the pre-landing notifications prior in the Gulf program, we had information about what vessel, and that is auto-filled. When you sign into your account, the application fills that information out, and then you've determined what type of trip activity you're on, commercial, charter/headboat, or private angler. You also intend -- What type of fishing trip, was it intended or non-intended, where you're returning to, when the trip starts, and when you expect the trip to end.

I want to be clear that the declaration is a separate form from the logbook, so they are two separate forms contained within an app. No application would be approved for SEFHIER without having both of these forms available. Within these, some of the vendors have also chosen that, if you're starting to fill information out in the declaration portion, they're going to transfer that over to the logbook, and so it can save some time, depending on what application you choose and how they've chosen to implement it.

Within this, the SEFHIER program was also distributing those notices both to the officers, managers, and port agents, and so that communication in near real-time still went out when a fisherman was leaving on the trip.

It's a little tricky when you talk about when the declaration, or this declaration hybrid, needs to be submitted. Obviously, it has to be submitted prior to leaving for your trip, but, when you think about the timing, you've got to think about what aspects you're using it for and how you want to move forward with it, and so, if you allow submission at any point in time, and say I submitted my declaration last night, and the weather turned bad, and I'm not going out. and there's no way to really recall that declaration, and so having a timing that's a little bit closer to when you're going to do the trip allows for better matching, and compliance, when you're thinking about here I submitted a declaration, and then I went on my trip, and then here is my logbook.

Also, we do know that a lot of the for-hire fishermen take more than one trip a day, and so it gets very difficult if they submit both declarations for two trips in that day, making sure that we're going to match it up, but it's still possible to match it. This tends to end up being more of a manual match, than some algorithm that's helping to match it, and so, in general, the closer the submission of the declaration is to the trip, the better there is overall at matching them to the logbooks, moving forward, reaching out and having communication, and ensuring that we're getting the information needed.

We also have seen some noncompliance with the declarations, and so, when you have no submission, there's kind of a mismatch in the audits. I might see a logbook, but I didn't see a declaration, but, if they also did not submit a logbook, you might not know that trip occurred at all.

When you're talking late submissions, they're still pretty valuable. When you think about what the submission requires, such as the landing location, I want to know that whether it was late or it was on time, and I'll get into that a little bit later in the presentation and talk about how we use information from the landing locations.

The one problem is that late notices will restrict law enforcement options. They might not be there to meet the vessel, and so that could impede any kind of regulatory process with it, and, typically, a late, or no submission, could eventually result in a fine. As we said before, we tend to like to do enforcement where we're making sure they understand the requirements, and not fine someone right off, and so, typically, we would have a conversation first with them.

At the point with the Gulf program, it did not impact the permit renewal. We simply kept the permit renewal to the logbook aspect, and not to the declaration aspect, and I'll say, typically, those who are submitting logbooks were also submitting the declarations. We didn't see a lot of difference in them only submitting the logbook or only submitting the declaration.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I just wanted to suggest that, since it's a lengthy presentation, and we're about a third through, maybe we should ask questions with each section, if the chair is okay with that.

MS. MURPHEY: I'm okay. Are you okay?

DR. STEPHEN: Yes, that's fine.

MR. STRELCHECK: I would note that I don't have any questions, but I just wanted to here to call on us, just in case people did.

MS. MURPHEY: I'm sorry, Andy. Did you have a question? Any questions? Go ahead, Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair. Thanks, Jessica. I did have a quick question, and so, on Slide 6, you talked about how the hybrid notification can assist port samplers in obtaining the biological samples. Currently, there is no directed sampling effort in the South Atlantic. Is that - Specifically for charter vessels, and it's only for headboats, correct?

DR. STEPHEN: Yes, and I don't believe we're doing any. We were doing biological sampling in the Gulf.

MS. DUKES: Okay. Would that be something that the service is, I guess, interested in, and would it mimic the headboats, or could it be more of like a cooperative approach with the states?

DR. STEPHEN: It could go through in a variety of ways. One of the things we did notice, in the Gulf program, is that having additional biological samples would be really helpful. If you think about SEFHIER's logbook, we're collecting in numbers of fish. We've got to convert numbers over to weight, in a lot of instances, and having biological samples typically allows you to have the length-weight conversions, as well as collecting otolith and gonads for other things.

I would -- I would imagine that, if we start to put the port sampling in place, and having this kind of the stronger program, we would go out with the states, and they would be available to get those notifications as well, to coordinate any type of port sampling, to get biological parts, or do other types of measurements.

If we go forward with an estimation survey -- In the Gulf, we did have that built in. The biological sampling was an additional component to it. It was lower on the priorities, because our priority was initially to get all the samples, but I would imagine it would work similar to how the headboat survey program works, in the sense that they would do their sampling, and, if they had additional time with vessels there, they would also take the biological sampling, and, in the Gulf, we ran that through the states.

MS. MURPHEY: I've got Tom.

MR. ROLLER: So, in a pre-landing notice, and I'm trying to figure out how I'm going to ask this. So, I mean, I recognize that, if you have a short trip, right, it's more helpful to land it in advance, but for-hire trips can vary in length a lot, and, for example, it's not uncommon that you have a full-day trip, and people get really tired at six hours, and say let's go in, right, and you're in two hours earlier than you declared, or it's a little rougher, or whatnot, or you got on fish late in the day, and you stay out an extra two hours, and how is that -- How would that be handled, from a sampling or law enforcement capacity?

DR. STEPHEN: So we didn't have any penalties for coming in early, right, and, typically, people come in early for some of the reasons you listed, either the weather got bad, or maybe someone got sick on the vessel, or they were just done fishing for the day, and so, with this program, we didn't have any penalties for coming in early.

We would probably only start talking to law enforcement if every trip you had started coming in early, right, and so you saw a pattern, where you felt that people were, you know, purposely putting a later time, so not to be intercepted. For the port agents that we would have, they would be just sampling, and so they wouldn't use the notification as much for their sampling protocol, because, in their survey estimation, we have a different sampling regime, but it does help inform them a little bit of who might be coming in.

MR. ROLLER: Okay. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Jessica, this hybrid approach, for the for the Gulf pilot, was just done for headboats, or would it -- Was it also charter?

DR. STEPHEN: It was done for the SEFHIER program, and so, when we did the Gulf Headboat Collaborative, which was just headboats, this was their recommendation out of the program, because their program did both the notification and the declaration, and they said it's a lot of work to do both, and it's a high burden, and we think we would get the same impact from combining them together, and so, when the participants said that, we went out to law enforcement, and the port samplers, and said how would this affect you, and would this be detrimental to do, and they also agreed that they could work with this hybrid, and so we put this in place for the Gulf SEFHIER program, and that's what they used while they were in play.

MS. MURPHEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Just a little bit of a comment. You know, one of the biggest complaints I hear from fishermen, regarding recreational data collection for, you know, for-hire and MRIP, is they say they're never sampled, or they never see a sampler, and why was I never called, and I think this -- It's how you package it in your outreach, and how you explain that to people, and I think that would be perceived a lot better, that this is done in such a way to make sure that you're sampled for better data.

DR. STEPHEN: Yes, and I'm going to get into the slides on the estimation survey, and I'll tell you how this kind of plays into it, and how it really helps.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Just because I'm not as familiar with the Gulf for-hire fisheries, but are we talking a very similar profile to what we see in the South Atlantic, with a lot of outboard vessels, one-man shows, or do you know if boats in the Gulf -- I mean, I imagine we're very similar in nature.

DR. STEPHEN: Yes, I think they're very similar in nature. We might have some more headboats out there than the charter, but on the six-pack charters, they're very similar in nature.

MS. MURPHEY: All right.

DR. STEPHEN: All right. Now we're going to get into the landing locations, and so a lot of people might ask what exactly is a landing location, and how do we use it, and, again, if you remember, we talked landing locations a little bit in the wreckfish program, but I want to highlight here that what we're doing for the for-hire is a little bit different.

Due to the nature of the for-hire fisheries, we're a little less rigid than we are with commercial, and so, in for-hire, you're selling trips, and not selling fish, and you're not necessarily coming into a dealer, and so, for those reasons, we adjusted how we would do the landing locations. In this instance, landing locations do have to be an actual street address, and they are the places where you expect to offload your passengers as well as your fish.

It can be more refined than just a street address, and so a lot of people might list the same marina. We might ask that they get a little bit more exact. If the marina has more than one dock, maybe you list the dock, or the slip number, where you're coming in. Here's the critical part. In the for-hire industry, we did allow private residences as your landing location, and so, in commercial, we do not allow that, but, because of the nature of the for-hire, where a lot of them are picking up people who might be at an Airbnb, and it's on the water, and it has a dock, and they want to pick their passengers up right there, and we go -- We went ahead and allowed that within the Gulf, and I'll show you some of the results of that in a few slides.

You might ask why we need these landing locations, and so, as I mentioned before, they're a really good tool for enforcement. It's hard to know when to meet a vessel, or where to meet a vessel, when you don't know where a vessel is landing, and so, by having this in combination with the declaration, we start to give law enforcement, as well as port agents, a better ID for where are the fish coming in in general, how does it change seasonally, and how can we adjust our schedules to start meeting more vessels.

It's also really useful in the validation or estimation survey. When we started in the Gulf, we started with MRIP numbers. Knowing where our federal for-hire vessels are landing is really critical, and we can then use the weights, that we get from the declarations, and the landing locations, to start picking which sites are more appropriate, or need to be weighted heavier, because they have more traffic of the federal vessels at them.

I was asked to kind of explain how the for-hire landing approval process works, and, again, because this is a little less rigid than what we had for commercial, the process is a little more simplistic, and so participants have to submit their landing location on one of our websites. They must enter the name of the location. We do ask that it's not duplicative of another one, and so it might get rejected if it has the same name or it's too generalized.

We also ask that they provide contact information, which is their name, phone number, maybe a mailing address, and this is because, if we have a problem with this location, we can call the person up and resolve it quickly, and then we've added on, or we want to add on, for going forward with this, whether they mark it as a private or public location. With the past Gulf program, we to go through by hand and identify private versus public, and this would just be a simple checkmark box where they'll tell us whether they're submitting a private or public location.

Once it's submitted, the SEFHIER staff does look at it, and we look to make sure that the address exists and that it's actually on the water, and the on the water is crucial, because, in the Gulf, we had a lot of misunderstandings that landing locations had to be anywhere where your vessel ended up, and so, if you trailered your vessel to your house, your house had to be a landing location. That's not the intent of this.

This is -- The intent is landing location, and so we're going to offload fish, and so we'll double-check, and, if they give us a location on land, we'll call them up, to make sure that they understand what the landing location is, have a conversation of whether it's still needed, and like are you trailering really people in your vessel there, or are you offloading your passenger somewhere else, and that also helps with the communication and outreach component.



Then each landing location is assigned to what we have with law enforcement zones. This is what allows us to send only those declarations for that zone to those law enforcement officers in the zone, so they're not receiving everything from every zone. Typically, these types of submissions are approved within one business day. It's a fairly fast process.

As I mentioned before, I want to highlight, again, that landing locations are where you offload your passengers and the fish, and it's not where you dock your vessel. It's not your high-and-dry. It typically is not your fuel docks, or bait or ice shops, unless you're also using those to offload your passengers and the fish.

When we talked a little bit about how difficult it would be outside the Southeast to do landing locations, from our program management perspective, and then in talking with law enforcement, we don't see that it would be a great difficulty. If you have one of our permits, and some of the SEFHIER permits do go up to Maine, and to New York, we would approve a location there. We would go through the same process to prove it. We would have to grab those law enforcement zones, and figure out which officers are in there, to make sure we would send notification to them, but, from our perspective, there wouldn't be any great difficulty in putting this all the way up to Maine or New York.

All right, and the last slide on this one. This is just showing you, in the Gulf, the number of private, public, and undetermined locations, and so, as I mentioned, when we started that program, we didn't have people tell us private or public, and so we had twelve locations that we couldn't quite figure out what they were, but you can see, overall, we had 226 public locations, and only seventy-five private locations.

We were starting to do some analysis, and, if we get the programs back up and running, we'll continue to analysis, if trips seem to differ between private and public locations. That is one caveat that we would want to look into as we get more data in the program. I think this was my last slide here, and so any questions on landing locations?

MS. MURPHEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: So, just to -- I had said, at the last meeting, that I was leery of landing locations, and that's just simply because I didn't understand it, how you explained it, and, when I see this, this makes a lot more sense, right, and so thank you for that. I would say, from my perspective, that, when we start looking at the east coast, versus the Gulf, where we have a lot more permit owners, this is probably going to be a little bit more difficult, and the comment that I'm going to offer is I know, in my county, particularly with all the coastal gentrification we have, for-hire operators are -- You know, they're leaving from all sorts of places, right, and a lot of docks, and ramps, whether they are private -- They're all private ramps, and they don't have street addresses.

That's been an issue for me, getting customers to meet in locations, because you have to drop them a physical pin off your iPhone, or like a lat/long, because there's no address to put into the GPS, and that's probably going to become an issue with landing locations, and so I just offer that as a consideration, when we look at this going forward.

DR. STEPHEN: When we started the Gulf program, we actually did also allow the GPS locations. We were trying to see if we could narrow it down, but, listening to what your conversation is, I

think we would probably open it back up to give us an address, if there is one. If there's not an address, give us the GPS locations.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other questions on landing locations?

DR. STEPHEN: All right. The next section talks about compliance, and so, when we talk about compliance, we have to be careful, because I think everyone means something a little different. Compliance can mean did you actually submit something, at any point in time, or did you actually submit it on time, or was your submission accurate, and each one of those can be a different type of compliance question.

To that part, in this presentation, I divided compliance up into three general types of categories, the submission compliance, whether you submitted something, how timely it was, and so your timeliness compliance and then your accuracy compliance.

I will also kind of give a caveat that, whenever we're analyzing data, the time period you're looking at is critical in how you're analyzing it, and so, if I'm looking for the past year, and everything has been submitted, versus looking at what's current, that timeliness, or submission, compliance can change over time. Also, the metric that you're going to be using to look at compliance, whether it's a vessel's compliance, a permit holder's compliance, or trip compliance will change what your metrics are in looking at things.

Let's start with the submission compliance, and so, kind of in plain language, where your submission is made each week, or each week of the year, and did you give me something every week, as required, and so, when we're looking at this, we're evaluating the proportion of operators who submitted that logbook, or a did-not fish report, for a given time period.

It typically is one of our easiest metrics to look at, because it's either you did or you did not, but that also comes with some metrics that you have to think about and caveat, and so you can do submission compliance by a vessel, or for every trip, and you can also do it by a permit holder. You can also review that submission compliance weekly, monthly, or annually. What we've realized, looking through our data, is that submission compliance does not take into account whether they submitted it late or whether it's an accurate submission. It's basically a yes/no type field.

For example, if you get late submissions, and you're looking for an entire year, you could say 80 percent of the people were compliant, but you could have something like 20 to 30 percent of those were late with their compliance, and you don't see that lateness when you're talking just submission compliance. We've also seen things where did-not fish reports were submitted in bulk, right around permit renewal time, and so that leads you to question whether there was an accuracy compliance. Did they actually submit the right thing, or did they submit a form to get your permit renewed.

Moving on to timeliness, it's basically this kind of compliance is did I report on time. Again, it should be, in theory, an easy metric to look at. What we do is all the applications have an automated field, that says when it was submitted, and so that's done by a behind-the-scenes action, and we compare that to when the trip occurred. It does require that comparison between two data fields, to determine the timeliness compliance.

This is where you can have a lot of impacts from late submissions on what your purpose and needs were for the program, and so, when you have late submissions of reports, that kind of decreases the anticipated benefit we have that we have more timely data, more often, given to us to evaluate where the different fishery stocks were. This means you could have greater uncertainty within your catch accounting, or your monitoring, and so, if you wanted to use SEFHIER data for in-season monitoring, having a high degree of late compliance, or timeliness noncompliance, would affect whether you were opening or closing the season, particularly if you weren't getting that information in time.

It also creates a lot of uncertainty in basically calculating your catch and effort until that late report is turned in, and so all of these kind of increase that also difficulty of automating, not using manual work to automate and match whether someone was late or on time. Typically, the late submissions kind of give this perception that overall submission compliance is higher, and submission was the previous one I talked about, because, in submission, we just say yes or no, and we don't say when it was done, and so, if I'm looking at this month now, I could say it's this amount of compliance. If I look at this current month six months from now, it might look a lot better, because all those late submissions were reported in time.

Then accuracy compliance was the other metric to look at. This was how accurate was this submission. As I mentioned before, we've seen, particularly in the SEFHIER program, a lot of did-not fish reports or suddenly submitted when it's time to renew a permit. Was that vessel actually latent, and just failed to submit it throughout time, or was this I'm just going to fill out a form to get my permit renewed, and so that goes, again, into whether the catch and effort being recorded is accurate. This is our hardest metric to validate and to look into.

One of the ways we could start to validate this accuracy, and compliance, would be using some type of survey estimation, or intercept survey, to look at the data caught and do the comparisons. Again, the survey estimation is really a boots-on-the-ground. It does come at a higher cost to implement, but, if it's designed appropriately, we're going to have a good way to estimate what is the accuracy and compliance, moving forward.

Let's talk about some of the numbers we gave out before in 2023, and so, at one point, one of our presentations said that there were 17 percent of vessels that did not submit anything at all in 2023, and so that sounds kind of low, when you think about it, and so these vessels did nothing, no did-not fish report, no logbook for the entire year, but it kind of gives you a false idea that submission compliance was 83 percent of all vessels.

When you're thinking about submission compliance, if those were turned in late, and we're looking at vessels, and we're not looking at trips, and so what is the real compliance problem? How many trips possibly were missed, or not missed?

When we look at the statistic, that monthly 18 to 50 percent of vessel submissions were non-compliant, that looks different over time. As I mentioned before, when we start looking later, a later period time looking back, your compliance will start to rise, because of the late submissions that are coming in, and another statistic we gave was 63 percent of the did-not fish reports, and 47 percent of the logbooks, were submitted late.

Again comes the question of accuracy, and were some of these falsely submitted, in order to renew a permit? Were some kind of innocently I mixed up my trips, and submitted my catch differently, and then these lengthier delays in submission tend to be a problem when you're analyzing data, because you're thinking about recall bias, and so 21 percent of those were more than thirty days late. If that was actually I didn't think to write it down anywhere else, and I'm submitting it, your recall bias is probably pretty high.

One of the problems is we have no good way to gauge how much was someone wrote it down, and just didn't submit it, versus someone writing it down three weeks later, and that makes it hard to judge where the recall bias uncertainty should be when we're starting to use the data in management.

So, to kind of sum up the compliance portion, the question of kind of what level of compliance do we need overall to run the program is not really a clear answer. I think we need to work on these different components of compliance, to address them directly and see how each one of them influences and move things forward, and so, basically, what we should be looking for are tools to increase overall compliance, in all three of these fields, and think about how that would make us have more data that's more suitable for management, moving forward.

I was also asked to give a comparison to the Gulf program, and so, in the Gulf program, we had really high compliance, and a lot of people asked why, and so we went and looked into this a little bit. I think some of these were reported with the SSC's presentation, but some of the reasons the Gulf program was more compliant is they do have a limited-access permit. Loss of that permit means that permit is gone entirely from the fishing industry, and not just from that person as a whole, and so that was a pretty large incentive to report timely and accurately.

We also had a number of tools that we were using, the declaration and reporting prior to offload both really assisted in having a reporting. With the declaration, if I didn't see a logbook coming in soon, I didn't have to wait a week to call them. We could call them the next day and say, hey, you forgot your logbook, and so that will then reduce that recall bias when they're filling out a logbook and turning it in.

The reporting prior to offload was also a way to get them more used to doing it. This is the end of my trip, and I fill this out, and I turn it in. That reporting prior to offload is also a significant factor in our estimation survey, and then we had the VMS requirement, when it was in place, and so this allowed a slightly different tool for us to look at it, and so, for the people who had the VMS, and maybe forgot the declaration, and did not turn in a logbook, we could look at their VMS track and go, you kind of look like you were probably offshore fishing, and let me give you a call and see if that's what you were doing, and, if it was a for-hire trip, did you forget to turn something in.

Then, finally, the validation estimation survey was really a strong component too to having that improved compliance. We had samplers meeting them at the dock, and they were able to explain the program in-person, one-on-one with the fishermen, and it gave us definitely information about the accuracy of the submission, and we could use that to move forward, to figure out was there some component of the logbook that you misunderstood, and therefore filled out inaccurately.

I will point out that the Gulf program did not have did-not fish reports. They are now considering it, and so for, when we didn't have VMS, and we didn't have did-not fish reports, there could be

vessels that we assumed were latent that were fishing, and turning nothing in, and so those could not be counted in overall compliance, because we were unsure whether they were latent or if they just were not reporting.

Then, looking at what could be some challenges, when we're thinking about what's a minimum compliance value, and this was also talked about with the SEP, understanding where the population is of our fishermen, as we're looking at it. With the open-access permits, these tend to be more dynamic population changes, and the number of permits -- Your universe isn't staying the same.

In the Gulf, your universe is staying the same, with a handful of permits changing hand each year, and then the question is were those noncompliant permit holders fishing the same way, or not, or were they even not fishing, and was it truly permit latency? Are there similar representativeness, the ones you're intercepting, and, once again, an estimation survey is a little bit more of an appropriate way to account for low compliance, and a pathway for us to start really using the data fully within management.

As you have greater compliance in the program, we probably need to subsample them less often. As you're getting people who are submitting, and you're just double-checking, maybe more for misreporting, versus non-reporting, and that survey does create an estimation for both of those.

Still the number-one challenge with an estimation survey is that the vessels you are intercepting are representative of the vessels you're not, and so, before, I mentioned the private locations versus the public locations. It's a lot harder to have sampling occur at a private location. If those types were different, we would have to consider some aspect to account for the private landings being different than the public landings.

Then, with comparison to MRIP, we were asked to think about how we could compare the SEFHIER data to MRIP, and so a couple challenges going forward with this. The first is that SEFHIER is only capturing the federal vessels, whereas MRIP captures both the federal and the state vessels. SEFHIER data is currently, for the South Atlantic, considered raw reported data. We don't have a survey to do an expansion for nonreporting or misreporting. SEFHIER also just collects the number of fish, and we currently don't have that dockside sampling program that would help us capture length to weight estimations, or transitions, and those could be different between state vessels and federal vessels, and so that is an important component, moving forward, to think about.

Then, finally, before we typically compare data streams, we like to have calibration. As you remember, like SEFHIER is considered a different unit of measure than MRIP, and so we would need to have a calibration, to evaluate what those differences are, and then an estimation process for that calibration, and then applying that calibration back in time, so we can look at what SEFHIER would have looked like back in time, compared to MRIP.

Currently, what we can do is use the SEFHIER data to validate the minimum estimates of the for-hire that is generated by MRIP, and that's typically, I believe, how GARFO is using their data. They use it to supplement MRIP, and not as a replacement data stream for MRIP. All right. Definitely questions after this.

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have questions? Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you. This is really well thought out. Wouldn't MRIP intercept staff have access to the declaration, and the prior landing reporting, so that they would be -- The efficiency of MRIP would be, okay, now I know this vessel is coming here, and I'm going to show up, and I'm going to be there, rather than sitting there all day long and waiting on a per-chance intercept?

DR. STEPHEN: So they can definitely have access to that data. One of the challenges is, when you think about this sampling design, and how you want to design it, and so you don't want to start biasing your design by going outside of sort of a stratified sampling, with different weightings, because you know someone is arriving. What could be done is those weightings from the SEFHIER landings, and trips, could be placed into MRIP, to readjust their weighting of how they do sampling, and does that make sense?

MR. HULL: Yes, and that's not the way I always think of it though, because I just -- Realistically, I've seen so many samplers at the dock, where there's not going to be a charter boat coming in, you know, but they still are there, sitting there all day long, and, you know, it's just the efficiency of it. It seems like it could be an improvement.

DR. STEPHEN: I'll get into this in a few slides, but I'll answer a little bit now. So, when we started the Gulf program, we started with the MRIP locations for where sampling was, and they were pretty mismatched for the federal vessels. We had samplers sitting there, and there was no -- There was MRIP sampling, because there were state vessels, but there were no federal vessels.

As we started gathering information, with the declarations and landing locations, we started adjusting or sampling to exclude those sites where the federal vessels weren't landing, and we started putting the weight on the sites where the federal vessels were landing. Each month, we started to refine that better, because there's also seasonality to that as well, right, and so the same site doesn't get the same pressure every month, and so the goal would be to use those landing locations, and declarations, to continuously refine it. That data could easily be shared with MRIP. They actually helped us do our sampling design for SEFHIER.

MS. MURPHEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: So, in my discussion with state staff and whatnot, over time, when it comes to MRIP, my understanding is one of the issues of sampling for-hire is that they tend to leave at different times than the regular community, and leave from slightly different locations, such as leave from one spot, pick up customers at another, and isn't -- My point is that this -- All of this would get around those underlying problems with the for-hire sector, correct?

DR. STEPHEN: The data we would start to be able to collect from this program, with those landing locations and declarations, would really be able to help refine things, and so we would actually get better understanding overall when fishermen are leaving, and maybe they aren't leaving between these different time brackets that we think they are, and we've started to do a lot of that exploration of data within the Gulf.

I'll be honest that I was fascinated by what we were seeing. There were some things that surprised me along the way. In gathering that information, it gives us a better idea of how we would do it

on the South Atlantic, how the South Atlantic fisheries are working, and it could be very different state to state as well.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other questions? Amy.

MS. DUKES: I will echo Tom. This is really good information, and so I really appreciate your time and energy putting all this together. You hit on something, a second ago, and the institutional knowledge is not there for me. When the South Atlantic Council started the SEFHIER amendment, was the intent for that to be supplemental data, because you made comment where it said it can be used to validate the minimum estimates for-hire effort generated by MRIP, and I would be curious if you guys have done that.

DR. STEPHEN: My understanding was that the SEFHIER programs, both in the Gulf and South Atlantic, were meant to replace the MRIP program for the federal vessels, and so it would be a way to have more timely and accurate data that we get in, and I don't know, Andy, if you want to comment.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and John might have a little bit of history as well, and so that statement about kind of the minimum level of effort actually came from a document from the Science Center, when they were essentially certifying the amendment, right, and so, at the time, right, we were acknowledging that we're trying to stand up a program, but we also were acknowledging that it may not be all that useful, in terms of accomplishing its goals and objectives, at the time, because of the way it was designed, right, that it had, obviously, some limitations to the overall survey design that would affect our ability to actually use that as more of a census-based sampling, or census-based, survey design.

With that said, no, we haven't compared it to the MRIP estimates in any form at this point. We certainly can, but the level of compliance has been so low, right, and it has certainly kind of come to fruition, based on what the Science Center initially indicated, in terms of what we could, or, for that matter, couldn't use the data for.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. Any more questions? You look like you're pondering. Anybody else? Okay.

DR. WALTER: That memo was did come from Cisco Werner, a couple of years ago, and it was really in relation to not having a validation component, that it would be just a minimum estimate of the effort, and so I think, here, the efforts to try to get at the validation are really the critical thing, because that is what we would be able to then say we can rely on this for use in stock assessments, and to estimate catch and discards, and so how we develop that validation, and how reliable that is, I think is the critical aspect here, and the differences between the Gulf and the South Atlantic, and we've gone over some of them, but one indeed was that, previously, the Gulf had the VMS requirement, for the purposes of validation, and then when it was ended it, and it now is going to be revised, and similar, I think, validation approaches are being explored for the Gulf. Thanks.

DR. STEPHEN: All right, and so it's a nice lead-up to this set of slides, so, in these slides, I talk about the validation estimation survey, and using the Gulf example of how we ran the survey within the Gulf.

We did have funding provided to us by Congress, but that funding had decreased over time. What we did is we worked in a cooperative agreement with GulfFIN to coordinate the surveys with the state partners in the Gulf, and so GulfFIN agreed to house the data system, for the data collection, and supply the tablets, and they also coordinate with the states, and so each state was given money, through GulfFIN, in order to administer the dockside sampling survey.

We had a lot of cooperative members, and so not only did we have GulfFIN and all the state partners, but we had the Office of Science and Technology, as well as SERO, working together on this estimation design. One of the key things was that we wanted to ensure that the sampling was consistent methodology across states. When you start to vary the methodology too much, then you still have to do some calibrations, to get all the information sort of in the same units of measure.

The validation survey that we used had what we call a mark-and-recapture estimation model. The mark was the logbook, and the recapture was the dockside intercept, and then you compare the two, to see what level of misreporting, or nonreporting, you have. When we did the Gulf survey, it was a separate survey, and not part of MRIP, or part of any of the other states surveys.

What we did with this is we were going for the allowance of having a side-by-side comparison of this program to MRIP, and to any of the state surveys, and so, as I mentioned earlier, how did we select the sites to do the sampling, and we did use a site register database that we created. It began with the MRIP sites as the initial components to it, but then, over time, we started adjusting those, as we got feedback from samplers that federal vessels for SEFHIER weren't there, and we started getting more indication, with the declarations and landing locations, of what sites were getting heavier pressure, and so, over time, we replaced those sites in the site register with ones more appropriate for this fishery.

The site register always included information such as the site name, some type of description, its actual location, and then the for-hire fishing activity information, and like that's how we got towards the weighting. We used a stratified random sampling selection constraint to draw sites. They were drawn each month, in advance of that month, and then they were given to the state partners, to have state samplers at those sites.

We did very similar to MRIP in this design. It had a specific count. We used site clusters, similar to how MRIP did it, and we had specific time intervals, but, again, those were all things that we hoped to modify, or adjust, as we got more information in from the SEFHIER program, in case it didn't align well with the MRIP program.

As I mentioned before, the survey was only really conducted at public sites. We did not send samplers to private locations, as they were often docks behind people's houses. The survey samplers interviewed the captains, and so this is a difference from MRIP, where they interview the anglers. Here, we interviewed the captains, and we asked about the entire trip, since we were trying to do a comparison to the logbook, and so the mark and the recapture. Again, our samplers had electronic tablets, in order to make the process go faster.

Types of information we collected, we got information on the species landed, the length and weight, when possible, and then some specific trip information, so we could do some comparison to some of the trip information.



As I mentioned before, all that staffing was done by the states, and, for the estimation survey priority, it was -- The priority was to interview, and get that information, and then we were more opportunistic about collecting the biological data, the length and weight data. I will say, in the Gulf, we had very little, if any, opportunistic biological sampling. Again, as we improved the weighting, and the locations, we were hoping to have more opportunities for opportunistic sampling.

A couple of caveats, when looking at this data, and so, in the Gulf, the survey began in October of 2021, and it ran through February of 2023. It cost us about \$1.5 million to run. The first year had additional costs, that were startup costs, and so, if you were adding additional samplers, and sometimes the states requested equipment, such as trucks, or fish measuring boards, additional things that they would need.

The program was, again, funded through Congress. Unfortunately, each year, the SEFHIER program as a whole did have decreased funding. That was decreasing their ability to do the estimation survey, and so we were down to the bare minimum sampling that we thought was necessary to get good information from that survey, to do the estimations of misreporting and nonreporting, and, of course, the survey did end after the court decision. I'll take any questions on the survey now.

MS. MURPHEY: Anybody got any questions? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Not a question. I mean, obviously, with what Jessica just stated, you know, there's a hefty cost, obviously, to boots on the ground, as you all know, and I think this is the biggest challenge for any logbook programs we would be implementing going forward. Jessica, refresh my memory, and I think we did have maybe some conversations with MRIP about economies of scale, and working with their team to potentially do sampling, but we, obviously, have to have overlap with the two surveys as well.

DR. STEPHEN: Yes, that's correct, and so MRIP did help us design the SEFHIER sampling survey, with S&T staff, as well as contractors, and we're currently still in some discussions, on the Gulf side, about is there a way to -- In this case, it will now be almost all state surveys, and most of the Gulf have moved to individual state surveys, and is there a way we can incorporate the sampling in it and still get that calibration that we need out of it, and so those are things we're actively exploring, to see if there's a way to get the most bang for your buck for your sampler on the ground.

All right. Last section, and so this goes a little bit, I think, some of the questions Amy was asking Cliff earlier. How is the agency, as a whole, thinking about electronic reporting and moving to more comprehensive data reporting applications, data systems, and requirements, and so a little background information.

On the kind of east coast, we have five different FMCs, and we call them financial management centers, that collect data, and so those are the regional offices, the Greater Atlantic and the Southeast, the science centers for the Northeast and the Southeast, and HMS. Most of the Department of Commerce, NOAA, and Fisheries strategic plans have support in for reducing

duplicative data systems and streamlining our data collection. Fisheries also has a goal to reduce the fisherman burden of duplicative reporting.

When we think about these five different centers that we have, vessels can have permits from different regions, and across different sectors, and so for-hire, recreational, or commercial. On the Atlantic side, we have three different permitting systems. We have one from SERO, one from GARFO, and then one from HMS. Each of these systems, while they collect similar permit information, they are a little bit different in their structure and build. They're different in some of their transferability rules, and, currently, they're not directly talking to each other.

With starting that as our number-one problem, I'm involved in quite a few different projects that are looking to streamline data collection throughout the agency, and so, while we don't have any standard operating procedures, or direct requirements, for one-stop reporting, these different avenues we're going down are laying the base layers that's going to make reporting across different regions easier both for the fishermen and the agency and the ability to share the data better.

Our first project is what we're calling the vessel permit registry. The goal of this is to obtain and combine together, from all three permit systems, relevant information about the vessels and see if they have permits across those three systems. We would identify a vessel that's unique and then say, oh, it has an HMS permit and a SERO permit and a GARFO permit. That means maybe, when you're on a for-hire trip, you have to abide by SERO's requirements, HMS's requirements, and GARFO's.

Having that initial base layer of knowing what reporting requirements are required for a vessel, based on the permits, allows us to eventually move to what we call dynamic reporting within applications. That means the application talks enough to know what permits that vessel has, and it only shows the appropriate questions for that vessel to answer, based on their permits. It's considered a base layer that's really needed in order to move forward, where we can reduce duplicative reporting and still have, as a whole, data obtainable by each of the different FMCs.

The next project that I'm also involved in is what we're calling a RADFISH project. This one is a little bit more on the nerdy, technical side. RADFISH is a react application development. It's a type of programming language that allows you to create a frontend application, and so what you're used to seeing on your phone.

What we're working towards here, for the agency as a whole, and so this is not limited to the east coast, is creating a template that allows you to start up and build an application in really fast time. When we're thinking about how to build an application, we've gone out to ACCSP, or VESL, and they have a core team of developers that develop things. This template would make sure that we cover NOAA security requirements, NOAA branding requirements, and 508 compliance, and that's all set from the get-go.

Then you just start, as a developer, picking the parts you want, and you can build any type of application. This can be used for dealer reporting, for-hire logbook reporting, permit application, and so, as this project is moving forward, and it's nearly complete at this point, one of the aspects we built into it is a proof of concept for the SEFHIER program, and so we will build an agency-owned SEFHIER application on the frontend.

Finally the largest component of what we're working to as a whole on the east coast is what we're calling the Atlantic Seaboard Data System, and so this is a project that will put -- Instead of having each FMC hold their logbook data separately, siloed within their own FMC, we're going to throw it all up into the cloud, and we're going to have access across each of the different FMCs, and so all five groups will be able to access the data. All the data will flow to one location.

We're expecting to have a lot of really strong benefits from this example. It reduces the cost to the agency overall, because now, instead of supporting duplicative systems, we're all pooling our money together for one larger system. It helps us to improve the data distribution, the data quality, and the transparency, and so, for the data distribution, we would all have access to it. I wouldn't have to go and say, hey, Mid-Atlantic, how many for-hire vessels do you have, and I would be able to see that within the database, and I would be able to see how many were reporting. If want to compare the overlap between the Mid-Atlantic and the South Atlantic, I would be able to do that from this reporting.

It also allows better data quality, because we'll be building information on the frontend that bounces back a logbook that has inappropriate information, and so say it was expecting numeric text, and you tried to put a letter int would bounce it back, and wouldn't accept it, and so we have higher quality coming in.

It also helps to align the data collection metrics across the regions. I think, as you saw from the HMS presentation, we're all similar, but a little bit different, and so what we hope to do with this is start to build in certain metrics, across the different regions, that would make the collection more similar, or at least account for it within the logbook, and so I could account for those slight differences without a large degree of manipulation of the data.

It also would be able to improve the agency's ability to track both vessels and landings, as they're moving across the fisheries, and so, if we think of shifting effort, or climate change, moving the fisheries around, we would be able to better see that, because all the data would be contained within one location, and, for the fishermen's benefit, it does support the elimination of having duplicative reporting by fishermen to multiple different groups within the agency, and so, in general, this is a comprehensive electronic reporting project.

We're trying to address what we see are the current challenges to the agency, such as reducing the cost, and we'll be able to hopefully increase the efficiency of the data and then provide information across the different regions, and that's all I have.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Any questions? I have a question, and so, just to get it straight in my head, these three systems that you talked about, the vessel permit registry, and RADFISH, I mean, are they going to build on each other, to the end result of this Atlantic Seaboard, and is that how that's going to --

DR. STEPHEN: Yes and so our intention -- I'm involved, and I was probably involved with writing the proposals for all of these, and so the idea behind it, right, and the first was that base layer. That vessel permit registry is really holding us back from having dynamic reporting, or having kind of more alignment, and so, by having that base layer, that will build. The RADFISH app, in theory, could use that vessel permit registry, and so could ACCSP, and so could GulfFIN, and so could VESL, right, and it will be open to the public.

Then we can use that to have dynamic reporting on the frontend, and so think of the vessel as the base layer, the RADFISH as the frontend, and this last portion is the backend, the behind-the-scenes portion, and, by building the structure in the backend, we'll be able to better compare, and analyze, what's occurring with our fishermen, particularly as we expect changes to occur.

Currently, when I want to do an analysis, I start reaching out to GARFO, and I wait a week or two to get data back, and then we go back and forth about what it means, to make sure I'm combining it correctly, and then you get started on analysis, and so this would improve it, because we would all have the same understanding, and we would all be managing the system together, and this one was funded, I believe, through IRA money, so this is the big culmination of where we're going towards.

MS. MURPHEY: What's your timeline to have this?

DR. STEPHEN: So this one is funded by IRA, and so, in theory, we're going to be done with a minimum viable product by 2026. The vessel permit registry, we're about halfway done, and we're playing with what the screens look like, to make sure it's useful to managers, and then we're also working with ACCSP, to figure out how we can send the data stream to them more effectively, and RADFISH is 80 percent done.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you. Anybody got any other questions? Amy.

MS. DUKES: That's aggressive. I'm excited to see how this goes. I guess I had a kind of an attitude, first. The fact that we have all the different agencies all collectively talking about this is good. I'm excited to see that. I think the next part would be when are you going to bring the states into it, because this is the first time that we're seeing, and hearing, about this, and it sounds like we're going to have to, at some point, since primarily we are the first source of that data collection, and how all this is going to play into it, and I know I'm probably getting into the details a little bit, but the little red flag went --

DR. STEPHEN: So, with all these projects, I think with the exception of RADFISH, and I can't remember if ACCSP is on that. ACCSP is a partner in both the vessel permit registry and this larger Atlantic Seaboard data system, and so we intend to work through the FINs to grab the inclusion of the state data, and so, you know, one of the challenges we've had with ACCSP is the three permitting systems really are structured very differently, and it makes it a little bit harder for them to ingest those three different types of data, and so, by having this comprehensive vessel permit thing, registry, that's going to do one outstream, and it will say this vessel has all these permits, they can utilize that, in combination then with the states, and so, ideally, at some point, we're going to want to start making sure those vessel identifiers, the U.S. Coast Guard or state registration, are matching between the states and the agency. Once we get that, then they could start building on from what we get, and add the different state permits to it as well.

MS. DUKES: And the federal permits, so we're collecting that same data from those federal permits as well, and so that access will be as equally important to the states as well.

DR. STEPHEN: Yes. Yes. The federal data, when we collect the vessel permit registry, that's all public knowledge, and so that will be a stream available to you. There's a website, or an API, that

states could ingest it as well, right, and I think we've been sending you some permit data, every now and then, and this would take out the manual process and then include also those that are in HMS and GARFO.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you. Great questions, Amy. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for presentation, Jessica. Your comment brought -- It made me start thinking just a little bit. You know, anytime I think about something being funded by something that has a time limit, and it's going to go away, it just makes me kind of curious. You know, what's the thought of a funding -- How is this going to continue after that money is spent?

DR. STEPHEN: So that is exactly what my leadership asked me, and so, when we put the project together -- When we put projects together now for funding, we have to include what we call transition plans, and how we're going to fund it afterwards, and so, with the Atlantic Seaboard, which is the larger one, what we're hoping to do is that the money we would have instead placed into our own systems individually would get reallocated to support this larger program, right, and we're still working through what the governance of that would be, you know, which people's tech people would support it, who would oversee it, but we did get general agreement, from all different leaderships of the different groups, that they would be supportive of the maintenance portion of it.

I will say, in general, your startup costs are your largest costs, and so startup costs, for most electronic reporting programs, start around a million dollars, and grow from there. Your maintenance costs typically tend to be half of that to continue, and so the cloud is costly, but now it's a cloud being supported by five FMCS, and not five clouds supported by five groups.

MR. GRINER: Thank you for that.

MS. MURPHEY: Do we have any more questions? All right. Thanks so much, Jessica. That was great information. It gives us lots to think about. So we are at 4:42, and I think we wanted to go through our amendment, the decision document. We may be running a little over time. Is everybody good with that?

MR. DIDDEN: This is Jason. I had a correction from my earlier presentation, and is that okay?

MS. MURPHEY: Sure. Go ahead, Jason.

MR. DIDDEN: It kind of relates to this data uniformity, and the importance of it. Geoff White and I just kind of identified that there's a different interpretation of my original question to NOAA on some of those New York data. I think that they were doing a total count, and it had duplicates in it, and so I think the total number in the MRIP frame is closer to the total permits, and it'll dig into that and follow-up. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jason. We're going to go ahead and start with the decision document, and I would like to go ahead and see if we can get this knocked out today, even if we have to run over, to maybe 5:30, and so let's shoot for 5:30. If we have to go to 6:00, we can, but we'll have a break, but I think we can get -- I think we can get through at 5:30. Okey-dokey. I'll turn it over to you guys.

MS. BROUWER: All right. Thank you, Trish. John Hadley and I are going to be going over the decision document, and so I hope everybody just has all the information that we've thrown at you this afternoon in your head, distilled and ready to apply it to what we're going to be talking about here in a minute. I know my head is rattling around a lot.

First off, a little bit of background, just, you know, to make sure everybody is on the same page, and I know we're going to be going over some things that you've already gone over, but so one of the things that just came up, in Jessica's presentation, was the intent, and what was the intent of the original Comprehensive For-Hire Electronic Reporting Amendment, and so the intent is summarized in this couple of paragraphs here, and I'm not going to read it all. I'm mainly pointing it out so that you guys can refer to it, but, basically, you know, the idea was to improve the timeliness, and accuracy, of catch data, right, and that's what Jessica talked about.

The purpose and need of the amendment is in front of you now, and so the purpose was to increase the accuracy and timeliness of landings, discards, effort, and socioeconomic data of federally-permitted for-hire vessels participating in the South Atlantic-managed fisheries. The need was to improve charter vessel and headboat fishery data used for management and to improve monitoring and compliance of federally-permitted for-hire vessels in the South Atlantic-managed fisheries, and so that was the original amendment.

Moving on, and, as a reminder, we included a link to a document that we went over with you in September, where we did sort of a qualitative evaluation type thing, where we looked at the intended outcomes that were outlined in the original document and asked ourselves do we think we've accomplished these or not, and so there's a link to that from this document, if you want to go over that.

Then, just to summarize some of the recent actions you already talked about this afternoon, that you've heard about this afternoon, there is an amendment that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is working on. There's a link to their latest draft. I believe their timeline for that amendment is to potentially have public hearings I believe in April, and their intent is to have final action to approve that amendment at their June 2025 meeting. Just so you know, that's how that's moving.

We've already heard about the HMS proposed rule, and then the letter that was mentioned a little bit ago, with information and feedback from the agency on what would be needed for the information that's being collected through SEFHIER -- For it to be used for management, and that letter is linked also in in this document, if you want to go back and read what it contains.

Then we've also included the motion that was approved, and I believe it was at the June meeting, to begin work on this SEFHIER amendment, and so that's what we're going to talk about. We have not yet -- There is an IPT, interdisciplinary plan team, put together for this, and we have not yet had a meeting, because we have questions of you guys, and we want to know -- First of all, this morning, we talked about the for-hire reporting AP, and so do we want to bring that AP together before you approve this for scoping, or do you want to do that after, and what would be the questions of that AP, all those things we haven't yet had a chance to talk about.

I'll point out that, as part of the motion, that first bullet was to focus on incorporating actions that can be taken in the near-term, without an amendment, including additional outreach. We are considering what the Gulf Council is doing. We are in communication with their staff, and we are just keeping each other informed as to what is being considered. They have an advisory panel that was also put together, and they've met, I believe, twice.

What we are looking for, at this meeting, is to -- Well, you've already reviewed all this information that was provided to you. We're going to talk about the timing, as I said, of the amendment development. make sure that you guys are good with the draft purpose and need, and I know there was a small tweak that was done to it at last meeting. We have a list of potential actions, and a range of alternatives, and so that's what we're going to focus on for the remainder of today, to make sure that we can narrow those down, as much as possible, and make sure that what you want analyzed is included.

Here we are, and you could potentially approve for scoping at this meeting. Scoping is a very informal process. You don't need to have actions, and alternatives, and so it is a possibility, but, as I said, do you want to go there before your AP meets, or do you want to do it after, and so that's going to be a lingering question, and then you can see the rest of the tentative timing there. We're looking to potentially approve for formal review in June of next year, and so a year after the Gulf Council intends to approve theirs.

Here's a purpose and need. As I mentioned, the only change was the addition of "and economic data" up there in the purpose statement, and so, unless anybody has any changes, I will move along. I'm going to pause here, for just a sec, to make sure nobody has any concerns.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy, do you have some?

MS. DUKES: I do. Thank you, Madam Chair, and I guess -- I don't want to hold us in this room any longer than we have to, and I know I'm playing catch-up quite a bit, and so you all just bear with me, but, if we don't talk about the intent of the data, and go back to what the intent of this original amendment was, and what the purpose of this, perhaps, amendment is going to be, with regards to our plans to supplement the data, I don't think we have a lot to go on.

I'm a strong proponent of waiting for the for hire reporting AP to really get in here, but I think, before that, I want to sort of ask, and, if the intent was to supplement, can we look at what data is currently provided to us, regardless of the compliance, to see what the Office of Science and Technology can do to look at the data, as it's being presented now, and how it can be used to help with some of these MRIP questions we have, from a supplemental standpoint, and not a sub-plant standpoint, or am I off-base here?

MS. MURPHEY: Andy, go ahead.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, I guess, backing up, the original intent was never to supplement, right, and it was actually to create a census, but we essentially indicated it wouldn't be capable of doing that, right, and, in terms of the question I think we could pose to the Office of Science and Technology, I guess my question would be, given the lack of compliance, and not understanding, obviously, the kind of underlying universe of participants that are, or aren't, reporting to us, how

that data could, or couldn't, be used, right, and so I think there's a lot of limitations, probably, to even use that data, but we could certainly pose that question.

I think that the broader question, which you're raising, which I think is an important one, is what are we also wanting to do, moving forward, right, and so is it a supplementation of the MRIP program, at this point, or is it an intent to replace the program, at some point down the road, which was at least the original intent, from the way I understand it, going way back when, and certainly it's the intent right now of the Gulf Council.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. Amy is still pondering. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Andy, that's very helpful, but I'm still struggling with how do you really ever get to that point, and who decides that? I mean, I'm like you, and I see this, and I thought that part of the goal was to replace MRIP with this data that was going to come from this effort, but how do you -- How do we really get there?

MR. STRELCHECK: John, free to reach in. I think the way we get there is what we're doing right now, right, and we're working, around the table, to develop an improved SEFHIER program, and we have to look at the changes that would need to be made, that would enhance the program, and achieve the purpose and need we're laying out here, right, and what Amy was raising though is really the, you know, question of, okay, well, the information collected, how is it going to be used to manage the fisheries better, right, and are we going to supplement, you know, existing programs, or are we going to ultimately use it to replace the program that is currently in existence, which is the MRIP, you know, for-hire survey.

I think the critical question there then is we may design the programs very differently, depending on which track we want to go down, and I have always understood it that we were trying to build a replacement program, and not a supplemental program, but, if we need to have that conversation, I agree with Amy that we should have it now.

MR. GRINER: Yes, and I agree as well. I think that's kind of where you've got to start from, don't you?

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Do we want to have that -- Okay, so let's have that conversation now. Thoughts around the table? John.

DR. WALTER: Yes, and so I think it's helpful to kind of put forth a vision for how this could be beneficial, because I think what we're trying to get to is much higher compliance, if not 100 percent compliance, and we want people to understand what the benefits of that compliance are for the for-hire fleet, and I'll illustrate it with an example that's happened in the Gulf.

The Gulf for-hire red snapper season reopened on November 18, to the end of the year, because they had not reached their quota. That allows those for-hire operators to continue fishing, to run a few more trips, through Thanksgiving and the end of the year, and it may benefit them, and their business models, and that's because we have data to be able to indicate they weren't reaching their quota.



Now, right now, we don't have that data in the South Atlantic, and presumably SEFHIER, with better compliance, could be giving that data, so that we could reach something like that, so that we could do more precision management and allow for better achieving of the opportunity, and I think that's kind of one of the goals here. If we can get to that, that would be one of those benefits that we would see out of it.

In this case, how do we improve compliance? Well, there's another aspect of I think a parallel effort that was brought up on the control date and the potential consideration of limited access, and that might be one of the main things that helps to achieve that compliance, and so it does seem like that needs to be considered, as in this -- In terms of it operating in parallel to this, and so I just wanted to bring that up, because I know that was control date that I think was put forth last December. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Am I misremembering that we were advised, by counsel, that we cannot use compliance as the reason for doing limited entry?

MS. MURPHEY: Let's see. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Yes, that's correct. You limit entry to achieve optimum yield, and that's spelled out 303(b)(6) of the statute. There may be compliance benefits associated with it, but you limit that access in order to keep catches constrained to optimum yield. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Shep.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks. It's nice to know I remember things and then. I'm just -- I think I don't really necessarily have an opinion, but I would -- I just want us to be very, very cautious about promises that we're not a hundred percent sure we can live up to with this. I'm not against it, but I -- You know, sort of the idea that it's going to replace MRIP, or allow for better accounting, and more open -- You know, longer open seasons, or whatever, and I just think we have to be very, very cautious about using that as our motivation.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other thoughts or around the table? Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I've always just looked at this SEFHIER program as a supplemental data stream. We are still conducting MRIP on state-only vessels, and I don't see us ever separating state-only MRIP for-hire and federally-permitted MRIP for-hire. They're still -- You're still going to have a sampler standing around the dock, and they'll be like, never mind, and you're a for-hire vessel, with a federal permit, and I have no idea if you were fishing in federal waters or not, but, because you're a federal permit, you're doing this sub-plant data, through SEFHIER, and I'm not going to interview you.

We can't get into that sort of complex situation, in my opinion, and so I think that's where I kind of go back to, if the idea is to supplement the data, which is what I've always thought it was, and I'm pretty sure that the ACCSP certification process, that they're going through right now, is a supplemental data stream for catch, or, well -- I'm not sure, and I don't want to speak for ACCSP,

but I just really want us to think about that, and separating all of those things just doesn't seem applicable, to me, and I don't think to our users as well.

I could see, perhaps, if you're doing a for-hire logbook electronically, and you're a federally-permitted vessel, maybe, over time, you get pulled out of the FES, effort survey because you're going to have dockside validation, and you're going to have all that, knowing you're going to get a logbook, and I could see that perhaps happening, and I think that's been a way that we could perhaps sell it to some of our for-hire captains, is, you know, we're not going to bother you, because you're a federally-permitted guy, and you're doing a logbook.

That's where I see where we can we can kind of meet in the middle, with our constituents, but I look at this as a supplemental data stream, and that intent is where I think we should be going, and then, if that was in fact the intent of the of the process all along, I think we've done a disservice to our for-hire captains who have gone and done the reporting, and done everything that they're supposed to be doing, and the fact that we haven't even looked at it. We haven't used it, in any sort of form or fashion, and it's been a disservice to the folks that have been reporting since 2000, and have actually gone through this process of taking the time to do the trip reports electronically, and I'll get off my soapbox. Sorry.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Amy. I have Kerry. Well, let's see I had -- Okay. Tom, Tim, and then Kerry. Okay.

MR. GRINER: Amy is right that we have done a disservice to the for-hire fleet, by not using this data. We've done a disservice by not trying to improve this program, knowing that we went into it, a decade ago, that it wasn't going to work. That was made very clear by the Regional Administrator at the time, and so, whether it's supplemental, or it replaces MRIP, I think we're in a place where we have to improve this program, so that we can use it, regardless of the technical discussion that we're going to have here, because, if it's going to -- Because we talk about whether we can use the data now, and I don't even want to look at that.

I mean, that's a hard discussion to have, because, from what I see, from a compliance standpoint, it's pathetically low, and I see a bad compliance on every single level. I see bad compliance from people who have the permits, and I see a lot of people who don't have the permits, who should have them, and so I think that we need to really revamp -- I mean, we need to be having this discussion now, regardless of whether it is supplemental or replaces it.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tom. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Well I -- You know, I keep going back to what Amy is saying, and I think she's - - You know, that's really, to me, where I keep getting wrapped around the axle on this. There is a big difference between supplemental data and replacement data. I mean, if you're talking about supplemental data, at some point, you know, once you get to there, well, what does that really mean? Does that mean this data goes into the data workshop, the SEDAR data workshop, as an alternate stream of data, that they can kick it around, and kick it around, and decide whether they want to use it or not, and, at the end of the day, it's just that, and it's just some supplemental data that somebody talked about at the data workshop it never really got used?

So, I mean, at the end of the day, I keep going back to, if we design the program, and the program works correctly, it's going to be the best scientific information available, which is going to be coming straight from the operators, and that's the data that needs to be used, through the scientific process, so that you can make accurate management decisions, but, to go down the road of only having it be some kind of supplemental information, that, you know, can be talked about in a workshop, I just don't see the value in that.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tim. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I think these are really good points, and I would like to add on that, you know, if it's going to be a replacement, or however it's going to decide, we're going to decide, for it to be used, what is considered compliance? Is it -- Jessica went through, and she might have said a number, but there was a lot of information, and so I might have not caught it, but she went into the difference between what's considered a submission and when it's compliant, and, you know, if it's late, it's not as -- I think what we really need to do, if we're going to move forward, is be very clear, you know, if X number is compliant, what compliant means, then that data will be used for the thing that we've set out it being used for, but that has to be defined upfront, because I'm very afraid that we'll get down the road, and we'll get someone else's interpretation of compliance, and the data won't be used.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thanks. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: So I guess my question, to that, is what are other people claiming is the compliance rate you have to have to use it? I mean, it's already out there it's being used, and so what's the threshold for compliance then?

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Carolyn. I've got Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I'm tying a few things together, and I agree with Kerry's comments, right, we don't want to over-promise and under-deliver here, right, and so I think that's where it has to be thoughtful, with regard to design. You know, there's, obviously, discussion about supplemental, versus replacement, and I look at this as no different than what the states have done with their own state reef fish surveys in the Gulf of Mexico, right, and they developed those systems as a replacement to MRIP, and now we're managing by them, for many species, right, and so, you know, I think what really is baffling me is MRIP has been a villain, around this table, for decades now, and now everyone wants to supplement MRIP?

I mean, I just -- To me, that's unfathomable, but regardless, I think the key, in terms of this conversation, really is what do we want to use the data for, going forward, right, and so it's, you know, not only improvements in data for stock assessments, but are there benefits to a supplemental survey, versus a replacement survey, in terms of our longer-term management goals, and, to me, I see a lot more potential, if we can get to a replacement, with close to a census, and higher compliance, as being much more useful for timely, accurate, precise data that ultimately gives us some flexibility, in terms of some of the management approaches we could take in years to come.

That's at least where I'm landing, but I know there's a long way from where we're at today to get there, and that's where it really comes down to how do we design a program that makes sure that we deliver what we're saying we're trying to deliver.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. I've got John that came up to the table, and so I'm going to go ahead and let him go, and then I'll get Tom, and then Charlie, or Charlie then Tom. Charlie then Tom.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Thanks, Trish. I mean, it's good discussion around here, and I think it's good points, about not over-promising, and under-delivering, and making sure we know what we want to use the data for. I mean, when you go back to when this started, the council didn't put this forth being told this will not work, and they said, well, we're going to do it anyway.

You know, I mean, at the time, it was thought this had potential, and, if it wasn't considered to have any potential, how could it have been improved by the National Marine Fisheries Service, because they shouldn't approve something if it wasn't going to provide data that had some utility, and there has to be, you know, Paperwork Reduction Act filings, and everything else, that, you know, point to the data having some utility, even though there were concerns recognized then that compliance could be an issue, and was it going to work, and were people going to do it, but, I mean, it's not like the council was told, at the time, you're doing this, and you're not doing everything you should.

There was a lot of concern about VMS, and anyone who was around the table will remember that was a huge outcry within the South Atlantic. People were adamantly opposed to VMS, and, you know, there's no guarantees that that necessarily is going to be the, you know, the smoking gun solution.

When we get into thinking about other ways of using the data, and there's a lot more that could be used, and I think, you know, Tim makes a point, and it wouldn't necessarily be an alternative catch stream, and I think that would be considered unreliable, by everybody, given the compliance, but maybe, looking at the data, we could understand something about those who are reporting, and those who aren't reporting, to know what is necessary to improve reporting overall.

I think this is a point that came out in the SEP review, and another thing that came out from the SEP was the perils of chasing after some compliance number, because you could say get to a compliance number now, that's good enough, but maybe it's not, and maybe it doesn't give you representative data. Their discussion was about you need to look at getting a representative sample.

You may have accurate information off of a 30 percent sample, if it's representative, and that's what really matters. Our lives are affected by all kinds of surveys that have very low sample sizes, but they're considered reliable, because they're representative. MRIP is considered reliable, for most of the inshore species, even though it has relatively low encounters, because it has enough to give you a reliable estimate. Where MRIP has been criticized, around this table, is the difficulty in dealing with specialized fisheries, like offshore, and so I think that's where the issue about supplementing comes in, because, from the state people's perspective, MRIP has a huge amount of value.

We can't just go in and wholesale replace it, and we can't be like the Gulf, and necessarily go off and have states do their own individual thing, because we are also connected, with so many of our species, through the Atlantic States, with binding management on stocks that exist up and down the coast, and so four South Atlantic states can't really go off and do different things, like they did in the Gulf. They don't have binding management on state species.

They don't have concerns about stocks moving north, out of their jurisdiction, and it's going to be really hard for fish to move north out of the Gulf of Mexico, you know, but that's something we have to deal with, which is a reason then we have a greater need for consistency across our coast.

You know, I just think all of these points of stuff, that I've heard people make in discussions in various times, and we have to make sure that we keep them in mind, you know, and, I mean, there's a lot of competing data sources out there. There's multiple streams of information coming in for the commercial fishery, but, you know, some, like the commercial fishermen reports, aren't considered reliable for the catch estimate, and we use the ALS, but they may be reliable for other things.

I think that's -- You know, as Amy said in the beginning, we should be looking at what we have, to start learning, and I think that was also a really good point as well, to start learning like what is it really going to take, because I don't think any of us around here necessarily know the answer to the question of what it's going to take to get compliance up. I mean I, for one, don't feel like we really know how to characterize those who are participating, versus those who are not, and, until we start answering that question, how do we go about fixing it, because you get back to Kerry's point.

You potentially put a fix on, but it doesn't fix it, and we lose five more years of, you know, trying to get people to comply, and they don't, and so I just -- I think you guys have made a lot of good points, and I just wanted to try to bring some of them together.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, John. Charlie, and then did you -- Okay. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thanks, Madam Chair. Well, if I was listening, it sounds like this money is available now, and it may not be available later, and so, if we're going to do it, if we're going to try to build a better mousetrap, and that's true, and MRIP doesn't get very many warm and fuzzies, and, if we can try to build a better mousetrap, and the managers can have stuff in one place, that's cheaper to use, and easier to use, and more efficient to use, in the long run, I would think it would be cheaper programs, and so that may release some money to do other things that we want to do, or MRIP have extra money to do -- To concentrate on some of their weak points, or something like that, but I'm -- This might be the time to try it.

Do we know it's going to work? Of course not, and we do a whole bunch of stuff that we don't know is going to work. We think it's going to work, and we hope it's going to work, and we keep tweaking it, until, a lot of times, we make it work, but I would -- I think, if we really want to build something that could work better for the managers and the fishermen, this might be the time to do it.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Charlie. I've got Tom, Jimmy, and then Carolyn.

MR. ROLLER: So I'm trying to figure out my comment here. Some of this conversation has taken me aback a little bit, and I'm just going to go back to what Andy said, is that MRIP has been the villain at this table for a long time. I talk to for-hire fishermen, and they complain about how MRIP isn't good, particularly for offshore species, and I talk to recreational fishermen who say MRIP isn't good, particularly for offshore species. I talk to commercial fishermen, at this table, as well as at our APs and in the community, that complain about recreational discards and our lack of accountability across these fisheries.

I view this as a way forward to better get a better grasp on not just catches, but discards, and everything in relation to the for-hire fishery, as well as the recreational fishery. My concern is now that we have a system that is really unfair to the small percentage of people who are complying. I think we owe it to our fleet to make a program that actually works, or get rid of it.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tom. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you. In my opinion, if we want to drive compliance, you have to link reporting to your permit renewal. I mean, that would be -- That would drive compliance, right there, in my opinion. I mean, it drives compliance for me, for the commercial sector, and that's the reason I sit down, and I fill out all these logbooks, because I don't want to get in a situation where I've been, where, oh, we don't have your reports, and then you've got to go back in time, and the hassles that are involved with that far outweigh the time that you take to go ahead and just get it done, and do it, and, if you apply that to the for-hire sector, they'll do it, because -- Especially if they hold the permit, or they own the boat.

Now, if they're -- In the instance they're a hired guide, but somebody -- The guy that knows the boat is going to do the -- He's going to make sure it happens, because you don't want to lose the permit. That's the stick that will work, for sure, and it will help compliance, and I agree with all the other statements that, you know, most fishermen, charter, and recreational, I mean, this is their motto. If I give you this information, you're going to use it against me, because you always -- You're going to take fish away from me, and then, using the example that John said in the Gulf, where, okay, that they got more fish, and they got more time, but that's a -- We don't want to promise that, but it is an example of where the data has been used to give you more fish, because most fishermen -- They'll do what they have to do to get more fish and not lose their permit.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jimmy. Good points. I have Carolyn, and then I have Shep. Go ahead, Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Jimmy, for the intro for that. So I would say, and I'm saying this is not even an opinion, and I would say this is a well-documented fact, but permit non-renewal, for failing to report, is not an effective tool with compliance when it's an open-access permit. That was one of the things that was discussed in relative to the Gulf presentation, and why it's effective in the Gulf is because it's limited-access. Taking it away really means something.

In an open-access fishery, where you can go get another permit if you don't report, and your permits -- You know, if you're not going to be sanctioned, or your permit is not going to be renewed, then so what? You can always go in and get another, right, and it has clearly been proven, I would say,

in this context, and in others, that it's -- You know, saying we won't renew that open-access permit is not an effective tool for getting compliance with reporting timely, and it never really has been.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Shep, and I've got Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: So, because Jessica was away from the table, Andy had made a statement about the state surveys in the Gulf supplanting MRIP, and can you clarify about SRFS, because my understanding was you all supplement MRIP.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's right. The State Reef Fish Survey is a supplement to MRIP. It's not replacing MRIP off of Florida.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Go ahead, Andy, and then I want to kind of bring this back to our purpose and need.

MR. STRELCHECK: So, to clarify, Jessica, so you use MRIP data, as part of the State Reef Fish Survey, to generate estimates, but we are now using these State Reef Fish Survey estimates, and not MRIP estimates, for managing many of our federal reef fish fisheries.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's correct, because they're not -- They don't come up with exactly the same numbers.

MR. STRELCHECK: Right, and so I would disagree that it's a supplement. It is a replacement, and it may be semantics, but the reality is you are using these the MRIP data, but we've replaced using MRIP data to monitor federal fisheries with SRFS data.

MS. MCCAWLEY: For some species in the Gulf.

MR. STRELCHECK: That's correct.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I would like to go ahead and bring us back to our purpose and need statements. I think that was very good conversation, about whether enhancing or not, but I think maybe we can have that discussion further down the road, but, at this point, let's get back to our purpose and need, and I'm sure we've got plenty of notes on the MRIP enhancement discussion, and so is everybody good with the purpose and need, or does anybody want to make any edits? Seeing none, I'm going to go with there's no need to make any changes to the purpose and need, Amy.

MS. DUKES: I feel like we need to do something, but, exactly what we need to do I'm not there yet, and so the conversation was helpful, but I'm still --

MS. MURPHEY: I think that's okay. I mean, I think that's okay, at this point, that, you know, it's kind of -- For now, I think we can keep this back in our -- I'm just thinking out loud, but it seems, to me, we can keep this conversation in our minds, as we go through this amendment, and, you know, just see how it -- I guess how it falls out. Anyway, we're not going to lose that discussion, but I think we just need to kind of move through this decision document, and, you know, we can discuss whether it'll enhance or replace later. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, I just wanted to make a comment relative to your deciding whether to go out to scoping, right, and you're debating whether you have your full purpose and need. Scoping is the early process, right, early optional thing of gathering information and identifying the scope of the problem.

Going out with a defined purpose and need, and actions and alternatives already in existence, is not really scoping anyway, right, and I would say, in this instance, as recent as this, you know, this action and this the issue is, how much additional scoping do you really need, and you could probably say you've done that scoping already, and not go out and hold specific scoping meetings, but, if you do want to take a step back, right, have this sort of foundational kind of discussion, that might guide where you go with it, and that is true sort of scoping, and you would go out with that now, and don't fret now over your purpose and need, and actions and alternatives, because you're supposed to be getting that kind of information developed through scoping anyway.

MS. MURPHEY: Does everybody go with that, and we've not dropped this discussion. We'll just carry along with this, as we go through it, and is that okay with everyone, because I would like to go ahead and get through this decision document.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and so, shifting back to the decision document, the first potential action that we have is to modify the reporting frequency of fishing trips for for-hire vessels, and so the purpose of this action would be to increase frequency, to improve monitoring and enforcement, and then increase the quality of the reported data.

You have your Alternative 1, where the owner or operator of a charter vessel for which there is a charter vessel/headboat federal permit for each of the finfish fisheries has to record all fish harvested, and discarded, for each trip and submit an electronic fishing report weekly, right, and that's what's in place.

Alternative 2 has subalternatives for the frequency of reporting for each trip, and so you've got subalternatives that you've already seen and then draft subalternatives that came about after your discussion in September. Subalternative 2a would have that the electronic logbook has to be submitted within thirty minutes of arriving at the dock, regardless of whether fish are harvested on a trip. Draft Subalternative 2b is within an hour of arriving at the dock. Then you've got Subalternative 2c, which includes prior to offloading any fish, and, if no fish are retained, then you have to submit that logbook within thirty minutes of arriving at the dock. Then the last one is similar, but it has a longer time period. After arriving at the dock, you've got an hour.

Lastly, we have Alternative 3, which incorporates -- It's not just for each trip, but it's for each trip daily, right, and then, under your subalternatives, you have whether offloading is -- Or whether reporting is required prior to offloading or not, and, under here, we have, to refresh your memory, the guidance that you gave us in September, and so some of these things came about based on this, and we have that you would like for us to get back with you, as far as stakeholder input, regarding the timeframe, or the frequency, for reporting, and then, also, for relevant other programs, which I think we've discussed.

Then there's a table, over here, that shows what is currently in place for SEFHIER, the draft amendment in the Gulf, the GARFO VTR, and what HMS is proposing, and so we just basically -  
- As Shep said, you know, we don't have to take these actions, and alternatives, out for scoping the



way they're written now. We can always, you know, put a document that's going to be more general, that's going to ask the questions that you want answered to help you better flesh out these actions and alternatives at a later date, but what we're looking for is, is this a good start? Do we have everything that you would consider, or do we need to narrow that down?

MS. MURPHEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Because of the scoping, thirty minutes or one hour after getting to the dock, and I'm not a commercial for-hire person, but I am a commercial guy, and I know what my guys have to do when they get to the dock, and I would wholeheartedly endorse us putting twenty-four hours, or forty-eight hours, and it's going to scoping, and we're not locked into anything. Put the widest range available that still works for, you know, the Science Center, for data collection, and send that to the public. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you Charlie. Gary.

MR. BORLAND: I agree with Charlie. Some of these guys run, especially in south Florida, run two trips a day, right, and to try to think you can -- They may only have an hour in between trips, and then run a second trip, and so, to think that they can go clean fish, get the boat straightened up, iced back down, and get the crew back onboard, and do a report at the same time, it's probably not possible, and so I agree putting it in the scoping document to provide multiple timeframes, and I think it's the right thing.

MS. MURPHEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you. Just a comment on that. So, if I'm running a charter boat, or a commercial boat, I'm keeping track of the fish that are coming over the rail, so that I don't go over my limits, and so I'm going to have that documented somewhere, on some notes, and so I think that we don't -- We don't have to require them to do it before they offload, or within thirty minutes, and I think that's way too close, and I think providing a longer timeframe, because they're going to have their notes, and they can go back and fill in their report from their notes, and I think you'll get better compliance that way.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you Jimmy. I've got Judy and then Andy.

MS. HELMEY: Thank you, Madam Chairman. It is true that we do keep a logbook of everything we do. We have to, because, if we get stopped, they want to know how many fish we have, whether they're going to look in the cooler or not, and we give them all the information, but, like everyone is saying, you can not do this and make two trips. You just don't have time. You're going to make more mistakes, and you're going to get more frustrated. Twenty-four hours I think is good. That gives us time to, you know, make all the stuff right, instead of making so many mistakes.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you Judy. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I'll first say that I agree going out with a broader range of options for scoping is the appropriate, you know, approach to take. You know, what I think I'm concerned about is what I'm hearing is, you know, justification right now of building a preferred, and we're way away from that, and so I just would encourage people to think more about the range of

alternatives, at this point, and less about the specifics of it, because there are reasons why you would want shorter versus longer reporting time periods, and there's reasons why you would want longer versus shorter reporting time periods, and so just keep that in mind.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you Andy. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: On that, I agree with the idea of putting some more alternatives in here, like reporting within twenty-four hours, or forty-eight hours, and I think that's fine. I will just add the comment that I think, if we just sent it out as this, I would be okay with that too, and I don't really think any of this is unreasonable. I think the whole idea of lingering on two trips a day -- That's just not that big of a deal, and so -- However, when it comes down to it, let's just add some more options and see what the public thinks.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you Tom. So is everybody -- I think Myra has put some guidance to staff, and does this fit -- I think this fits what everyone is requesting. Is this okay? Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do think it would be helpful, from an education standpoint, when we have this audience, to let them know that there are groups, in the Gulf and within HMS, that are also moving forward with some things, and it may be helpful for them to sort of see this table of how things are going to look, because that also may influence that idea of what the South Atlantic may need to be thinking about doing, and maybe what's best for them, and they may not even know that HMS is doing this, because the outreach is not there yet, and so just trying to give the audience as much information as possible.

MS. MURPHEY: I think Myra is capturing that. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Just one other comment. You know, we need to decide maybe if it would be better to send this out to the for-hire AP, prior to the general public scoping, because they may have some other great ideas for us to put in there, or things that we've missed, or things that maybe we've gotten right.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes. Thank you, Jimmy. Do we want to skip to that conversation now, or do we want to go ahead and get through the -- Okay. Let's go ahead and get through the actions, and then we'll get to that point, Jimmy.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and so, moving on to possible Action Number 2, this would be to require trip notification for for-hire vessels. There's currently no notification requirements, and that's under Alternative 1. Alternative 2 would require that there is a trip declaration for trips that will be engaging in any time of for-hire fishing or --Then you have various subalternatives, to also potentially include bait fishing, private recreational, commercial, or other for-hire activity.

You have requested that we clarify the intent of the action, and we reword and simplify the text of the alternatives, and so we did that, and, this last bullet, I'm not sure that we actually got to that part, but we have captured that, to make sure that we bring that information to you. Again, another place where we just don't need to get into the weeds, but are you comfortable, or, you know, how broad do you want to pose this to stakeholders to give you scoping input?

MS. MURPHEY: Anybody? Everyone is good with this list? We'll move on. Okay. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I think I understand the distinction here, but we talk about any type of for-hire fishing, and then we refer to bait fishing in 2a, right, and so I would, I guess, encapsulate that as any type of for-hire fishing, and do we need Alternative 2a, at that point, or is that because there's customers that aren't onboard, and so they're going out and getting bait? Is that -- Okay. Gotcha.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead John.

MR. HADLEY: I think that's to encompass vessels that leave beforehand, to get bait for their trip later in the day. Also, just to keep in mind, and provide some context for all of these action alternatives, we -- As staff, we were trying to pick out the bits and pieces from the Gulf's amendment, that's a little bit further along, just because that's been the guidance all along, and so we're trying to make sure that those kind of move -- At least parallel.

You know, you don't have to choose the same options, of course, but just trying to encompass those within the bookends of the alternatives, to make sure that those Gulf options, or Gulf alternatives, are in there as well. That's kind of why you see some of these very specific items. A lot of those were pulled directly from the Gulf document, and so just a little bit about background context info.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John, for clarifying that. Anything else, or do we want to move on to the next action? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you for that clarification. I had a lot of questions about that, but, just on the end, like I guess -- Do we need -- So other for-hire activity, and are we talking things like ecotours, or non-fishing? I mean, we may want to define that a little bit, like other for-hire activity that's not fishing, or something like that.

MS. MURPHEY: Good point Tom. Thank you. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Just add "leaving the dock", and then that -- Because we're just framing the alternative, and so just the most strict is when you leave the dock, and then that will cover everything.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Kerry. I think that has been captured. Everybody good with what Myra captured there for the range of alternatives? All right.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Moving along, we'll go through the next set of actions, and so this is looking at establishing approved landing locations for vessels. We had a great bit of information earlier about how this worked in the Gulf of Mexico, but, essentially, there again, this is an action trying to keep the Gulf's amendment at least, potentially, with the South Atlantic's amendment, so you kind of have some regional requirements that line up.

Currently, there is no requirement for a vessel to land at a preapproved landing location. We developed a draft Alternative 2 that would require a vessel to only land at a preapproved location, and, again, we went through the kind of the overview of the process for this preapproval, the preapproval process for landing locations, and so, at the September meeting, you requested

information on sort of how this would work, and I think that, you know, a good bit of information was provided on that.

Presumably, you know, it has been carried out in the Gulf of Mexico. That could be extended, potentially, to areas further north, if it were implemented in the South Atlantic, looking at the particularly the coastal migratory pelagic and dolphin wahoo vessels that operate in the GARFO region. That would be part of it, since they're also part of this amendment, but we're just looking for a discussion on the draft action and range of alternatives, again just kind of making sure that the bookends are there, with the intent of moving towards approval for scoping either at this meeting or the next.

MS. MURPHEY: Any comments on the landing location action? Okay. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I understand we all plan on coming back to the same place, but I remember multiple instances where weather stopped my boat from coming back where I was where I wanted him to come back, or a breakdown or -- We don't need to do it now, but we need to keep in mind we need a Plan B, where we can call in to somebody and say, hey, I broke down, and I busted a fuel line, and I can't get back there, but I can get somewhere else, and we need to know that there's -- We need to build a Plan B in somewhere. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you Charlie. I think they're capturing that. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I agree with that. I think that's something we can look at down the line, but I would point out one of the big differences between for-hire and commercial operations is I've usually got to get people back to their cars, or where they're staying, and so that's -- You know, even when I've had a breakdown, that is still something that has to happen, and so usually I'm going back to that spot, whether I'm under my own power or somebody else's.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks Tom. Anything else? So we'll go ahead and move to the next action, and so validation survey, and John is capturing the Plan B.

MR. HADLEY: Yes, and so the next one is looking at requiring participation in a validation survey. Again, I got some information on that, and how that may potentially be applied in the South Atlantic. Currently, there is no mandatory participation in a validation survey, and so it's really optional if that -- If a validation survey were to be implemented.

Alternative 2 would mandate participation in a validation survey. Really, this would be part of the permit requirement, and so, if the vessel had -- If the vessel has a federally-permitted charter/headboat permit, then they would be required to participate in the validation survey, as part of that -- You know, all that comes with having that permit.

One, you know, small change is we removed some -- If you recall, at the last meeting, there was some language on if selected, and we just kind of simplified this alternative a little bit, to just make it clear that, if the vessel has the permit, they would be required to participate in the validation survey, and so we kind of simplified Alternative 2 a little bit, but, again I'm just looking for, you know, just a discussion, to make sure that the draft action range of alternatives is what the council wants to consider.

MS. MURPHEY: Any thoughts around the table? I am not seeing any. Well, I guess we can move on to 5.

MR. HADLEY: Sounds good. All right, and so this is the last action in the amendment, and this would focus on the reporting of economic data for charter vessels. Currently, the -- We kind of discussed this a little bit earlier, but there's sort of a -- Not sort of, but there is a census approach to reporting economic information on the for-hire logbook, and so Alternative 2 would really look at only including vessels if they were selected, and so you're looking at a subset. You're looking at a sampling approach, under Alternative 2. Under Alternative 1, you're looking at a census approach, and we were discussing, particularly during the SSC and SEP presentation, a discussion of some of the tradeoffs of moving to that, but this action is largely the same as you saw it last time, and so the idea was, in Alternative 2, there would be some tradeoffs there, but it would help reduce some of the regulatory burden on permit holders.

We're just looking for discussion on the draft action range of alternatives and whether or not you would like to consider, continue considering it, for scoping. I will mention this is an action that is being considered by the Gulf, and so, you know, again, trying to keep it in line there between the two regions. This is this is one of the measures that is being considered.

MS. MURPHEY: Comments? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I'm comfortable with keeping it in for scoping. This has really been a big issue in the Gulf, and there's a lot of opposition to collecting economic data, through logbooks, as a full census, right, and so I like the idea of including it, for the sake of just keeping alignment between the programs, and I'm curious, John, or others, if you've heard of kind of similar concerns with the economic data collection in the South Atlantic, because it seems to have been at least less of an issue so far for South Atlantic, but maybe still something that's an underlying issue.

MR. HADLEY: If I could, I would say I would agree with that assessment. Maybe not quite as big of an issue on this side, but we've heard a lot of -- I guess of the, you know, framing the unhappy and negative feedback on the logbook as a whole, a lot of it does focus on the economic component, and we've particularly heard a lot from vessels operating in the GARFO region, that sort of got drawn into the reporting of economic information, since they do have that South Atlantic permit, and so it has been a point of contention. I don't know if it -- You know, I would say it sounded like a bigger issue in the Gulf of Mexico, than on this side over in the Atlantic, but still certainly an issue.

MS. MURPHEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I agree that that was probably the biggest complaint that I heard from people, is with the economic questions. I kind of scratched my head at that, but -- I'm okay with this range of options. I guess the bigger question is, without economic data, I just want to make sure that a validated logbook could still be used for economic or for disaster declarations and stuff. That's a bigger question that we have. We probably can't answer that here, but, you know, that's a -- That should be a point of having this this system in place.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tom. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: To the people that are in opposition, you know, it's cash. Cash transactions have a lot to do with their opposition to reporting, you know, reporting their income from this, because a lot of the payments are all in cash. Tips are in cash, and a lot of -- Most of the trips that we run with our charter boat are paid in cash, and so it's a lot of cash transactions, and people don't want to report their cash.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you Jimmy. Anything else? So I think everybody is good with this range of options, and I think that's it. Have we got other items to discuss? We're almost there.

MR. HADLEY: Yes, and so, very quickly, a couple other items to discuss. In the letter that the council received from the agency, there's a mention of did-not fish reports, and potential changes to that. The council currently, or the SEFHIER program currently, has weekly submission of did-not fish reports, and I believe they can be submitted up to a month ahead of time, and so just looking for clarification. Does that need to be in this amendment, or is the current requirement for did-not fish reports, you know, satisfactory, or do we need to add -- Basically, do we need to add an action for that or not? You know, if so, you know, we can go ahead and do that, but, right now, it's not in the amendment, because there is an existing requirement in place.

Then the other other topic, if you will, is the for hire reporting AP. You appointed those members in closed session. We'll go over those for final appointments during the Full Council session on Friday, but just a little feedback on when you would like that for-hire reporting AP to hold their first meeting, and so those are the two other items.

MS. MURPHEY: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess I would just ask the same thing, and should the AP meet before we scope the document? Okay. I see heads nodding yes, but, also, should the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel weigh-in on this, and do they weigh-in prior to scoping, or after scoping, and so I just wanted to put that out there.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jessica. John, would you think it'd be appropriate to have out the -  
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MS. BROUWER: So you're asking whether law enforcement -- They typically meet in the spring. I that was going to be one of the questions we posed to you later on in the meeting, is whether you want that AP to come together, and, based on the discussion this morning, it sounded like you wanted at least a topic already for them to discuss, and so certainly we could bring that AP together before March, or whenever we can find time.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Great. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Yes, and so I've got two things. First of all, I do want to address the did-not fish reports, in terms of the timeline, and that is a question I have. I found that thirty days to be kind of -- I don't know where it came from, and I would like to know where it came from, and I would like to see if we could consider other options. I mean, that was one thing, and I got called by SEFHIER staff, because I went out ninety days. Now, I was really sick at the time, and couldn't fish, but that was -- You know, there are other people in that circumstance, are there are also a lot of people with seasonal businesses, that aren't fishing, and so I would like to at least address that.

As far as whether this AP meets prior, or after, I would like them to weigh-in on this document. I would also like them to weigh-in on them after we scope it. I mean, that's why we have them, right?

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I guess I wanted to follow up on Tom's comment. I almost see a benefit to the AP weighing-in after we go to scoping, because they'll have the scoping input, right, and then they can then be informed, based on that scoping input, and provide even better input, you know, as part of the process. I guess I view scoping differently than I think the council has been, in that it's just very early in the process, and I feel like we put up these steps in the process that maybe are unnecessary, and so having the AP meet before we go to scoping I don't think is a requirement.

I don't think we have to have a meeting. In fact, I would kind of consider the AP meeting as part of the scoping process, because we're gathering their input at the same time as everyone else's, and so just keep that in mind.

While I have the mic the other thing I guess I wanted to mention, and this might be for Myra, or John, and, you know, just -- So I appreciate all of the work that's gone into this document to maintain alignment. Obviously, we're far from selecting preferreds, but, given this isn't a joint fishery management plan, what do you see as kind of a mechanism, or way, that we could collaborate across the councils, and SERO, kind of going forward, to just ensure that, you know, greater alignment, as these essentially go on separate paths, with the Gulf Council's going forward, right, and that's my concern, is I don't want the Gulf Council to, you know, approve something, and then the South Atlantic is going to be a year later, and it's going to be looking very different, right, and so I feel like there's some opportunity there, where we need to collaborate now, and make sure we're ensuring we're on the same tracks, and, where there might be differences, there might be reasons for those differences.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. John or Myra.

MS. BROUWER: So thank you for that, Andy. We're trying, as I said earlier, to have direct communication with Gulf staff. We also -- There will have to necessarily be an overlap in IPT members for this amendment, as well as the Gulf's amendment, right, and so we're going to have two IPTs, composed of almost -- You know, a wide overlap of the same people, and so I feel that that is going to allow us to make sure that we are, you know, like John said earlier, at least going parallel to what the Gulf Council is doing. Beyond that, I mean, I'm not sure that we need to consider anything like meeting together with the Gulf. I mean I don't -- I don't know that that's -- You know, but, I mean, the communication is definitely there.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks Myra. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Just something else I would like to see is, as we go out to scoping early on, is to have the idea of limited entry for the charter, for the open-access permit that we now have, and see how that is taken by the AP, when they meet, and get some comment, because I can remember, back when I was on the Snapper Grouper AP, and we made recommendations to the council that they implement limited-entry for-hire permits, you know, way back in time, and so this isn't something

new, but I would like to see that conversation of implementing a limited-entry for the open-access for-hire permits.

MS. MURPHEY: So we have discussed limited-entry, and that particular amendment is on hold until we get permit data, and so I'm not sure if we need to do it then, unless other people feel the need, but we will be having that conversation, once we get permit data. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Again, this is scoping, and it doesn't hurt to ask, and then, when we get the permit data, then maybe we'll have some answers from the public, and that will help us inform our discussion as we go through forward. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Other thoughts on asking? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I'm okay with asking, because it's going to come up, and people are going to talk about it. The APs are going to talk about it, and I guarantee our for hire AP is going to talk about it. All our APs talk about it all the time, all of us.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. It looks like we've captured that, if everybody wants to take a look at what staff has captured here, and gathering more information on the did-not report forms, convene the -- So I guess the other question, because I've heard different answers, is convene the for-hire reporting AP before or after scoping. Any thoughts? I know Andy wants to -- So now I'm hearing both, to treat them as scoping. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: How about we just say we get both done before the March council meeting, and, if one comes before the other, so be it.

MS. MURPHEY: I'm sorry. Repeat that.

MR. STRELCHECK: That we just complete both before the March council meeting, and then council staff, based on AP schedule and everything else, can decide what gets in the queue first. I don't think we have to be so prescriptive, with regard to what is accomplished first.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Is everybody good? I think I see heads shaking with that, and so thank you, Andy. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Just agreeing with Andy. That's a good point.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: One thing to add to when we're gathering information about the did-not fish reports is I think it would be helpful, from the fishermen's perspective, to talk about ways that they could be able to see their compliance. I think that's going to come into play, if we talk about changing the did-not fish reports, from an easy way for fishermen to know whether or not they are compliant or not, and so just things to ask them while we're -- Easy ways for them to know that they're compliant.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Amy. Tom.



MR. ROLLER: I think that's a good point, and I think we should also ask fishermen what sort of timeline, looking forward, to put did-not fish reports in in advance. Does that make sense? Like what would people like to see, thirty days, sixty days, ninety days, five years, and I don't know. I'm just kidding, but --

MS. MURPHEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you. Amy, under the VESL, it's easy to see your compliance. It's really easy.

MS. MURPHEY: So if everybody can take a look at what staff has captured here. Is this good? Everybody agree with this? I see heads shaking, and we may have six minutes to spare to six o'clock, and so do we want to approve for scoping then? Is that -- Let's go that, on what, Friday? Okay. All right. We're going to chew over sending to scoping or not, and we'll hit that again on Friday. With that, is there anything else? I want to thank everyone for persevering and sticking it out till almost six o'clock, and only an hour lunch, and so thank you all very much. We got it done, and so thanks.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on December 2, 2024.)

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DECEMBER 3, 2024

TUESDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Council Session I of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the Lumina Holiday Inn, Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina, Tuesday, December 3 2024, and was called to order by Chairman Trish Murphey.

MS. MURPHEY: I'll go ahead and call Council Session I to order. I think the first thing we have is John Hadley is going to go over our allocations review on spadefish and the jacks complex. I think we talked about this some at the last meeting, and so go ahead, John.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you. So, in front of you are the two attachments for the allocation review reports for spadefish and the jacks complex, and, if you'll recall, in September, these groups of species, or this species, came up for allocation review, according to your allocation review trigger policy, and so this is sort of the first trial of your allocation review guidelines.

In this case, according to the guidelines, when you reviewed a species, and you didn't necessarily have an update to the catch level recommendations, and an associated amendment, you still wanted to review the allocations, and then, at the subsequent meeting approve the allocation review report, and so that's what we're doing today, is coming back to you with a summary of your discussion in September, to make sure you're good with what's in the report, and, assuming that it looks good, this is what will go sort of on file, so to speak, for the group of species, for the jacks complex and Atlantic spadefish.

Also, with this approval, it sort of is the official starting of the clock, if you will, for that seven-year timeline, and so this is the -- Once the council approves these reports, seven years from that approval would be when the species would need to be reviewed again for its allocations, if it weren't reviewed before that, and I'll just kind of walk you through this allocation review report.

We'll start off with spadefish. I'm not going to go through all the information that was presented, but we did capture that in the appendix, and so you can see the information on the Snapper Grouper FMP goals and objectives, the landings over the past five years, some of the retention regulations, the existing allocations, and when those were set, and some of the rationale for why those were set, and so all that information is captured in the appendix at the end, and so I just wanted to --

You know, it's the same information that you saw in September, but this is sort of the documentation of what the council reviewed to come to your decision on sector allocations for Atlantic spadefish, and so, on that, you know, the first part is sort of the introduction and background information, and then that latter part is what we're looking for approval today, to make sure that you're okay with your decisions at September, and you're okay with this report.

There again, we can kind of put it on the -- Once approved, it starts the seven-year timeline, and so, without further ado, generally speaking, the council felt that the existing sector allocations for Atlantic spadefish were sufficient for the current fishery. You noted that neither sector has harvested its annual catch limit in recent years, and so changing incremental allocation towards one sector or another would not necessarily lead to a change in harvest, or benefits from the fishery, and so, with that being the case, Goal 2, the management goal of the Snapper Grouper FMP, is being adequately addressed with the existing allocations.

You did note that you wanted to re-examine sector allocations when catch level recommendations were updated for the species, and, essentially, these, along with that update on the catch level recommendations, will be moving to the more recent MRIP Fishing Effort Survey, and so that's going to sort of likely change the scale on what the annual catch limits look like and how harvest is being measured, and so you want to -- You noted that you wanted to re-examine sector allocations at that time.

You also expressed interest in having accountability measures being examined at that time as well, and so that's the very simple rundown on Atlantic spadefish. I'm happy to answer any questions, and, there again, just looking for -- You know, we can either pass a motion or just make sure there's consensus approval of this report for Atlantic spadefish.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Does anybody have any questions on spadefish? Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: No questions. I just want to say, since I think this is the first one of these we've done, a report like this, I thought that this was nice, and I think it captures the discussion that was had at the last meeting, and I think it's a good way to capture the council's intent on these allocation discussions, and so it's a really nice document.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jessica. Anybody else have any questions? Does anybody want to make a motion to accept this, or approve this? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Well, I also just want to thank staff for these two documents. I thought the same way, when I went through them. They were really well put together, really helpful, really organized. **It's really good to see this stuff, but I'm happy to make that motion.**

MS. MURPHEY: We have a motion on the table by Tom Roller to approve the report. Do I have a second? Charlie. Any discussion? **Any objections?** All right. **The motion passes.** Thank you. We've got jacks.

MR. HADLEY: Thank you, and so we have one more. We have the jacks complex. Similarly, you'll see, you know, the same basic format as what was put together for Atlantic spadefish, and I'm going to -- Let me change that a little bit.

So, generally speaking, you know, the same general format, the introduction at the beginning, some sort of background information on the review policy and the review guidelines, and then we get into the council's comments on the current sector allocations for the jacks complex, and there's also, similarly, an appendix that captures all the information that the council reviewed in September, and so, there again, the Snapper Grouper FMP goals and objectives, all the recent landings information, some of the kind of general retention limits, and then the current allocations and the rationale for those allocations.

After reviewing that in September, much like spadefish, the council noted that existing sector allocations for the jacks complex are sufficient in relation to the current fishery. You noted that harvest has been variable, and both sectors have utilized their respective ACLs in some years. However, neither sector has been really constrained by the existing sector allocations, in recent years. You noted that almaco jack have become particularly important, for both the recreational and commercial sectors, and you would like to continue monitoring landings before re-examining allocations.

You felt that it was not the appropriate time for reallocation of the total ACL, with the expected updates to catch level recommendations for the jacks complex, and so that's -- You know, based on that discussion, Goal 2, management of the Snapper Grouper FMP, is being adequately addressed through the existing sector allocations. You did note, during the discussion that you wanted to -- Much like spadefish, you wanted to re-examine sector allocations when the MRIP FES estimates were integrated into the updated catch level recommendations, and so that would be sort of the next trigger when the sector allocations would be examined.

You also noted that you wanted to look at accountability measures for the complex at that time, and you would like the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel to complete a fishery performance report for the jacks complex before the revised catch level recommendations are developed, and so gather a little bit more information from your AP on this complex, how it's operating, before making allocation decisions, and other potentially other management decisions for this complex, and so that's sort of the summary rundown of this report.

MS. MURPHEY: Again, any questions for John on the jacks document? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Not so much a question, but I just wanted to comment that I agree that we need to have like a fisheries performance report from this, from the AP in particular. I would like to learn more about this fishery and how it operates in the different states and sectors.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tom, and John is writing that down, and so, at this point, does anybody want to make a motion to approve this document? Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: **I move that we approve the allocations review report for the jacks complex.**

MS. MURPHEY: I've got a second by Carolyn. Any discussion? **Any objections? Then motion approved.** Thank you, John.

MR. HADLEY: Thank you, and that's all for that agenda item. I appreciate it.

MS. MURPHEY: I think now we have Chip Collier coming up, and he's going to go over the headboat vessel limits report that the council requested a couple of meetings ago, I think, and so we'll get Chip all set up here.

DR. COLLIER: This is going to be Attachment 6 in your briefing book for Full Council I. As mentioned, the council had requested a detailed description of the headboat fishery, to better inform what management options could be available for developing specific regulations for the headboat fishery, and so I just want to start off with a couple of things, putting this into context, looking at the headboat fishery relative to the other components of the recreational fishery, whether it's the shore-based fishery, and, here, I have displayed the recreational effort, in terms of -- That's estimated either through the MRIP program or through the -- So the Marine Recreational Information Program or the Southeast Region Headboat Survey.

I started off with all trips, just making sure we get a full grasp of what's going on, and that's what's in Figure 1, or Figure 1.1. You can see that the vast majority of trips occur in the shore-based component, and that's represented here, with these pluses and dashed line, and then you go down to the next component, and that's probably the most important one, at least for the offshore fishery, and we're looking at the private recreational sector, represented with the blue line and square boxes, and, down here, you can hardly even see them, relative to the other two components there, but that's the charter boat and headboat fishery.

So, in order to give you a better view of that, you can see it zoomed-in a little bit more for the charter boat. It's in gray here, a little bit higher than what's going on in the headboat component, and then we have the headboat bouncing around, at around 300,000 angler trips per year.

Now, looking at this, it dawned on me, as I was putting it together, that it's not really fair to count all the inshore trips that are going on for the charter boat fishery, and so what I wanted to do is then look at trips that were occurring greater than three miles, assuming that most of the headboat trips occur in greater than three miles that are in the headboat survey, and so this is it again. Obviously, shore-based trips can't occur three miles from land, and so that component is removed.

You can see that the charter, or the private recreational trips, dropped from twenty million trips, angler trips, per year, to around four million that are occurring greater than three miles offshore. Once again, the charter boat and headboat fishery are very, very minor, compared to the private recreational, but you can see them zoomed-in, over on the right side of the graph. Once again, gray is the charter boat fishery, and the yellow triangles is the headboat fishery. Here, you can see

that those two are pretty equal, as far as number of angler trips. In most years, the charter boat fishery is exceeding the number of angler trips than the headboat fishery.

In some years, particularly here in 2014 and 2015, you will see that there's an increase in angler effort in the headboat fishery, and I was lucky enough to talk with Rob Cheshire, with the headboat program, and he has a little bit of explanation, and we'll get into that a little bit later.

Looking at the number of headboats that are operating, or that are part of the headboat fishery, or headboat survey, and not all headboats are part of the headboat survey, and so, if a headboat operates just in state water, and does not have federal permits, those folks will not be in this survey, but it accounts for probably the majority of headboats operating in our region.

One thing I want to note is we're seeing decreases in both the Gulf and the South Atlantic. One issue that I was potentially concerned with was whether or not certain vessels were just moving from the South Atlantic to the Gulf, and potentially shifting sides, and that's why these two are graphed together. You'll see, from 2000, or 1992, to basically 2023, it's been a decreasing trend on the Atlantic side, and, for the most part, it's mirrored on the Gulf side as well, although, in the last few years, the Gulf has leveled out, where the South Atlantic has continued to decline.

There's two ways to look at the number of trips occurring in the headboat fishery. You can look at the number of trips that a headboat is doing, or you can look at the number of anglers that are going out on headboats, and so those two are displayed here. Later on, you're going to see a little bit more on the overall impact of the difference between the two. It's not that obvious in this plot right now, but you'll see something a little bit different.

The one thing I do want to point out is, if you look in the early time period, from 1990, or from 1980 to 1990, as far as number of headboat trips, those are pretty equal to what's going on from around 2017 to 2023. If you go down to the plot below, and number of angler trips, you'll see it's between 300,000 to 350,000, and maybe a little bit lower in that same time period, and then go to the more recent time period. You do see a shift overall, that the number of angler trips are going down. When you're thinking about the headboat fishery, angler trips are probably fairly important, because they're getting paid by the head, and so this is showing that, for the number of trips that they're going out, they're having fewer anglers on them.

Another thing that we wanted to look at was the regional differences that are occurring in the headboat fishery, and this is separated out based on the knowledge in the headboat program. Some of it was based on analysis from 2017, and some of it was based on previous analyses that were done, basically seeing a break around Cape Canaveral of what is being caught and what the headboats are targeting, and so we have it split and north of Cape Canaveral, and so this will cover -- The north region covers from just south of Cape Canaveral all the way up to the North Carolina-Virginia border, and then south goes through the Florida Keys.

For the area north, you can see the number of trips has been fairly level, although it has been declining since around 2012, with a few peaks in there here and there. As far as south, you can see a dramatic increase, or dramatic decline, basically beginning in 1992, and bottoming out when we had an economic recession, around 2002 and 2003, increasing from 2002 to 2003, all the way up to 2014, and then you see the 2014 and 2015 points, and then a pretty substantial drop, beginning in 2016 or 2017.

Some of the reasons for those giant increases, and decreases, in the headboat survey, as far as number of headboat trips, as well as angler trips south of Cape Canaveral, is due to a few vessels. In that southern region, they had increased their number of trips per day, and, basically, were just having a really good time period, and then, when you see the drop, those vessels are no longer in the headboat survey. They had indicated that they are only fishing in state waters, and so that's why that drop is there.

Unfortunately, as they drop out of the headboat survey program, they become part of the MRIP program, and they would be sampled based on a random sampling, and so it's going to be a little bit harder to actually track what those vessels are catching.

Diving a little bit more into the details of this, on headboats, there are a variety of options that you can go on, when you're looking at taking a headboat trip, whether it's a multiday trip down to a half-day trip. It all depends on what experience you want to have, and so, on the top, we have the north of Cape Canaveral, and so the area just around Cape Canaveral all the way up.

We have headboat trips and angler trips, and it's a little bit difficult to see in these graphs. I was trying to figure out which graphs best demonstrate what I was trying to get at with this, but there was a transition from full-day trips to more half-day trips in the northern region, and you can see that, around 2000, or 2010, and that's where the change really occurred, and you really see it beginning in the number of angler trips. If you look at the end of the time series, you're seeing just many fewer full-day trips, compared to the half-day trips that were going on.

In the southern, or south of Cape Canaveral region, almost all the trips are half-day trips. It's very rare to get something that is different than that. Looking online, it's pretty difficult to track those down. You can go on some multiday trips, and full-day trips, and it just takes more time to find them.

A very interesting component of this is looking at the number of anglers per vessel on the different types of trips. If you look at half-day trips, and this is presenting information for just north of Cape Canaveral, and I'll talk about south of Cape Canaveral after this, but, north of Cape Canaveral, you can see a drop in half-day trips, the number of anglers bouncing around forty anglers per trip, down to below thirty anglers per trip in the more recent time period.

Now, the three-quarter-day trips, that is a little bit more variable. You see it starting off around thirty anglers per trip, and dropping down to probably fifteen anglers per trip, and then increasing up to forty, and then dropping back down to thirty. I think this is just low sample size in the early time. If you remember, it wasn't until 2010 that it really seemed like there were a lot of vessels that had offered three-quarter-day trips, and so that variability might have been causing this.

Then, going into the full-day trips, which were much more common in the early time series, they had forty anglers per trip, and, in the more recent time period, matching the half-day trips, it drops down to below thirty anglers per trip.

Now, I didn't plot the number of anglers per trip for the area south of Cape Canaveral. It was a lot more stable. It was around twenty anglers per trip throughout the time series, although it did have a declining trend. I think it went from twenty-two anglers down to eighteen anglers per trip from

2005 to 2023, and so that's not a big decline, but it is still a 25 percent decline over that time period, or a 20 percent decline.

Now, getting into the species that are most common on headboats, I really struggled on the best way to present this, and so hopefully I will explain it a little bit, and it's not as painful to see. If you look at these bars all the way to the right, that would represent it's more common on a trip. If it is a smaller bar, that means it's less common on a trip. There's a hand up.

MS. MURPHEY: Robert? Go ahead, Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Chip, I was wondering if you had any information in this document, and sorry if I missed it, that shows the total availability of headboat seats, or capacity, over this same time period.

DR. COLLIER: I have not looked into that, but we could look into that. I'll have to get up with Rob, to see if that information is available.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I kind of wondered if some of these trends were driven by availability of boats coming in and out of the headboat space, but, if it's too much work, don't worry. It was something I'm curious about.

DR. COLLIER: I'll definitely look into that.

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

DR. COLLIER: All right. Back to the common species on trips. We have it broken up into decades, thinking that just annual variability might be way too much to be looking at, and so we do have five different time blocks, from 1980 all the way up to the 2020s. Just remember, when you're looking at the 2020s, this is only a few years. It doesn't have a full decade in there, and so it's only going to be 2020 through 2023.

Now, looking at this, the first time block, we can see black sea bass was the number-one-caught species, followed by vermilion snapper, tomtate, red porgy, then white grunt, and that is the top five for the 1980s. If you come over here to the 2020s, black sea bass is no longer number one. It has dropped down to number five, similar to what you've been hearing throughout, that black sea bass are becoming less common in some of these areas, and this is just north of Cape Canaveral.

Vermilion snapper filled in that number-one spot, and then spottail pinfish has come into the number-two spot, followed by tomtate and white grunt, and this is looking at number of fish, as opposed to weight of fish. Weight of fish is going to be different, and that's going to be in a figure below, and so it's a lot of information in these plots. I apologize, but we're trying to get you as much information in the beginning. That way, we can narrow the focus, as needed.

South of Cape Canaveral, it's a very different species assemblage. Either white grunt or yellowtail snapper are the number-one or number-two species throughout the time series, and then gray snapper is also an important species, as well as vermilion snapper, tomtate, lane snapper, and king mackerel.

I mentioned, before, that weight looks a little bit different than numbers of fish. When you look at weight of fish for the area north of Cape Canaveral, you can see that gag grouper begin to pop in there, as well as greater amberjack, and, as John was mentioning in the previous discussion of allocations, almaco jack seems to be becoming an important component of it, as well.

Going to the area south of Cape Canaveral, in the early part of the time series, king mackerel were a very important component of the headboat sector, especially before the 2020s. It was the number-one species in the 1980s, all the way through the 2010s, and then, if you look at some of the information from the fishery program, you can also see a lot of king mackerel trips in that as well.

Another piece that I found interesting, as far as weight of fish, is you see a lot of pelagic fish down here that were important for the headboat fishery, indicating that, contrary to what we hear for the area north of Cape Canaveral, where they can't go pelagic fishing, it seems like, south of Cape Canaveral, they are able to switch and go to fish for some pelagic species.

Early on in the process, staff had asked for information, just number of trips that had landed or caught some -- Just a variety of species, and, when we developed this list of species that we had requested information for, what we were trying to do is get information for what we thought were common species, or problematic species, and we also wanted to get some species that were pelagic.

We wanted to get some inshore and offshore species, and so you can see the variety of species that we requested, including black sea bass, to cover some of the inshore stuff, blueline tilefish, to cover some of the offshore stuff, dolphin, an important recreational component, more of a pelagic fish offshore, gag grouper, an important grouper throughout the region, king mackerel, and that's an important pelagic fish, kind in between the offshore and inshore, red snapper, and we don't need to say why we are talking about that one. Spanish mackerel is just a very important nearshore fish, and then yellowtail snapper, being an important nearshore fish south of Cape Canaveral.

If we look at these two components, we can see that black sea bass -- They were most commonly caught on half-day trips north of Cape Canaveral, and then, if you look in the graph, around 2010, you see a declining trend, and you'll see the declining trend and number of trips, both for the half-day trips and full-day trips, overall declines in total trips catching black sea bass.

For gag, you see a longer time series of decline, from basically around 1992 all the way through the 2020s, and just remember, when we're looking at this, this is not catch per unit effort, or anything like this, and so, if number of trips are going down, that also means your total trips interacting with these fish would be going down as well, and so it's multi -- There's a lot of information going in this, and it's not clear what the drivers are. We'll get into those in the catch per unit effort plots.

Down south, the two species that seemed to be most important were king mackerel, from the 1980s all the way up to around 2015, and then it dropped out in 2020, and then yellowtail snapper is most commonly caught on half-day trips.

All right, and now looking at catch per unit effort, and I just wanted to begin looking at the last five years, and so we have information from 2019 all the way through 2023. You can see those represented in the colors here, and, on the left side, we have number of fish kept, or number of



vessel trips with fish kept, versus the total catch on that trip, and we have it separated out in number of fish per angler, and so all the way on the left is less than one fish per angler, and so let's say you had ten anglers on a trip, and only nine black seabass were caught. That would end up in this category here, or, if nine seabass were kept, it would end up in this category here.

On that same trip, let's say we had fifty black seabass that were caught, ten anglers, and only nine were kept, and you would have a lot more of the five-plus discarding, over here, and so that's represented in total catch, and the important part of this, at least in my mind, for this graph, is the difference between what you're seeing in kept versus total catch.

If you're seeing most of your increases over here on the kept side, and then on the total catch, another on the far-right side, that's indicating you have a lot of discards in there, and so, with black seabass, you're seeing very few people that would be getting to the bag limit for black seabass, which is seven fish per angler, and most anglers are only catching less than one fish per angler, or most trips are catching one fish per angler, and you see the same thing here. Most trips are catching less than one fish per angler.

The only other exception where you're seeing a bit of an increase in the number of fish discarded is vermilion snapper, and I have these separated out into a couple different groups. When I was originally doing this, it just made it a little bit easier to look at some of these -- I wanted to call them smallmouth and bigmouth, but triggerfish have an extremely small mouth, and so it's hard to put them in the bigmouth group, but they were ending up in more of the weight category, and that's why they're grouped over here.

Once again, with these other fish, almaco jack was becoming an important component here, and so they were in the top-five, as far as weight of fish, and you see the grouping here of less than one fish per angler. They were also catching less than one almaco jack per angler as well.

Now, going on down south, to the area south of Cape Canaveral, you see a little bit more balancing out of things like white grunt, where you see it pretty much spread out, either from less than one fish per angler up to five fish per angler, and you see the same thing for white grunt and yellowtail. If you remember, those two were ranking one and two, as far as number of fish caught in that area.

Moving on down to some of the more pelagics that I had mentioned, and then mutton snapper, which I realize is not a pelagic fish, but they ended up grouping in this way for me, and, once again, it's usually less than one fish per angler kept and one fish per angler on the trip.

Then, diving into some of the anglers' perceptions, and attitudes, you know, there's a growing body literature on what anglers want and expect on different trips, and, quite often, they're opposing each other, and, with a headboat fishery, where it's each individual angler pays for themselves, their motivation for going fishing is going to be for themselves.

There is a document that was put together by a graduate student at the College of Charleston, Stacey Weinstock, and she presented to the council, I think in 2017, or 2018, on the attitudes of folks fishing on headboats for black seabass, and with some of the anglers indicating that they were fine with the current bag limits the way they were, the current size limits, and they weren't -  
- Not all anglers were interested in catching more fish, or they weren't interested in keeping more

fish, and they just wanted to catch more fish, and I'll get more into some of that literature as I have more time.

The other thing I do want to point out is I did look into some of the economics of this, as far as for the angler, and I did an internet search, basically looking at nine different ports along the Atlantic coast, or the South Atlantic region, and looking at the number, or looking at the cost, for a headboat trip versus a charter boat trip, and then whether or not it was a half-day trip, full-day trip, or -- Yes. Half-day, three-quarter day, and full-day trips, and, for the most part, headboat -- The cost for going out a headboat, per angler -- If you had six anglers on a charter boat, it was about half the cost, and so it was much cheaper.

Both headboats and charter boats seem to be changing their operations nowadays, where headboats are offering specialized trips, where folks can go on those, and that might have a fewer number of anglers, or maybe they're targeting certain species, and they have a cap on the number of anglers, and so those are slightly more expensive, and then, with the charter boats, they sometimes offer options for going out on charter boats when it's not fully chartered by a single group. It might be a multi-group charter, and so it seems like both groups are offering different trip types, in order to make their business work better. That's all the information I have right now for the headboat stuff.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Chip. I think I'm seeing a few hands with questions. I had Tim and then Kerry.

MR. GRINER: Thank you for that. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for that, Chip. That was a lot of information. One thing I was curious about, when you were looking at any of this, especially with the CPUE charts, did you relate any of this back to depth of water that was fished, or do you have any information on the range of depths, or the average depths that the headboats are fishing?

DR. COLLIER: There is information on location where they were fishing. That's not for every set, or anything like that, and so, if they fish on the way out, go to -- Let's say they start off in a shallow trip, and it's not going that well. They might move out to deeper water, and then they might come back in, depending on the length of the trip, and so half-day trips are always going to be in much shallower water than full-day trips, but we can look into the information on location and then infer depth from that.

MR. GRINER: Thank you. I would be curious to see, you know, whether they're getting into, you know, 100 feet, 120 feet, or actually getting out to 150 or 200 feet of water, especially further north.

DR. COLLIER: Rob is coming to the table, Rob Cheshire, with the Southeast Region Headboat Survey, and he could have some information on that as well.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead Rob.

MR. CHESHIRE: Thanks. We do have information on depth, starting in about -- I think it's 2013, when the electronic reporting started, and you get -- It's like location, and you get one value per trip. They did add a min and a max depth, at some point, but we've used that depth information before, and so it's available, and we could analyze that, also.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks Rob. Do you have a follow-up?

MR. GRINER: Yes, just a follow-up. Yes I think that would be important, because I think that does have an impact on -- Especially the discards, because these are -- They're going to be discarded by size, looking at only keeping one per angler, and so I would be interested to see that.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Tim. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks, Chip. This was really helpful. I have a couple of questions, Madam Chair, if you don't mind. Starting sort of back at the beginning, and I guess this data wouldn't show it, but one of the things I would be interested to maybe ask some of our AP members is, is there a number, a set number of people, where they'll go on a trip or cancel a trip? There is? You know that? Did you say that, and I missed it? I'm sorry.

DR. COLLIER: No, I did not say that. When I was looking on the different websites, it was definitely mentioned a minimum number of people that would need to be in order for the trip to occur, and it varied by operation.

MS. MARHEFKA: Of course. I'm sure the probability changes based on -- Then, sort of along that lines, when you saw the shift to half-day trips, and maybe it was easy to see in the chart, and I just wasn't reading the chart correctly, but was it that they -- They forewent full-day trips, and only did half-day trips, or they did two half-day trips?

DR. COLLIER: So, when I was looking at those same plots, it was definitely both were going down around the same time, and so it wasn't that some of those full-day trips were being shifted over to half-day trips. It seemed like -- Some of them might have shifted over, but you remember the declining trend of number of vessels in the survey, as well as those declining trends, and so it seemed like some folks dropped out, and some might have shifted over to half-day trips, but not all of them are doing multiple half-day trips in a day.

Looking on several of the websites, some of these half-day trips are really just the half-day trips that they offer. You don't see a second half-day trip that they're offering, and it might have been the wintertime when I was looking at this, and so it might be different during the summertime as well.

MS. MARHEFKA: I have one more, if that's okay. Sorry. When we were looking at the CPUE charts, I didn't see gag or scamp. I would be interested to have a deeper conversation a little bit about the groupers, because, for me, sort of the reason I've been really interested in, you know, this headboat -- I mean, for many reasons, but one of the things that's been top of mind for me is these very low grouper bag limits, trip limits, that we have right now, and how they affect the headboat sector.

From what I saw in the early time series, neither of those groupers made up a huge -- There was a moment where those blue bars were there, but, even in the early 1980s ones, I don't think we were seeing a ton, and so I'm just curious to sort of tease out the grouper importance anymore, and then I would be curious to know, and maybe just present it in a different way, the way we do bag limit analyses, and you can see what percentage of trips are limited by the bag limit, because what I'm

trying to get at is -- I was thinking grouper was the choke, right, but maybe grouper isn't the choke. Maybe these trips were always intended to get more fish than the beeliners and the black seabass, is sort of what I'm seeing from this data, and am I reading that kind of right?

DR. COLLIER: I would probably defer to Rob on this. He has much more experience in the program, but I always feel -- My feeling was, especially on those half-day trips, you are focusing on the black seabass and smaller-mouth species. As you move to the full-day trips, there is the greater potential of catching those bigger fish, like the groupers, but, Rob, if you want to speak to that a little bit more.

MR. CHESHIRE: I think the objective for the headboat captains is to put the vessel on enough fish so everyone's happy, you know, and so I think you're right. They're targeting those fish that you can catch in bigger numbers, and then occasionally they, you know, hook up with a gag, or some larger species, but it's not like they're going out targeting those, and I think the other thing to consider is that headboat -- People who go out on headboats aren't, you know, as probably experienced in fishing for grouper, and so more likely they're just -- I mean, most of the time, they're just dropping a hook to the bottom, with some squid on it, and so they're not as savvy about catching those fish, I don't think.

DR. COLLIER: Kerry, when you had mentioned the groupers, so our list of shallow-water groupers include gag, scamp, red grouper, as well as the hinds, and so would you want those folks in there as well, or do you want just the black gag, scamp, red grouper?

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, maybe. You know, I don't want to make more work for you, but, if you're in there, I would be interested to look at those, all of the shallow-water groupers, I think. As Tim was saying, it will help us understand the depths a lot more, but, if that's a pain, then pick the highlights.

DR. COLLIER: I want to get as much information for you all to make a decision as possible, and so just let me know what you need, and we'll get it for you.

MS. MURPHEY: Are you good? Okay. I've got Jimmy, and then I've got Tom.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to make a comment that -- You know, how great it is to have all this information from this sector, you know, and, whenever the decision was made to collect all this, by the council at that time, a long time ago, congratulations to them. It makes you look at the tough decisions we're making now on SEFHIER and how it will pay off in the long-term, and so it's just really good information, and it's great to have it. Great presentation. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you for drawing that back to SEFHIER, Jimmy. That's a really good point, right, the importance of this data. I just -- I wanted to just bring up like a rhetorical point, that, you know, a lot of times, and we've discussed this, whether it's general for-hire, but I think particularly headboats, you're selling the idea of potential, and not necessarily what you're actually going to catch, right, and I know we couldn't probably source this out from data, but Kerry brings up a good point regarding depth and grouper, but like -- I would think it would be more relevant

whether trips decrease after a season closes, just because that perception that you maybe could catch one even though you're not going to, or are very unlikely to, might be the thing, but I don't think that -- I don't see how we could source that out, but that would be more how I would look at it.

MS. MURPHEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: To Tom's point, what I think my perception, and this could be wrong, which is why I find this data -- It has already changed some of my perception, and so thank you, and that's effective, but it has always sort of been that the folks that go on out on headboats are more interested in bringing meat home, and it's more utilitarian, where it's more experiential in charter.

Again, that's my perception, and I'm holding open the fact that I could be wrong. I don't know how on earth we can like truth that, but that's just -- My starting place has always been, if you're going on a headboat, you may have less means, because it's a more economical way to go fishing. It may be your way to actually fill your freezer with fish, all of those things, and, a charter, you might be more likely to be like, dude, this is just an awesome day, and, you know, we hooked up, and let them go, but we had this experience, and so that's just -- That's my base perception, and it very well could be wrong, and I don't know how we get at the -- If that is true or not.

MS. MURPHEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Philosophically, that's a really good point, and I'm not sure we can get to the bottom of that. I would point out that, if you're fishing in the grouper snapper fishery, you better be meat fishing, because you're going to have a lot of discards, right? You know, from my experience, it's that -- What I find very interesting about headboats is they seem to cater to a lot of inexperienced anglers, but they also cater to experienced anglers.

I have a lot of customers of mine who may charter me for a couple days, but they may come down for four days, get me for two days, and then they'll go on a headboat for a third day, right, but they're also pretty specialized. They're going to bring their own equipment, and they're going to bring their own bait, and so that's not your average customer there, and I don't necessarily think that we can get to the bottom of some of these questions, but I would point out that, regardless, this is a really important aspect of our angling and recreational community, access-wise.

DR. COLLIER: Just to that point, I mean, even if you were to dig into this, there's different types of anglers, and they go on headboats, and they go on charter boats, and some of them even commercial fishing. You know, they have different motivations on why they're doing it. Some people are doing it because that's the only way they can make a living, and some people are doing it because that is the way that they're choosing to make a living, and so it's -- The motivation of why somebody is going out there is going to vary, and it's definitely showing up in the literature that it's hard to pin down why these people are going, and maybe we can get to the fraction of them that are going on these trips, to be able to catch more or keep more, whichever one they're trying to do, but it would take some specialized surveys to get there.

MS. MURPHEY: I have a question, this may be more for Rob, but are there any demographic information out there for the customers? Is there anything like that available?

MR. CHESHIRE: Not that I know of. There may be, but I'm not aware of it.

DR. COLLIER: It seemed -- In my quick review of some of the literature out there, it seems like that Weinstock paper is one of the few that was looking at it.

MS. MURPHEY: Gary.

MR. BORLAND: Just listening to all this, the trend -- You know, the trend I see is that the hundred-foot head boat is kind of going away. Obviously, infrastructure, cost of dockage, and the trend's going to thirty-five-foot boats, especially in the southern end, and they're doing six to eight to ten people, and it is on a pay basis, right? They show up to the dock, and they take six or eight people on a, quote, headboat/charter boat.

Are we capturing that data in this data that we're seeing here, that boat, because it feels like that's where it's going. If we see a fall off on a true headboat, and into these smaller boats, and the cost goes up, I know, per person, but it almost is a different angler. The experience level seems to increase on these smaller, because you pay more to go out boats, but you get specialized attention from the smaller, quote, headboat, and is that captured, or do we have a way to see that trend?

DR. COLLIER: Rob has his hand up. I think he would be much better at answering that.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Rob.

MR. CHESHIRE: Yes, and so this goes to the other online comment about vessel size, and we currently have information on vessel size, but it doesn't go back through the time series. What we've done, in the past, for standardizing indices of abundance is to use either a maximum number of anglers for a certain vessel, and use that as a proxy for vessel size, and so we might be able to sort of tease it out that way, for the years where we don't have information on vessel length.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Gary.

MR. BORLAND: Just to follow up, you know, from a management standpoint, those boats, those thirty-five or forty-foot boats, are more specialized and probably catch more fish, and release more fish, than a true headboat. I mean, the operation, and the way you approach the fishing, from a headboat and from what I call a six-pack boat are completely different, and so the way we manage those, quote, headboats could be totally different, if that's the trend we're seeing, where that's more popular.

MS. MURPHEY: Judy.

MS. HELMEY: Also, in my opinion, with the headboats and everything, you have a different quality of fishermen now than you had fifty years ago, because you're right, and they could get on a headboat for the least amount of money, and get to go fishing, and they would catch fish, but now you don't have as much of that desire. I don't think we don't have as much desire. They don't have as much desire for that as they do when they get on the six-pack boat, where they can just go with their family or something.

We very seldom now get calls for headboats anymore, and, after Steve Amick retired, and nobody took his place, it really has made a big impact on our area, because, when he took the same people for years and years and years and years, and then, when he quit, that kind of stopped a volume of traffic to Tybee Island, which I know is horrible, and nobody took his place, and so I think that -- He did sell his boat, and they were supposed to take his place, but they couldn't make it work, which is understandable, because of the cost of everything and trying to get up-to-date-for being an inspected vessel, and so I just think the trend is going where there's more people now that might want to go with the charter boats, the smaller boats.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, John.

DR. WALTER: Thanks. I think this analysis is quite useful, and helpful, and I think the next extension of it would be to estimate discards from this, because I think this is just landed catch. Am I correct?

DR. COLLIER: No, and it has information on landed catch as well as kept and discarded.

DR. WALTER: Are the plots landed and -- Or are they total catch, including discards? Those are total catch including discards?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, it has kept and discards.

DR. WALTER: Okay, but some of the other plots show like the red snapper dropping out completely, even though presumably they're catching and discarding them, but what would be a useful analysis is what the discard rates are for a number of the species that -- Because I think that's a big part of the picture. It's potentially a big part of angler dissatisfaction, because I think they may not be happy to get a nice fish and then have to discard it, but it's, I think, a key aspect of how the fishery is operating, with respect to regulations right now, and so maybe that's the next analysis, because I think it would be helpful to partition those blocks up by kept and discard. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: I've got Amy.

MR. DUKES: A follow-up to Rob. Can you tell us how long back in the time series you do have that vessel length data? I think the more recent stuff may be more appropriate anyways, versus estimating those lengths going back in time.

MR. CHESHIRE: I'm not exactly sure what year they were added. It's possible it was about the same time they started with the electronic reporting, but a lot of that comes from the permit information, and I'm not sure how far back that goes. One of the issues with that is you get the information for the vessel, but it's not an annual capture, and so, a vessel that's been in the survey for ten years, I can tell you what the length is this year, but, a vessel that was it in -- You know, that went out of the fishery, and I can't go back and -- I can't tell you each year, you know, what the vessel size would be, and so it would be a matter of going back to those inactive vessels and seeing what information is there in our vessel directory, but it would be easy to pull that information and figure it out.

MS. DUKES: Chip, just from a thought process, and this was extremely helpful, and so thank you very much for putting this together. I think, looking at that last six, seven, eight years, where we've really seen that decrease in both the northern and the southern, with regards to headboat trips and angler trips, it may be kind of neat to zoom-in on that and look at the trip variations by month, so that we can then take that information and apply it to what our current seasons are, maybe what they're fishing for, and it also applies to the depth side of things, and so I think knowing when in the calendar year those trips are happening would be helpful. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: I've got Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, ma'am. Chip, on the graph that you have presented now, and so on the kept and then total catch side -- On the kept side, to me, that indicates that the black seabass, for example, that it was -- That it met the size limit, and so they kept it, and, on the total catch, it's including the discards there, so they interacted with them, but they were a sub-legal size limit, and so there's your discards there, correct?

DR. COLLIER: That's correct.

MR. HULL: Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have any other questions? I'm going to check in with Robert online. Do you have any questions? All right, and so -- Yes.

DR. COLLIER: You guys had requested information, detailed information, on the groupers. I'm assuming you would want that same detailed information for red snapper, and maybe a yellowtail snapper, just because it is an important component down south. White grunt seemed like it was important in both regions.

Black seabass, I feel like, is an important one for the northern component, and so we can look in details for those. I'm seeing nods around the table, and then, Amy, you had requested monthly information on the number of trips, and do you -- Do you want it split out by trip type as well, because we could be getting into some confidential information at that point. I'm not positive, but, as we parse out the information, it could become confidential.

MS. DUKES: Good point, Chip. I don't think necessarily the length of the trip would be as, perhaps, important as more just the number of trips. I think we can sort of characterize three-quarter-day, full-day, half-day, from a larger time span, but I think looking at when those trips, regardless of the length, are occurring would still be really helpful, and so aggregating them by trip types may get out of that confidentiality.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Let me make sure that Chip captured all this, but the information that the council is requesting is information on depth, or location, capacity of headboats, is there a set number of people to cancel a trip, the importance of the shallow-water grouper, and you also added red snapper, white grunt, black seabass, and yellowtail, impacts of seasons, discard rates, because that might be a measure of dissatisfaction, and then Amy is looking at trip variation by month. Is that the same things you captured, Chip, or is that right for everybody? Kerry.



MS. MARHEFKA: I had an addition. Sorry. Stay here long enough, and your list is going to grow. Can we see active number of permits by state, in some manner?

DR. COLLIER: So you've got to remember the permit is actually a for-hire permit. There isn't a dedicated permit for headboats, and so it would be number of vessels within the survey.

MS. MURPHEY: We're still waiting on that data, or do we have that data? We're still -- John Walter, are we still waiting on that data, the permit data?

DR. WALTER: We have a snapshot of the permit data, which it's not active current to this year, but I think to 2023 or so, which was enough probably to go on for a basic snapshot. It depends on the purpose of what that's needed for, but it shouldn't hold up most of these kind of exploratory analyses.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Great. Thanks. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Could you look at the number of vessels reporting to the head -- Yes, by state. Then you're getting out the charter guys, right? Then it's just headboats. That's what I was thinking, and who is active and who's not, and I'm sorry. Amy was just in my ear.

DR. COLLIER: I would say -- Rob, do you think we can do that?

MR. CHESHIRE: Yes, absolutely. It would be really quick to figure out, because any vessel that's in the headboat program has a for-hire permit, and so, you know, I can just give you the number of vessels in the survey by state.

MS. MURPHEY: Is that okay, Kerry? Okay, and I had Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I mean, on that note, I would just love to see a map, with little dots on it, where headboats are, where they're operating from, so we can get an idea of where they're located on the coast.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, and Chip is shaking his head to that, and so that should -- That would be cool too. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: When we're talking about those locations, and I think this is the same thing that Tom is saying. In Florida, I would like to know where they are in Florida, and not just Florida, because you've divided this up into north of Canaveral, south of Canaveral, and I think that would be helpful, with those locations for where these boats are operating.

MS. MURPHEY: Now Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Yes, and that's what I was trying to get at. Absolutely, and like not just the differentiation of Florida, and just I think it's helpful for all of our states to see if -- You know, where the coverage is, right?

MS. MURPHEY: So, a map, and can you do a map of dots? You can do that. Chip can do anything. Judy.

MS. HELMEY: Yes, that would be very good, a map with all the dots on it. Are you talking about headboats that have a federal permit and headboats just have a regular -- I mean, are we going to break that down, because some -- Like I'm a headboat, but I'm not technically a headboat, because I don't have a federal permit to go to the snapper banks, but so are these boats -- Are you talking about headboats that have federal permits or just have permits?

DR. COLLIER: So what we're going to be talking about are headboats that are in the headboat survey. Given some of this discussion, I might actually just take a snapshot of the permits that are available and have -- Do a plot of all for-hire permits and then do a separate plot of vessels that are in the headboat survey.

MS. MURPHEY: Yeah, you're done. Test, test, test, test, this side.

MS. MURPHEY: So, Chip, have you got your list? Okay, and so, if everybody is good with that nice long list, I think we're going to get a lot more information. This is going to be -- This headboat information is going to be great information to have, and so thank you, and thanks, everybody.

John can probably add to this, but I know the conversation started when we were talking about vessel limits between private recreational, for-hire, and headboats, because I think there was concerns about like Atlantic black and gag, and there were concerns about limiting a headboat to one fish, or two fish, versus private rec, and so I think that was the start of the conversation, and then we've had some public comment from folks also with those concerns, and so that's what we are looking into, and delving into, and so I don't know if John or Chip wants to add to that.

MR. CHESHIRE: That's -- I think, until you have an idea of what you want a bag limit to be though, it's hard to figure out where you would hit that, and it's species by species, and so I think this is a good first step towards figuring out what the headboat effort looks like, and, you know, the species that are caught, and then deciding which, you know, bag limit analyses, or trip limit analyses, you want to complete.

MS. MURPHEY: We're going to take a break and see if we can get our sound working, and so, everyone online, just be patient and let us get our sound working again. Thank you.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, everyone. We're going to try to get back on track. It looks like our mics are all working, and so come on.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Aren't you just dying to hear about the CCC meeting?

MS. MURPHEY: Everybody is. Thanks, everybody, for your patience. I think we are back online, and so we get to open it up with John now.

MR. CARMICHAEL: All right. Thank you, Trish, and so I'm going to give an update on the Council Coordination Committee. Just as a reminder, this is a meeting of the chairs, executive directors, and vice chairs of the eight regional fishery management councils. We meet twice a year and talk about issues of interest to the councils, developments in National Marine Fisheries

Service, policies, et cetera, and so the last meeting was October 16 through 17, 2024, in Crystal City, Virginia.

You can find all of the information from the meeting, as well as transcripts and a summary report will soon be available at the [fisherycouncils.org](http://fisherycouncils.org) website. Links are here in the document to the meeting itself, as well as the fishery councils' website, and, if you're ever wondering about meetings, and other council meetings, et cetera, there's a great calendar on there that shows the meetings of all the fishery management councils nationwide out the next few years.

There's a number of standing topics that are always talked about at CCC meetings. I'll just update you on these, right quick. The first is a budget outlook. It's kind of a broken record the last few years. We anticipate status quo funding for 2025. There's been small increases in the amount of money coming to all of the councils collectively over the last few years, and by small, I mean, you know, 1 to 2 percent, which, as you can imagine, is really not keeping pace with inflation, and that's been one of the topics that councils have been grappling with, is how to maintain activities in the face of really decreasing buying power over time. I think in real dollars, our money maxed out about a decade ago.

We always receive a science update from Dr. Werner, who was here for us this week. We hear about surveys, and progress within the agency on conducting surveys. We heard about CEFI, which we heard a little bit about. There's an EBFM Roadmap. This was available in October 2024, and I think that's out now, and you can take a look at that.

Then an update on the MRIP, the re-estimation that's underway looking into the potential bias, as well as the revisioning effort that's going on. There was a report from the 8<sup>th</sup> National SCS. That's the Scientific Coordination Subcommittee, otherwise known by its original name, the National SSC, which is a gathering of SSC representatives from all the councils. The report there is at the councils' webpage.

We also receive a legislative update from Dave Whaley, who keeps track of congressional issues on behalf of the councils, and you'll notice I send a report, and I think it's about monthly, from him to all of you on what's going on in Congress.

Other topics we hit on was the Seafood Strategy, and we got an implementation update on the agency's efforts to work on the National Seafood Strategy. Update on the IRA program, and we'll talk a little bit more about our particular situation in the staff report. The bottom line now is there's no additional RFP expected. The council submitted projects to consume all the available funding, and the agency is working on getting all of that out, hopefully by the end of the year.

There's been an EEJ effort underway for quite a while. The CCC was considering an EEJ workshop. The EDs had some subsequent discussion on that, and it seems like it's something that's unlikely to happen in 2025. We need to get some more information on what would be the purpose, what would be the objective of doing that, and will there be any funding available to support EEJ activities in the future.

Another topic that's been ongoing for a while is dealing with harassment, and so we've had some antiharassment training that's been available. There's a CCC workgroup that's been working on a

code of conduct, essentially, to deal with behavior expectations and setting standards and harassment issues within all of the councils.

The intent is to have a document that each council can then use that really describes an acceptable code of conduct for dealing with the public and interactions with people that can sometimes become a bit heated and maybe cross lines, and also talking about having some sort of training, something directed certainly at council staff and council members, and there is some of that that's available through the agency, but what would be the future of getting recertification of this kind of training, which is necessary on a recurring basis.

An update on NEPA, and there was pretty significant changes in the NEPA program, things like page limits and the timing and the documentation standards. They were still underway in getting the MSA procedure revisions that would adopt these NEPA changes, but staffs of all the councils and the regional offices are working together to get these new changes implemented into the documents that are going forward at this point. Then, finally, we hit on some international trade issues, which not so much an issue with us here, but, in places like the Pacific, it's a much bigger topic.

We heard reports from the CCC working groups. There's a number of working groups that dive deeper into topics and report out to the overall CCC. The communication group is planning for a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the MSA. One of the highlights of this will be a video of some sort. Right now, it's looking like potentially short videos from all eight councils, that will be hired out to a contractor to put together, that will capture, really, the successes of the Magnuson process over the last fifty years. It would be unveiled ideally next year at the CCC meeting.

CMOD is the council member ongoing development training. We got an update on the 2025 workshop, and we submitted names for us. This will be looking at implementing ecosystem management, and let's see. I will probably get information on that, for those who are going, probably early in the next year, in 2025.

Then habitat is interesting. There's a fishing gear effects database that's available. It's not just U.S., but it's worldwide, and there's links to that in the CCC materials. It's intended to be something that would be continually added to over time, as more information is available on effects.

Some of the ongoing concerns, as I mentioned, is the funding. If you look at the table there, the figure there on the right, you see the actual funding, and then you see the value in 2024 dollars, which I said actually peaked in 2010, or 2011, and so, in terms of real dollars, you can see the trend, there in the dashed red line, has really been very flat to, in recent years, slightly trending downward.

The concern is, you know, loss of basic abilities of the council keeping up with inflation, being able to support the activities that we've been doing, but also point out that this is not just the councils. This is the agency as a whole, and so, when you hear the agency talk about concerns with funding, and the ability to continue activities and programs and monitoring and sampling and research, they're in a very similar situation, in terms of their funding available to do their core activities.

You know, other concerns we're looking at is shifting stocks and changing climate, really a big focus of the Atlantic, as we know, and then threats to the fishing and seafood industry, which are kind of nationwide, with various things, whether it be imports, or it be weather, or it be just other changes going on with demographics, et cetera, and so that's a quick snapshot of what we talked about at the CCC. As I said, all the materials are available on the website, and that's the end of the presentation, and I would be glad to take any questions.

MS. MURPHEY: Anybody have any questions for John on the CCC meeting? Okay. You want to jump into -- Is it staff reports?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Up next is the staff reports, where we hit on a few of the things that staff is doing that aren't otherwise raised here during the meeting. This is Attachment 8 in your documents. The first thing off the bat is the best fishing practices, and so just recall this as an initiative that you support, and you initiated, to try and spread the word about best fishing practices. It's an outreach, and it's an education program, getting people to try and use fishing practices that increase the survival of released fish.

It's really been a great success in the last couple of years. This year in particular, the MVP, Master Volunteer Program, that Ashley set up has been a great success. They've done a number of workshops with that. Really, at the end of it, she's had more participation for a new thing than I think was expected, and it's been very rewarding for those doing it, and we've had some great opportunities to interact with people and spread the word about this, and hopefully this snowballs, as they share the information they have with people that they go fishing with.

This is going to continue into 2025, as well as participating in some pretty exciting events, like the Saltwater Sportsman Seminar Series that George Poveromo puts on. It's just been a great relationship, and, you know, we're very appreciative of him inviting us to be there and to be able to present this information to the folks that go to those seminars.

We also participate in things like, in Charleston, there's a fishing expo in Haddrell's, which brings in a lot of folks, and ICAST, and other seminars. We're looking at one down in Florida recently that we just got wind of, and so, you know, we're sort of seeing greater interest in actually getting reached out by people to say, hey, we have this going on, and we would love to have you come and share that information, which is really, you know, a great step, in my mind.

The website continues to get better and better, and bigger and bigger, with more information out there all the time. I appreciate all the efforts that Nick puts into that. One thing I want to highlight on there is the What It Means To Me. If you haven't looked at any of those videos, please take the time and do so. They have conducted interviews with council members, and advisors, and others engaged in the fishery, about what, you know, fishing means to them.

They're really outstanding videos. I'm blown away by the work that the staff has done in putting those, and as well as those of you that have agreed to do the interviews. They are wonderful, and they just recently completed one with Mark Phelps, and they're working on one with Chris Kimrey.

Those are on the website, and so, please, if you haven't, take a moment to look at them. It's kind of bleak, sometimes, sitting around this table, and making hard decisions, but, if you want a little pick me up, look at one of those videos.

The mackerel port meetings, we've talked about them a lot. They're underway. They just wrapped up, actually, I guess, and we'll hear a full report-out on this at the March meeting. I'm really looking forward to that, and I'm sure Christina is really looking forward to sharing with you what she's learned, but I have to say those have been a great success. The turnout has been good. Even when the participation was down, the conversations were spectacular.

I would say probably one of the biggest struggles was within South Carolina, where we had to cancel some from a hurricane, and I think we really lost a lot of steam there, and the participation on the rescheduled ones was certainly not as good as it looked like it was going to be initially, but, nonetheless, it was good conversations with people, and a lot of the success goes to our partners, the states, the other councils, the Atlantic States Commission, whose staffs work with our folks to get the word out there and get people to these meetings, and so I think you're really going to enjoy getting the full dose of what was learned, and what we got from the fishermen, from Christina in March, and so definitely look forward to that.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks. I've got a question from Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I just want to just say how wonderful the port meetings were and just say how incredible staff was in running these. Christina, and Myra, and Allie, and Mike, and everyone who attended did just such a phenomenal job. The discussions were incredible. The turnout was great, and, also, we couldn't have done that without our state partners, you know, in all the different states, and you did such a fantastic job. I was really, really blown away, from Virginia all the way through Florida.

MS. MURPHEY: Great job, staff.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Thank you. They appreciate hearing that, and they really do enjoy that part of the job, and it's just so important to the success of what it is we're actually trying to do, the real success of it, and the MREP, the education program, got rescheduled because of a hurricane. Hurricanes were an issue this fall. There is no doubt, but back on track now to happen in February of 2025.

I've got a plug in here for the seminar series, and so, monthly, we do seminars to present scientific topics, to give researchers an opportunity to share what they're working on. There's a whole section on it, with the link there on the webpage, where you can see all of the recordings from all of the seminars that have been presented, and there's been some really interesting topics and stuff that, you know, I think adds to your knowledge base, and the decisions that you're making, and I just encourage folks to take a look at that, when you've got a moment, and maybe, you know, scan through a video, watch the whole thing, listen to the question and answer, et cetera.

Again, I always put in a plug to, you know, try to make the time out of your schedule to listen to some of these, when you see a topic that you think will be interesting. There's a lot of great work being done in our region, and we continue to use this to try and highlight that.

Then the last thing for me to hit on is the IRA projects, and so we have submitted proposals for all of our projects. The last two are under review by the agency. We're hoping to get those finalized, and cleared out, by the end of the year, which the goal of the agency is to get all of that proposals and everything wrapped up by the end of this year.

We've got an RFP that just closed on a project to look at the EFH, potential changes in EFH, and as a result of potential stock shifts, and then one will go out soon to look at the data-limited, where we look at either assessments of rock shrimp or wreckfish, using data-limited methods, and so we're making progress on those couple of projects, and then things are underway with a number of the other things that were tied to following through on climate scenario planning activities, and so we're making progress there.

Right now it's sort of behind-the-scenes for you guys, but I expect, over the next year, this stuff to become more prominent, and then the last thing I'll add is a shrimp SAFE report is under preparation, and I hope to have that out by the end of the year, and so, Trish, that wraps up that, and I would be glad to take any more questions.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thanks, John. Anybody got any questions for John? Okay. I think, next, we've got Christina, who is going to go over the stakeholder engagement meetings, and, since we're running pretty good on time, I think we're going to try to squeeze Dolphin Wahoo in after Christina. Kerry is all over it.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Thank you, guys, and so I just want to say that mackerel port meetings has been probably the most rewarding thing I've worked on in my seven years with the council, and I'm excited to take what we sort of learned from doing that port meetings process and put it into the stakeholder engagement meetings that we've been planning for you all.

We've talked about this a number of times, and so I won't go over the background in detail, but I do just want to again remind you that the purpose of this outreach effort is to really start building, or rebuilding, relationships with fishery stakeholders, by engaging them in these more informal settings.

Again, when we do, you know, sort of public comment, we often hear that the most valuable conversations are those that are sort of had at the side of the room, where you're able to really engage in a discussion with fishery stakeholders, and so the purpose of this sort of outreach and engagement effort is to have that open dialogue, where you can learn from fishery stakeholders, and fishery stakeholders can learn from you.

So, as we sort of go through the bulk of this document, keep that in mind as the overall goal. It is, of course, a long-term goal, but it's something that we're hoping to start achieving through this process, and so, for this meeting, we want to have you guys review comments and recommendations from the Outreach and Communications AP, as well as Snapper Grouper AP, both of whom received presentations on this in the fall.

We have updated the structure, based on some of the comments we got from them, as well as the sort of council subgroup that's been working on planning these. We'll talk about proposed topics for the upcoming meetings, outreach, and ways to incentivize stakeholder attendance, and then,

finally, we'll have a conversation about when to hold the stakeholder engagement meetings, given a lot of the other council priorities that you guys have on your plate right now.

So, first, one of the things we've talked about a lot is how the council is going to utilize this information, and this is something that is key to be communicating to stakeholders that we want to attend these meetings. Usually, when we're out in the public, talking to fishermen, there's a specific management action on the table. There's something very specific to comment on.

These meetings are intended to be a little bit different, much more proactive and forward-looking, and so it's going to be important to communicate to stakeholders how the information that they're providing will be incorporated into the management process, when it's not quite as cut-and-dried as in reference to this specific management action.

In your discussions, you've said that you will use the information to identify topics that need to be addressed by the council, but, for one reason or another, haven't really been on your radar to set overall workload priorities. We've all seen the spreadsheet of doom that we look at at the very end, and using what information you're getting from these meetings to determine where to put some of those priorities, and then, finally, because active management actions are inevitably going to come up in discussion, to guide you on those management actions, sort of as appropriate, what things should you be considering, and asking, when discussing a given topic.

When we talked to the Outreach and Communications AP about this, they really felt like these meetings needed to be marketed as an opportunity for an extended discussion with council members, even going so far as to acknowledge that fishermen don't feel like they're being heard, and this is one of the ways the council is trying to remedy that frustration.

They also noted that it's going to be important to have some concrete examples of how fishermen input has influenced the management process, and communicating the value of similar efforts, such as port meetings, the Best Fishing Practices Master Volunteer Program, snapper grouper visioning, things that council has done along these lines before.

The Snapper Grouper AP had some concerns about these meetings, knowing that trust in the council is at an all-time low, and so this part right here, communicating to fishermen how the information is going to be used, is key, and that the council really needs to be transparent when controversial issues come up, red snapper, shark depredation, things like that. They also felt like the council is going to need to do a good job, at these meetings, of communicating timing, that fishermen might be bringing up issues, something that's happening in the fishery right now, but the management process is a long-term process, and there's a reason that it is a long-term process, but that really needs to be communicated.

Then, finally, there should be a decent chunk of this that focuses on the fisheries management process. You guys are certainly no stranger to the fact that it is a complex process, and it takes a lot of time to understand, and that's often what the Snapper Grouper AP felt like was the obstacle to people really participating, and participating in a valuable way, and so making sure that one of the goals of this was to really spread information on the fisheries management process.

When we brought all of this information to the council planning team, they agreed, and they listed a number of specific examples that we could use where fishermen input has directly affected the



management decision, things like black seabass size limits, versus trip limits, ropeless gear, removal of the operator card in the dolphin wahoo fishery, just to name a few.

They noted that, sort of related to some of those more controversial topics, it's going to be really important to make clear sort of the council's limitations, especially with things like red snapper, sharks, whales, and that it's going to be helpful for staff to provide just sort of a quick FAQ sheet on controversial issues, so that council members sort of feel prepared, when talking to the public, to provide, you know, honest and transparent answers, which is something that is a relatively low lift for staff to do. We keep a lot of these sheets, just for our outreach team, to begin with.

Then, finally, sort of a note that the goal for these is not to have a minimum number of attendees at each meeting, but to sort of, over time, see attendance increasing, and so there's no action necessary here at this time, but I do want to pause, since this is something key that you, as council members, and us as staff, are going to need to be communicating, how you're using this information. Is there anything else that sort of you would like to add, or any comments you sort of feel comfortable with, what's been outlined, what we will be communicating to the public, as what you will use this information for?

MS. MURPHEY: Does anybody have any questions so far? Keep going.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Then we'll keep communicating sort of those three main bullets is what you will be using the information gathered from these meetings for. All right, and so here's the meat of it, the stakeholder engagement meeting structure, how these meetings are actually going to run. We've gone over this sort of in brief before, but I'm going to go over it in a little more detail today, so that you guys sort of understand what will be expected of you, as council members, at these meetings.

They will be very well attended by staff. We felt a minimum of five staff needed to be in attendance, and, in addition, it's thought that all three council members for a given state would be in attendance at each meeting that's held within their state, and we do plan to do sort of a pre-meeting training session. We'll talk about just sort of facilitation, and best practices, and we'll have some one-pagers on the topics to be discussed, FAQ sheets with information on important or controversial issues, and, really, the purpose of this is to make sure that, before we go into a meeting, you guys, as council members, sort of really understand what your role and responsibility is going to be, and that everyone is comfortable with how things have been laid out.

Once we get to the actual meeting, as people are sort of walking in and arriving for the meeting, they'll be greeted by council members, but what we'll also have staff doing is sort of walking around, chatting with people and recording why attendees decided to come to the meeting, and what they hope to get out of the meeting that night. That way, if necessary, we can make some small adjustments, within reason, to what we're going to talk about, to really make sure that those people that are in the room are getting what they hoped to get out of the night.

Once six o'clock hits, we'll begin the meeting. We'll have a brief presentation that will be given by a council member, not staff, and it will be to welcome attendees, sort of explain the goals and objectives of the night, and how the night will operate. We'll probably also have you note some of the reasons people decided to attend that staff recorded as people were walking in.

Then we'll move into the meat of the meeting. We're going to start with a sticky-wall session. If any of you were around when snapper group revisioning is going on, I think you're fairly familiar with a sticky wall, but it's, as it sounds like, sort of you can put Post-Its, up with questions and comments on it.

We'll have a council member explain to attendees that, first up, this is the first opportunity for attendees to provide information on council priorities and identify where more communication is needed, and so we'll have sort of a sticky-wall section set up, related to questions that people may have for the council, and then another sticky wall set up that will allow them to sort of rank some of your top priorities.

People will get up, and they'll write their questions on the sticky notes, put them up on the board, note which priority should be number one, things like that, and, after about ten minutes or so, depending on how large the group is, staff note some of the questions on the sticky wall and give you guys an opportunity to respond to some of them.

The thought is that this is a way to get some of those more controversial issues out of the way. People are going to have questions about things like red snapper, for example, and this then provides you an opportunity to address those questions that they do have before we move into the other sections for the evening, and that'll last a total of about twenty-five minutes.

Then we'll move into sort of what we're calling our topical discussion session. We'll break attendees up into one, two, three different breakout groups, probably no more than three. It will really depend on the number of attendees in the room, with the logic being that smaller groups are better for discussion. There will only be one topic that's discussed. Each breakout group will discuss the same topic.

A council member will sort of give a brief one or two-minute synopsis of the topic, and then there will be sort of a series of pre-prepared discussion questions, to help get conversation flowing, and staff will be there to take notes, on a flip chart, and assist in discussion, as needed. If you are one of the council members that attended a mackerel port meeting, this is very similar to what we did for port meetings.

We'll have a quick break, so everyone can take a breather, and then we'll do what we're calling our sort of informal information session. Think of this as like a very mini tabling session, where different topics are around the room, and so fishermen will be able to move from over here, to talk about shadow shark, or over here, to talk about releases, and have much more of an unstructured opportunity for conversation.

Then, after we've done that for about forty minutes, a council member will give a brief presentation, and sort of wrap up the evening, thank attendees, recap the goals and objectives, and talk about where the information goes next, and then, as attendees are leaving, I think one of the things we're going to ask them to do is to sort of rate where the meeting was on their expectations level, and I mean, just like a quick, you know, it met expectations, didn't meet expectations, and they can just quickly put a dot up somewhere, as they walk out of the room, so we have some sort of metric for how attendees felt the night went.

Then, finally, after the meetings are over, we'll send a thank-you email to all of the attendees, and it will include a bullet point list of some of the things learned and information on upcoming opportunities to participate in the council process.

We'll have a debrief with council members who attended the meetings, to discuss what went well, what didn't go well, and sort of what was learned, and then staff will prepare a summary report for the meeting, that will be available on sort of a dedicated webpage for this effort, and we'll post photos of the evening on social media, do sort of our usual outreach stuff.

At the next council meeting that follows these stakeholder engagement meetings, council members that were present will be asked to sort of take a moment, at the start of the meeting, to note their biggest takeaways and things they learned from the most recent round of engagement meetings. It's felt that it's more important that it come from council members, about what you all learned at these meetings, as opposed to just a summary presentation from staff.

Then, as there's more detailed information that came out of the meeting, that's relevant for a specific committee, or topic, that can be dove into before that specific topic, and so, again, comments on the structure, from the Outreach and Communications Advisory Panel, they really recommended, since the purpose of this is to have those informal conversations, to step a bit more away from the structured breakout groups, which is why you've seen that change in structure from the last time this was presented to you, to do what we're sort of calling an unstructured structured sandwich, where we do something like the sticky wall, that's a little bit more unstructured, and then have a more focused conversation on a topic and then do the more unstructured tabling session.

They also felt like it was important that the council member and staff debrief occur sort of as soon as possible. If not after the meeting, then maybe the morning after, to make sure that information and what was learned is recorded, before it sort of gets forgotten, or all blurs together in a week of meetings.

The Snapper Grouper AP was concerned that people might not be willing to attend a meeting like this. They were fairly honest with their concerns. They recommended an online forum instead, where questions could be asked anonymously. They also noted that the younger generation often would like to receive information in sort of these shorter snippets, and so, really, they recommended that, if we were going to move forward with this effort, that any information that was provided was clear, concise, short, and then they encouraged council members to be prepared to ask discussion questions, and sort of facilitate and pull discussion out of people, and they were concerned that people might not be comfortable speaking up in breakout groups.

Then, finally, a real need to not sugarcoat what was coming in the future, and that they wanted information provided with honesty, even if it wasn't what they were hoping to hear, and then they did talk about whether there should be an opportunity for a virtual or webinar participation, as a replacement for these meetings, if people were unable to attend.

In talking to the council planning team about all of this, they felt like the structure was good, but facilitation will need to be planned in a way that prepares for both very low attendance and very high attendance, especially given that small breakout groups are better than larger breakout groups. They felt that it would be helpful, for that first session, to make sure that introductory presentation,

the sticky wall, that all three council members are up at the front of the room, so they're sort of showing a united front. It also allows you all to get sort of comfortable in the meeting environment.

Then, ultimately, it felt like there was no reason to hold a separate webinar. Conducting a webinar, sort of doesn't meet the goals and objectives of having those in-person face-to-face informal conversations. However, the consideration could be made just to have the fireside chat. I know that's a bit of a dated reference now, but sort of a question-and-answer session during the council meetings in the states where a stakeholder engagement meeting wasn't held that year, and so, with that huge blast of information, what we're looking for from you all here is some discussion of that meeting structure.

Is this something you're comfortable with? Again, keep in mind that this is very council member forward, and so you guys will be giving the presentations and facilitating the discussion. Staff will be there to support, but we want to make sure that what has sort of been outlined here is something that you all are comfortable participating in.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Madam chair. Thank you for that. This is -- It's pretty exciting thing, I think. What I really wanted to touch on, or talk a little bit about, was the importance of that sticky wall. That is super, super good. People loved that at the visioning. I think it was very well received, and it was super easy, and it just gave you that visual impact of everything up on a wall and how many different things there were, when they're just all stuck up there on a sticky note, and so I really hope that we can exploit that, and really use that, because I really think that's where a lot of good ideas came from, and it was easy to see all these ideas, and it was -- You know, they were all there in front of you, and it was informal.

I think that's the other key to this, is to keep it very informal and loose, and, having said that, I don't think that there's any place for any kind of webinar participation at all in it, because that -- That takes away from that. That's just not what we're trying to do. It's got to be in-person, and, to facilitate that happening, I think it's very important, since the council members are going to be so involved, that every council member reaches out to their network before the -- You know, while these things are being set up, you know, and, I mean, probably nobody -- Not many people know more of the fishermen in their area than say Tom does in his area.

So, you know, for each council member, they've got to reach out to their network and make -- Get some excitement going about this thing, and build it up, and I think, once people attend, and they see -- They see that sticky wall, and then they continue to see that those sticky notes that were up there are still being talked about in two years, or a year later, that it did mean something, that those ideas are still there, and alive, and so I keep coming back to that sticky wall.

You know, that vision statement, those visioning ideas, stayed with a lot of people. Even though they didn't come to fruition, they stayed with them, and so, you know, making them come to fruition is the next part. Thank you.

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

MR. HULL: Thank you, and he stole my thunder. The sticky wall is pretty much where the rubber meets the road here, and fishermen -- They generally won't speak up, most of the ones I know. They talk to themselves a lot, but they won't speak up in public, and so they will do the sticky wall, and write something down, and that's going to get us in the direction of the conversations we need. Also, the breakout tables, I think, is a really good idea.

I know, at the port meeting in Cocoa, there was a lot of other, you know, individuals that had specific items of concern, that you would say, okay, well, I'll get with you after we get done with this main discussion, and so all of those are great things. I think you've thought this out very well. I'm excited.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jimmy. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I guess I'm dated, because I remember fireside chats. I remember them well, and, and I think they did a lot to let the fishermen, and the stakeholders, know that we at the council are accessible. Andy is accessible. It was a laidback atmosphere, when we had them, and they didn't take long, but, if something like that could be incorporated again, it -- I think it could help with just the relationship between the stakeholders and the council, because, again, we get beat up a lot, and I don't think they understand why we have to do some things we have to do, and/or the timing.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Charlie. Do I have anyone else that would like to comment on this so far? If there's no one -- Okay. Go ahead, Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you. Just one follow-up. From the APs, some of their advice of, you know, not feeling like fishermen are going to attend these. I mean, you know, you hear that a lot from fishermen, like I'm not going to bother wasting my time to go to this meeting, because what am I going to get, and what's going to happen, and what am I going to get out of it, and you hear that all the time, and so I don't know how we -- Except for having success for the fishermen, to feel like it was successful for them, and that's where --

I don't know if you did post surveys of satisfaction from the mackerel meetings yet or not, or got results, but that will be really interesting, to see, you know, if they feel like their questions -- If they learned something from it, and, you know, it furthered their knowledge of, you know, interest in fisheries and their futures.

MS. WIEGAND: I will say that sort of an exit survey, if you will, we did not do for mackerel port meetings, though I very much wish we had. I will say, sort of anecdotally, I received a number of emails from fishermen saying thank you for coming out, wanting to double-check that I had their contact information, so they could continue to stay involved, and so I would say, overall, it was positive, but definitely I think incorporating that exit survey into stakeholder engagement meetings is going to be important.

MR. HULL: So, continuing the conversation on that, I know, from the meetings I attended, I did get email correspondence from some fishermen who I met, and didn't know, and we had, you know, conversations by email after the meeting, and so that was important, too. It was good.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Jimmy, thank you for bringing that up. That was one of the comments from the APs that I scratched my head at a little bit, right, I mean, particularly given my experience with mackerel port meetings and I would say like one of the things with the mackerel port meetings that was interesting is, you know, it's not like we -- It was mackerel, but it's not like we had a topic, right, and it wasn't like some hot issue of the day.

It's just the fishery, and so, I guess, I guess on that note, I would point out that we also had a huge demographic. Like we had all ages at these meetings. We had kids who were like, you know, high school kids, all the way up to some of, you know, people in their eighties, and so I think like it was really attractive, and we heard a lot of -- Really attractive to all fishermen, I would say, and we heard a lot of different comments from other people, and so I guess my point is like I hope they're well attended, but, given my experience, I believe they would be, as long as we get the word out to our communities.

MS. WIEGAND: I will say we did ask this. There were a number of Snapper Grouper AP members who attended mackerel port meetings, and so, when this discussion was going on, we sort of asked them, straight up, you know, we got great attendance at mackerel port meetings, and we had fifty people at the Moorhead City meeting, and what was it that drove people to those meetings, and we were talking about this in an outreach context.

My understanding, from talking to those AP members that attended mackerel port meetings, was that they did, you know, receive the email blasts. They got the postcards we sent. They heard from North Carolina DMF staff about these meetings, but sort of the vague nature of what was to be discussed, just the mackerel fisheries, made them very concerned that management regulations were coming, and so they wanted to come and make their voices heard on that, and so that's ultimately what drove people there. How we sort of harness that, for these meetings, I'm not quite sure, but, according to them, that's what drove attendance at those really well-attended mackerel port meetings.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, and I'm glad Jimmy touched on that, you know, the success. You know, people don't want to get involved, because they think it doesn't matter, and so I think it's really important that we drive home, you know, with that sticky wall, whether it's on a sticky wall beside the sticky wall, but success stories.

We've got to -- We've got to hammer home that your participation does make a difference, a big difference, you know, and one of the ones that just keeps -- That I always come back to, and it was something that kind of caught me by surprise, and it wasn't -- It was kind of a, you know, a federal-state thing, but, you know, not too long ago, we had an issue with Spanish mackerel, where Spanish mackerel, because of the way we split it up, you know, in the north and the south, and the north was getting shut down, commercially, at a very important time of year, with Spanish mackerel everywhere, but, because guys got involved, and really jumped up, and, you know, got involved, and had some good ideas, you know, a combination of some, you know, Trish's group, and some states getting together, you know, coming up with a solution, they were able to reopen the fishery.

That would have never happened if guys hadn't jumped up, if guys had not gotten involved, and they would have just gone by the wayside, and so there are success stories out there. They seem like they're hard to find sometimes, and they're not always in the species that we want them to be in, but we do need to highlight the success stories, as best we can. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Tim. Anyone else? So can I make a -- Can I give you a couple of comments? I just wanted to be last. So I just kind of go -- It reflects -- I mean, I looked at this, and it, my thoughts kind of reflect the outreach and communication folks, and, you know, they talked about, you know, maybe an icebreaker, to get people comfortable, you know, make them feel safe, and so what I was going to suggest, and you guys do what you think is best, but I wonder if it might be good to do the topical discussion before the sticky-wall discussion, because then you've broken them out into three groups.

People are getting a little comfortable with each other, and, you know, you've got that icebreaker, and they're getting comfortable with each other. They probably have a friend with them, or they'll meet somebody, but, you know, and then maybe go to the sticky walls, because the thing that I noticed, at least at the mackerel meetings we went to, the sticky walls weren't very popular, and I felt like people were afraid to be seen to walk up to write something.

That's why I was wondering if it might be good to switch it, and then they're in their groups to the sticky walls, and maybe there's just -- Maybe that would improve the comfort level, and that's just a thought, but, just kind of looking at what the outreach guys said, the folks said, and so, anyway, just my two-cents' worth to consider. I've got Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair. I actually really liked that idea, because I was sitting here trying to figure out this process. Well, first and foremost, your enthusiasm and excitement for this is just absolutely contagious, and I cannot wait to do this with you, but I was curious if the planning team has sort of done almost like a mock trial of what this is really going to feel like, and look like, because that might give some of this direction for what Trish was suggesting, which I tend to kind of agree.

Since the topical discussions are preselected topics, I think it might be kind of nice to sort of have that as a baseline of some of the conversations that will sort of lead into the sticky wall, because I was sitting here trying to figure out how the sticky wall is then going to lead to the more informal sessions, and tying those two events together, because I would hope that information that comes to us on the sticky wall are then things that we can have more informal conversations about during that latter session.

Then I'm also then going, oh, gosh, is that enough time to sort of gather those thoughts, if you flip those, but I don't know, and my mind is in loops right now, but I think that all of this is just wonderful, and maybe doing some of those little internal mock trials, and really kind of hitting it with hard topics, and seeing how we can adjust really quickly, would be helpful.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Amy. I think that's a good idea, too. Anybody else have any suggestions, or is everybody good with moving forward? I think we have another discussion point to make that will --

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, and so we've got a couple more discussion points, but here's one of the big ones, and Amy teed me up nicely for it, and so timing for the 2025 meetings in North Carolina and Georgia, and there are a couple of different options for this. We had originally planned to hold meetings in North Carolina and Georgia prior to the March 2025 meeting.

There are some positives to continuing with that option. Those meetings would occur when fishing activity is generally lower. That's not universally true for all fisheries, but it's generally lower, and it would provide you all with stakeholder input to start off your year.

There are also some negatives. The first round of meetings will require a lot more time to plan than subsequent meetings, since this is our first time going through this, and I will say the turnaround after the holidays is always tough, and I think staff would like a bit more time to keep planning things, to do things like mock trials that Amy was just talking about.

Additionally, the January and February calendar has gotten pretty full with other council priorities. You've got Attachment 4 in your Full Council II briefing book. It's looking like it would be incredibly challenging to block out two full weeks to do these meetings, especially given that these are staff intensive. We're sending five staff members to this, and so, when we're doing these, we are not doing other things, and you do have a lot of other priorities on your sort of winter quarter agenda.

Other things to consider are information gathered during these is not necessarily time sensitive, and it's sort of unknown when public hearings for the secretarial amendment will occur, but, if they overlap with this effort, that could cause some confusion, or challenges, and just another thing to consider.

Alternative options are we could try to hold these meetings after the March 2025 meeting, but prior to the June 2025 meeting, in that spring quarter. A positive is that it provides more time for us to plan, and it would allow the focus to sort of be on, you know, other priorities prior to March. However, you're likely to see fishing activity starting to increase during this time. It's also -- Spring is always a very busy quarter for council staff. We have a number of APs that meet in the spring, as well as the SEP and SSC.

Option 3, we could hold the meetings in November, prior to the December 2025 council meeting. This would then have them occurring at a time when fishing effort is slowing. Again, generally, and that's not universally true, and it provides significant more time for staff to plan. However, it does then delay implementation of this until that sort of fall quarter.

Another thing to consider is sort of consistency in when we're holding these meetings. We would like to hold them at the same time every year, and so would the plan be then to sort of hold North Carolina and Georgia in that fall quarter, before the December council meeting, before the holidays, and then immediately turn around and do South Carolina and Florida in the winter quarter, and so sometime between January and March of 2026, or just have fall, late fall, be the time we hold these, and so lot of things to consider, but we're looking for sort of a decision from the council on if you want us to move forward, to try to put these into January and March, or if you would like to consider other options.

MS. MURPHEY: I've got Carolyn.



DR. BELCHER: So the first question I have is announcing, and so like Federal Register, or how is this -- How are these being announced, and what's the time window of announcement? Like how are you setting dates? How far in advance?

MS. WIEGAND: So we'll get to sort of the broader outreach section in a little bit, but these would have to be noticed in the Federal Register, which is twenty-eight days out, and so we're sort of starting to look at locations and dates now, but, again, the calendar is making that increasingly challenging, and so I would say, for picking venues and dates, I mean, a couple months leadup is preferred.

DR. BELCHER: So then, just speaking to the options for Georgia, I can say the first option is probably not at least good for us this year. We have a couple of things that are brewing. They're not part of our legislative session, per se, but they're hot-button topics that are being kind of lobbied through, and so I don't know, with us being in a legislative session starting January 1, and going to March, if there's chances that you -- Not necessarily myself, but potentially we could get called into action, to have them jump out, go to Atlanta, do whatever.

I know Doug likes to be involved in these, considering he really is the council member, and I'm just the proxy. He doesn't like to be out of touch with it, especially when we're getting feedback from stakeholders. He really does like to hear from people, what their concerns are, and so I would push away from the early part of 2025. Whether you do it before the June meeting or you push it to the end of the year, I think that's just a timing thing for you all, but that really does help us, because it kind of takes us off of that potential needing to jump for legislative stuff.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Thank you, Carolyn. I had Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I share some of the concerns about having it early in 2025, like based on the secretarial amendment workshops, plus everything else that's already scheduled in early 2025, and so I share those concerns. I don't know that I have a preference for when later in the year. I mean, November sounds good too, but I would look forward to hearing from others about when in 2025 to do those meetings. I don't think it would be bad if you did the two states in say November of 2025 and then the decision was made to do the other two states in early 2026. I think that's okay, too. I don't think that there needs to be some type of a three or six-month separation between when those additional ones are held.

MS. MURPHEY: Does anybody have else have any comments on timing? Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks for those comments, and I'm -- I was struggling with, and I know I'm not first on the list, and so we'll be the 2026, but I did appreciate the intent for a consistent timeline every year, moving forward, and I think, after hearing Carolyn and Jessica -- I mean, I'm down for having it be a little not consistent, maybe the first and second year, and then really working to get on that consistent track.

For me, looking at the council's schedule, the first quarter sounds good, and then you think about our state general assembly schedule, and they do overlap, but I would be okay with those, kind of doing it at the end of the year for North Carolina and Georgia and then turning around and doing

it in the early part of 2026, as long as staff can do that, and then maybe try and stay on that schedule, moving forward.

MS. MURPHEY: Kerry, have you got anything?

MS. MARHEFKA: I just agree with them, and I think there's some utility in having them -- The different states closer together, because there's some level of momentum, and fishermen, like fish, do communicate across state lines, and so, you know, if people go to the meetings, and, you know, North Carolina, or Georgia, and I forget. Sorry, but you know what I'm saying. People go to one set of meetings, and they have an experience, and they're talking to their buddies about it, and so I like the idea of fall and winter.

MS. MURPHEY: So am I hearing Option 3, for the most part? It's just to ask for staff workloads.

MS. WIEGAND: So I think that could work for staff. I will say we'll have to -- Again, in that fall quarter, we also have AP meetings, and SSC meetings, and so there will always be meetings to try to work around, but, with these, because they're not time sensitive, we can hold them sort of --

They can abut the council meeting a bit closer, and we can be a bit more flexible, especially since some of the briefing book material will just be your oral experiences, at the beginning, and so I think that's possible. This also then, going into the new year, gives you information from the full coast, and not just a small chunk of coast, and, as Julia just brought up, that also then gives us the opportunity to do some mock trials of this with APs, and so, when looking at AP agenda items in March for the spring, be prepared to see some stakeholder engagement meeting practice trials.

MS. MURPHEY: I had Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you. Well, and I keep going back to the visioning meetings. You know, I think, to me, spring and fall, you know, and, if you could do them starting this spring, that's even better, regardless of anything else going on, but I also wanted to bring up that one of the things that I think worked really well last time was lumping North Carolina and South Carolina together, back-to-back.

We had one of the meetings was in Salote, which is almost on the South Carolina line, and, in that area of southern Brunswick County, that area of North Carolina, North Carolina and South Carolina fishing is interchangeable. It's all the same inlet, and so you get so much crossover in the federal fisheries, especially in the charter guys that are -- Their clients are coming from the North Carolina beaches, as well as Myrtle Beach, the South Carolina beaches, and there is no distinction between where their customers are coming from.

So, you know, I just think it's -- It might be worth thinking about. If we're going to hold a meeting down there, then, you know, South Carolina needs to be involved in that meeting, and it needs to be advertised to South Carolina too as well, and so, you know, I don't know that lumping North Carolina and Georgia is the way to go.

MS. WIEGAND: So I can sort of provide some context to why that decision was originally made. The thought had been, back when we were going to do these only in sort of the January /February timeframe, two states a year, the thought was that, if we lumped North Carolina and Georgia

together, we would then still get some information from South Carolina fishermen who might attend a North Carolina meeting, and Florida fishermen who might attend a Georgia meeting, and so we would have some sense of the whole coast, even only holding them in those two states in a given year.

If the intent to move forward is to do them now just two in the fall quarter, and two in the winter quarter, I don't think it's necessarily as important to group the states together the way we have now, and we could consider doing North Carolina and South Carolina together, and Georgia and Florida together. That's something I think we would need to discuss further, but your sort of point is well taken. There's a lot of overlap between -- We would expect to see some South Carolina fishermen at North Carolina, and vice versa, and the same with Georgia and Florida.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you. I've got Carolyn, and then Jimmy.

DR. BELCHER: I kind of like the idea of the split states, with the reason being is, if you're doing them six months apart, something could be going on with the north-south in the fishery, that you would not necessarily -- You might skip it, right, and so you get here in the northern area, and something has happened to the south, or vice versa, and so, if you're only focusing one way, you might not hear something that pops up in that time window, and so, at least, if you're kind of overlapped north to south, you might be able to at least pick up a signal, as you're doing it, but that's just my thought.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Carolyn. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you. Don't laugh, but have you ever thought about the idea of having this during -- In conjunction with a council meeting? I mean, somehow, and have you thought about it? It may be something that's impossible, but you have all your resources available. It's just a thought that I had. I didn't know if you had thought about that.

MS. WIEGAND: So it's not something that we've talked about, and so I'm speaking from my personal experience and not speaking for all of the other staff members who have worked on this. I think that would be a lot. I will say the week-long trips we took for port meetings -- I was pretty exhausted, by the end of it, I and feel like it might be tough to then turn around and do a whole council meeting after that, and that also then puts prep for those two things for staff back-to-back, and so I'm not saying it's impossible. I'm saying, if we were to do something like that, we might need to consider the number of meetings we're doing. I think a full week, followed by another full week, might be challenging, but, again, that's just me speaking. I haven't talked to everyone else.

MS. MURPHEY: I think I'm seeing heads shaking no around, but I appreciate your idea, though. Thank you, Jimmy. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I think we -- You know, to Jimmy's point, I think we've discussed that a little bit in the meeting too as well, and the whole, I think, comment of like just work-life balance was brought up, which is important, because, you know, we were all pretty tired at these meetings, but it is a good point. I think I had brought up like, you know, if we weren't covering one state, we could always do the fireside chat, during a council meeting, right, and I think that was one of the alternative perspectives.

I want to go back to Tim's comment, and Carolyn's comment, regarding like the split the states, and, you know, Tim brought up a really good point, but I'm going to come at it from a different way, right, and like, if we split the states north to south, and there is overlap in North Carolina and South Carolina, and we do them the next year, that provides another opportunity for those overlapping fishermen to participate further, right, and so I think that actually could increase participation.

Does that make sense, what I'm saying? Like, because, if you're doing North Carolina in 2025, and then you're doing South Carolina in 2026, right, like that's going to give more stakeholder participation potential, if you're doing them separately at different years, at least for us for getting feedback from people.

MS. MURPHEY: I think that's a good point, too. So, at this point, I'm picking up that we're selecting -- We're suggesting Option 3. Okay. I don't think we need a motion or anything. We're just -- Everybody's in agreement, consistence. Okay.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Then the next thing I wanted to talk about, and we don't have to talk --

MS. MARHEFKA: Real quick, please, just as early as possible, and I think it's going to be really important to get those dates on the calendar, because, if you're wanting all three council members to be there, they need to be locked in far ahead of time, and so just that point.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so the next thing I want to talk about is sort of topics for the 2025 meetings. It seems like we're going to have a bit more time to plan now, but I do still want to go over these, so you can see what we're thinking about for these meetings.

The first topic, and this would be the topic that we would use for that more structured conversation, when we have people in breakout groups, and have specific questions to ask them, would be fishing trip satisfaction, and sort of one of the perks of this topic is that it's something that can be talked about for all fisheries, as well as commercial and recreational fisheries.

Keep in mind that we're likely to have a very mixed group of fishermen at these, and so it's important that we're not talking about something that's only relevant to mackerel fishermen, or only relevant to, you know, recreational snapper grouper fishermen. The topics need to be something that everyone participating in the South Atlantic fishery can talk about, and so fishing trip satisfaction, talking to them, you know, about the variables that drive satisfaction.

Is it, you know, catch rates, the size of fish, diversity of catch, and a lot of that can change with trip motivation, the time of year, the desired species, things like that, and so we would ask meeting attendees to talk about what makes a successful fishing trip, tradeoffs between those different variables, and then the thought would also be that we could structure discussion questions in a way that might provide information helpful for management of all fisheries, but also helpful for information for the next steps of the snapper grouper MSE, and this would directly address Objective 1, which is, again, providing that opportunity for open dialogue and learning between council members and stakeholders.

The next few topics are topics that we would have for that informal tabling session. There would be sort of stations set up around the room. Fishermen can move freely between them to talk about these different topics. The first one is fisheries management 101. I think this is likely to be something that's at multiple iterations of these port meetings. It addresses the Snapper Grouper AP's concern that there needs to be more education on the fisheries management process, because it is so complex and time consuming to understand.

We could cover, you know, general information on the council, in the form of a looping slideshow. This is something that Nick Smilie has already developed for us for use in outreach, as well as, you know, ways to get involved in the process, public comment, advisory panels, information on MREP as well, and, again, this addresses Objective 2, increasing knowledge of the fishery management process.

Next, we've got the citizen science program could be an area where people can come to talk about directly addressing, you know, increasing knowledge of the management process and opportunities to get involved. The success of the citizen science program, of course, relies on fishermen participating in the program. This is something that we already have a lot of materials for to help reach fishermen.

I'll also note that I think, after lunch, you're going to be getting a presentation, during the Citizen Science Committee, from Jennifer Sweeney-Tookes, on work that her and her colleagues have done related to participation in citizen science, and I think, based on those results, citizen science is very a clear candidate for inclusion in the stakeholder engagement meetings process.

Finally, the last sort of informal topic would be releases. I'm pretty sure I don't have to get into the details on why the number of released fish is an important topic for discussion, but this table could then provide information on best fishing practices, which, of course, again, we already have a lot of outreach material on, but also would give an opportunity for staff, and council members, to talk about how releases are estimated, in layman's terms, and how it affects catch levels, something that I think a lot of fishery stakeholders are interested in talking about and discussing. They could also then provide information on what their goals are for a given trip, where they're releasing fish, and how this sort of changes by area, and, again, that would address Objective 4, providing council members an opportunity to share information on salient management issues.

Finally, sort of a miscellaneous section of place where, you know, a council member, and a staffer, could be ready to talk to attendees that are saying, hey, the topic I came to discuss wasn't explicitly addressed at this meeting, and I want to make sure I can bring it up, an opportunity for them to bring their concerns and observations forward, addressing Objective 3, and we added that miscellaneous topic based on input from the council planning team, and then, again, they sort of noted that the informal topic for releases would really help us understand fishing effort and experience by area, since this is something we talk about sort of up and down the coast.

So, with that, those are the topics that have been selected for the 2025 meeting. We did send those to sort of the North Carolina and Georgia council members in advance, but we wanted to make sure the whole group was comfortable with those being the discussion topics.

MS. MURPHEY: Anybody have -- Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I agree with the miscellaneous, because there's a lot of times -- I know, even with our board meeting, they stick to the agenda items, and you'll get people who want to come and talk, and they're immediately shut down at the mic, because, I'm sorry, that's not the topic on the agenda, and that really frustrates people, and it sends them back with a bad taste, and so I do think a miscellaneous is a good thing to have available at every one.

I personally would like to lean towards the releases, because the releases right now seems to be our biggest elephant in the room, with what we're grappling with. I mean, we can talk regulations all day, but, as long as there's the discard tax on the front end, I think it would be helpful to be able to talk to them about why it's taken off the top, how things go, and think, just in general, what's going on with releases, and get feedback from them on that.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other input on these subjects? Go ahead, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I've been largely listening, but I appreciate the comments that was just made by Carolyn. I guess I would reframe it though, right, because you refer to it as a tax, right, kind of taken off the top, and how can we reduce discards, right, and what are things we can do to make this fishery more efficient, to increase productivity, fishing opportunities, landings, et cetera, right, and so reframe it in the standpoint of why it's a problem, why it's a challenge, how it affects fishing trips, but then, more importantly, it's kind of the issue of the day, and so what can we do about it, and how can we make improvements, going forward? Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. Anyone else? Okay. Amy.

MS. DUKES: So thank you, Madam Chair, and, Carolyn and Andy, I guess I would say, to take what you guys said, to me, it sounds like it needs to be more of a topical discussion, rather than an informal session, maybe. I know you won't necessarily get as much feedback, but I think reframing it that way, and then allowing for some exchange of information, may be more appropriate than an informal session, so you're capturing the entire audience, if we feel like that is one of those strong topics, and I too also agree with the miscellaneous. I think that will allow you to get those sticky notes and bring those and make it relevant back to the people that showed up and what they want to talk about.

MS. MURPHEY: Anybody else? I was just thinking of Kerry's comment yesterday about applications, and that would put them out there for fisheries management 101, and, actually, there's an opportunity there to stress the importance for them to engage, and be on these APs, and follow us more, and so just to kind of make sure that Kerry's idea was not lost. What I was hearing was maybe making releases a formal session. Is that doable for you?

MS. WIEGAND: I think that's doable, and then we would be interested in sort of taking that trip satisfaction and making that more of an informal topic. Is that what I'm hearing?

MS. MURPHEY: Is that okay with everyone? I'm seeing head shaking. All right. I think you have everything you need?

MS. WIEGAND: We're almost there.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and the last few things I just wanted to quickly breeze through is talk to you about the outreach we're planning for these. We'll have a council website, that's got background information, goals and objectives, meeting dates and locations, and summaries. If you've seen our port meetings, or BFP MVP, webpages, these would be similar.

We'll do our usual council release materials, flyers, news releases, featured articles, social media posts. We're also going to focus pretty heavily on community outreach, working with, you know, advisory panel members, people that have participated in the BFP MVP program, Release participants, asking industry groups to get the information out, mailing, and media outlets, as well as focusing on media outlets that have been willing to publish information on our citizen science and best fishing practices program. We've made a pretty big effort to get information on those two programs into, you know, magazines, online journals, things like that and sort of focusing on people that we've already had a positive working relationship with.

I'll go over just the, you know, AP input briefly. One of the things the Outreach and Communications Advisory Panel really harped on is something that Tim mentioned earlier, is really marketing these as an opportunity to talk to council members. It's not staff that they'll be talking to. They'll have an opportunity to talk directly to council members, and having council members really push the outreach, to identify who you want at these meetings and to make sure council members are reaching out, getting the word out, and encouraging people to attend.

They also noted that using social media will be important, collaborating with fishing influencers. This is similar to what the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel talked about, letting fishing influencers be the voice encouraging participation, even partnering with tackle shop manufacturers, and other such fishing groups, and then they did note that the venue is going to be extremely important. The more informal, the better.

This is also something we tried with mackerel port meetings, sort of avoiding the hotel ballroom environment, and going to places like tackle shops, community centers, that might be a more informal comfortable environment, fitting for the goals of these meetings, and so we did sort of note both APs really focused on the need for social media to help get the word out, and so we did ask the council planning team if they were comfortable personally reaching out to constituents and, you know, sort of being a face on social media, and it seemed like there were positive responses, and so there will probably be some discussion about how we can utilize social media to promote these meetings, and so that's the outreach we have planned.

Then I'll quickly talk about evaluation of these. We've alluded to this a little bit, in talking about the structure, and building and maintaining relationships is a long-term goal, and we want to keep track of how successful these meetings are, and so staff has proposed doing a couple of things, like preparing an internal survey.

Of course, with PRA restrictions, we can't do sort of an in-depth survey, but what we can do is sort of, as staff and council members that were at these meetings, take a survey that we just do internally about how we felt the meeting went, and how well they were meeting the different, you know, goals and objectives that we identified earlier.

We'll ask attendees about whether the meeting met their expectations at the end of each meeting. We will note key issues that were identified, and do our best, as staff, to sort of keep track of where they go from there, where they added to the workplan, an amendment was initiated, things like that, so that, at future meetings, we can then say that we heard this back in 2025, and this is what happened with that input.

Then, finally, general metrics, like overall attendance, returning attendees, attendees that are asking for more information, or applying to advisory panels, participating in public comment, et cetera, because of these stakeholder engagement workshops, and so there's one more thing I want to talk about after this, but I just want to pause, real fast, and make sure there aren't any comments on sort of outreach and evaluation.

MS. MURPHEY: Anybody have any thoughts on their outreach plan, and also the evaluation? I think the evaluation is going to be a great idea, and so all right.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. One very last thing that both the Snapper Grouper AP and the Outreach and Communications AP and staff all agree is stakeholder engagement meetings is a boring name. Fishermen are not going to want to attend something that's called a stakeholder engagement meeting. It's dull, nor does it really reflect the overall goal of this meeting, and, if you know anything about council staff, we love a competition, and so we've been brainstorming names, and voting, to try to identify something a bit more catchy to call this engagement effort.

We've come up with two, Conversations with the Council and Fishermen Roundtables. I will say there was also a dark horse entry recently for Lines of Communication, and so this is what we have come up with. Since we would like to start marketing these sooner, as opposed to later, we're looking for either selection of one of these names, or a new one that's proposed by council members, but we need something other than stakeholder engagement meetings.

MS. MURPHEY: Anybody got any suggestions? Go ahead, Tim.

MR. GRINER: I like the fact that you mentioned the council in the first one. I think having the word "council" in there is important, because that is part of the problem, in their minds, is the council. You know, it's -- There is no distinction between the service and this council. It's all the same. It's the council, and so I like having the "council" in there, but, at the same time, I like the idea of having "fishermen" in there, right, because this is about the fishermen, and the word "roundtable" just -- You know, you kind of -- That says it all, right, a fishermen's roundtable.

So, you know, I don't know. It's kind of torn. They're both really good, but I will say that I like having the word "council" and I like having the word "fishermen", and whether you can do something to combine the two, I don't know, but I do like the first two.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. I've got Tom.

MR. ROLLER: So Tim took my first thought, because this is branding, right, and we've got to have fishermen understand what it means, and, you know, when we just call it a stakeholder engagement meeting, or even fishermen roundtables, I'm not sure it captures what we're trying to accomplish here, which is to facilitate conversations with the decision-makers, who is the council,



and so I think it is important that we capture that. I don't know how we do that. I don't know if it needs to be the title, but I'm leaning towards yes.

MS. MURPHEY: I had Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. To Tim's point, I think I like Conversations with the Council, because that implies a two-way street. A roundtable might just be perceived as gathering information, which we are, but I still think it's important that it's perceived more as a two-way street, and I would prefer, you know, from what I see right here, Council Conversations.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Charlie. Anyone else? Can I throw my idea?

MS. WIEGAND: Absolutely.

MS. MURPHEY: It's -- I was just thinking about Council Convos, and so that was just one I was throwing out it, just thinking on it, is Council Convos.

MS. WIEGAND: That's all from me.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, and so you guys will play with the names. Okay. All right. We're done?

MS. WIEGAND: That's all I had for stakeholder engagement meetings, or maybe soon to be renamed Conversations with the Council. We'll see, but is there anything else anyone had on this effort?

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Well, thank you, Christina. Are we going to try -- Do we still want to try to do Dolphin Wahoo, or do we have the time?

MS. MARHEFKA: If Cassidy is ready, and can we have like five minutes, just to reset?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and let's have a five -- We're going to take a five-minute break to make changes here.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on December 3, 2024.)

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Certified By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Transcribed By  
Amanda Thomas  
January 21, 2025

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Full Council I  
Mon 12/2

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Full Council I  
Mon 12/2

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Full Council I

Tue 12/3

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Rick DeVictor  
Dr. John Walter  
Sonny Gwin  
John Sanchez

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Representative  
TBD

Full Council I  
Tue 12/3

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL  
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**SEDAR Program Manager**

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Greyson Webb

# SAFMC Dec. 2024 Council Meeting

## Attendee Report: (12/2/24 - 12/6/24)

Report Generated:

12/09/2024 09:45 AM EST

**Webinar ID**

887-478-187

**Actual Start Date/Time**

12/02/2024 10:38 AM EST

## Staff Details

**Attended**

Yes

**Interest Rating**

Not applicable for staff

## Attendee Details

**Last Name**

**First Name**

Alhale

Sydney

Allen

Shanae

Barrows

Katline

Bauer

Tracey

Beal

Bob

Bianchi

Alan

Bogdan

Jennifer

Brouwer

Myra

Bubley

Walter

Bunting

Matthew

Byrd

Julia

Calay

Shannon

Cermak

Bridget

Clinton

Haley

Coffill-Rivera

Manuel

Crosson

Scott

Curtis

Joe

Curtis

Judd

Cvach

Sarah

DeVictor

Rick

Delrosario

Leeanne

Didden

Jason

Dobbs

Jeffrey

Dover

Miles

Dukes

Amy

Finch

Margaret

Fitz-Gerald

Claire

Foor

Brandon



Foss	Kristin
Gamboa-Salazar	Keilin
Glazier	Edward
Guyas	Martha
Hadley	John
Helies	Frank
Helmey	Judy
Hemilright	Dewey
Hiers	Homer
Hollensead	Lisa
Howell	Mary
Howington	Kathleen
Hull	Jimmy
Iberle	Allie
Iverson	Kim
Kalinowsky	Chris
Kellison	Todd
Kimmel	Courtney
Klasnick	01Kelly
Klibansky	Lara
Knowlton	Kathy
Kolmos	Kevin
Lam	Sarah
Lazarre	Dominique
Long	Stephen
M Borland	Gary
MCCLAIR	GENINE
Malinowski	Richard
Marhefka	00Kerry
Markwith	Anne
Masi	Michelle
Mason	Gina
Matter	Vivian
Mehta	Nikhil
Meyers	S
Miller	Andrew
Murphey	Trish
Newman	Thomas
Oliver	Ashley
Ostroff	Jenny
Paskiewicz	James
Patten	Willow
Pelletier	Claire
Phillips	Charlie

Poholek	Ariel
Poland	Stephen
Records	David
Reding	Brandon
Reichert	Marcel
Roller	00Tom
SCHLICK	CJ
Sartwell	Tim
Seward	McLean
Silvas	Rachael
Smarrito	Mike
Smillie	Nick
Soltanoff	Carrie
Spanik	Kevin
Spurgin	Kali
Sramek	Mark
Stancil	Mackenzie
Stephen	Jessica
Stephens	Haley
Sweetman	CJ
Vecchio	Julie
Vincent	Matthew
Waldo	Jennifer
Walia	Matt
Walsh	Mick
Walsh	Jason
Walter	John
Wamer	David
White	Geoff
Williams	Erik
Willis	Michelle
Withers	Meg
Zapf	Daniel
carvalho	avelino
collier	chip
gloeckner	david
griner	tim
I	I
moss	david
thomas	suz
Barile	Peter
Beyea	Taylor
Cox	Jack
Cross	Tiffanie

Gahm  
Garber  
Griner  
Harker  
Hordyk  
Lee  
Mathews  
Miller  
O'Malley  
Sedberry  
Solinger  
Stam  
Vital  
Waldrep  
Warren  
Willingham  
Yandle  
sandorf

Meghan  
Chip  
00Tim  
John  
Adrian  
Max  
Joe  
Shana  
Rachel  
George  
Laura  
Geoff  
Victoria  
Megan  
Camilla  
Darrin  
Tracy  
scott

# SAFMC Dec. 2024 Council Meeting

## Attendee Report: (12/2/24 - 12/6/24)

Report Generated:

12/09/2024 09:40 AM EST

**Webinar ID**

887-478-187

**Actual Start Date/Time**

12/03/2024 07:31 AM EST

## Staff Details

**Attended**

Yes

**Interest Rating**

Not applicable for staff

## Attendee Details

**Last Name**

**First Name**

Allen

Shanae

Atkinson

Seth

Baker

Scott

Barile

Peter

Barrows

Katline

Beal

Bob

Bianchi

Alan

Bogdan

Jennifer

Bonney

Rick

Brennan

Ken

Brouwer

Myra

Bubley

Walter

Bunting

Matthew

Byrd

Julia

Calay

Shannon

Cermak

Bridget

Clinton

Haley

Coffill-Rivera

Manuel

Curtis

Judd

DeVictor

Rick

Dover

Miles

Dukes

Amy

Dyar

Ben

Feller

Skip

Finch

Margaret

Floyd

Brad

Foor

Brandon

Foss

Kristin

Garber	Chip
Gentner	BRAD
Glazier	Edward
Gore	Karla
Green	Matthew
Guyas	Martha
Hadley	John
Helmey	Judy
Hemilright	Dewey
Hiers	Homer
Howington	Kathleen
Hull	Jimmy
Iberle	Allie
Iverson	Kim
Kalinowsky	Chris
Keppler	Blaik
Kimmel	Courtney
Klasnick	01Kelly
Klibansky	Lara
Knowlton	Kathy
Kolmos	Kevin
Lazarre	Dominique
Lee	Jennifer
Lee	Max
Lenox	Scott
Leone	Melissa
Long	Stephen
M Borland	Gary
MCCLAIR	GENINE
Marhefka	00Kerry
Markwith	Anne
Martin	Rob
Mason	Gina
McWaters	Mark
Meehan	Sean
Mehta	Nikhil
Meyers	S
Miller	Andrew
Miller	Shana
Murphey	Trish
Newman	Thomas
O'Malley	Rachel
Oliver	Ashley
Ott	Emily

Package-Ward	Christina
Paskiewicz	James
Patten	Willow
Perkinson	Matt
Peterson	Cassidy
Phillips	Charlie
Poholek	Ariel
Poland	Stephen
Reichert	Marcel
Roller	00Tom
Runde	Brendan
SCHLICK	CJ
Salmon	Brandi
Seward	McLean
Shipman	Thomas
Silvas	Rachael
Sinkus	Wiley
Smarrito	Mike
Smillie	Nick
Spottswood	Robert
Spurgin	Kali
Sramek	Mark
Stemle	Adam
Stephen	Jessica
Stephens	Haley
Stephens	Haley
Sweetman	CJ
Vecchio	Julie
Vincent	Matthew
Waldo	Jennifer
Walia	Matt
Walsh	Mick
Walsh	Jason
Walter	John
Wamer	David
Weaver	ALWTRT -- Sierra
White	Geoff
Willis	Michelle
Withers	Meg
Yandle	Tracy
Zapf	Daniel
collier	chip
gloeckner	david
griner	tim

I	I
sandorf	scott
thomas	suz
Alhale	Sydney
Bauer	Tracey
Beyea	Taylor
Cox	Jack
Cross	Tiffanie
Crosson	Scott
Curtis	Joe
Cvach	Sarah
Delrosario	Leeanne
Didden	Jason
Dobbs	Jeffrey
Fitz-Gerald	Claire
Franco	Crystal
Gahm	Meghan
Gamboa-Salazar	Keilin
Griner	00Tim
Gwin	earl sonny
Harker	John
Helies	Frank
Hollensead	Lisa
Hordyk	Adrian
Howell	Mary
Kellison	Todd
Lam	Sarah
Malinowski	Richard
Masi	Michelle
Mathews	Joe
Matter	Vivian
Ostroff	Jenny
Pelletier	Claire
Records	David
Reding	Brandon
Sartwell	Tim
Sartwell	Tim
Schlenker	Lela
Sedberry	George
Solinger	Laura
Soltanoff	Carrie
Spanik	Kevin
Stam	Geoff
Stancil	Mackenzie

Vital  
Waldrep  
Warren  
Williams  
Willingham  
carvalho  
moss  
murphy  
zales

Victoria  
Megan  
Camilla  
Erik  
Darrin  
avelino  
david  
allison  
bob



<b>Duration</b>	<b># Registered</b>
9 hours 32 minutes	169

<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>
Council	South Atlantic