

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

COUNCIL SESSION I

**World Gold Renaissance
St. Augustine, Florida**

June 8-9, 2026

Transcript

Council Members

Trish Murphey, Chair
Jessica McCawley, Vice Chair
Robert Beal
Dr. Carolyn Belcher
Amy W. Dukes
Judy Helmey
Dewey Hemilright

James G. Hull, Jr.
Kerry Marhefka
Charlie Phillips
Tom Roller
Andy Strelcheck
Robert Spottswood Jr.

Council Staff

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Myra Brouwer
Dr. Chip Collier
Julia Byrd
Dr. Judd Curtis
John Hadley
Kathleen Howington
Allie Iberle
Kelly Klasnick

Dr. Julie Neer
Ashley Oliver
Emily Ott
Dr. Mike Schmidtke
Nicholas Smillie
Suzanna Thomas
Christina Curtis
Rachael Silvas
Meg Withers

Attendees and Invited Participants

Shepherd Grimes
Dr. John Walter
Sonny Gwinn
Matt Walia

C.J. Sweetman
Rick DeVactor
Dr. Marcel Reichert

Observers and Participants

Other observers and participants attached.

The Council Session I of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the World Golf Renaissance in St. Augustine, Florida on Monday, June 8, 2026, and was called to order by Chairman Trish Murphey.

MS. MURPHEY: All right, everybody. We'll go ahead and get started. It's 1:30, and so good afternoon, everyone. It's great to see everybody. I would like to introduce C.J. Sweetman from the Gulf Council as our liaison, and also Sonny Gwin, who is here from the Mid-Atlantic Council, and I hate to say it, but it's going to be his last meeting, and, well, we're going to miss you, but just to go ahead and just introduce our guys that are here from the Gulf and the Mid-Atlantic.

I'll go ahead and ask for approval of the agenda. Does anybody have any changes to the agenda? Any other business that needs to be brought up? All right. Any objections to the agenda? Okay. Seeing none, the agenda is approved.

Next is our March 2026 meeting minutes. Any significant changes beyond typos or anything that need to be changed? Edits? Okay. Is everybody -- Is there any objection to the minutes? Okay. With no objections, we'll call that approved, and next we'll hear from Shep on a litigation brief, and so I'll turn it over to Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll give you an update on the facts that have occurred to-date. We'll discuss where the case stands procedurally now, and I'm happy to answer clarifying factual questions afterwards, but the case is in active litigation. It's subject to an ongoing injunctive order, and I'm unable to comment outside of these limited bounds. I won't address the case looking forward in time, what we're going to do, and the first thing I'm going to do is describe the case overall, which includes the preliminary injunctive relief aspect, and then I will focus on the preliminary injunctive relief, or PI, as we tend to say.

Anyway, first, the case summary. On May 5, 2026, a commercial fishing industry group, Southeastern Fisheries Association, and multiple commercial fishing industry representatives, Slash Creek Waterworks Incorporated, Strawberry Incorporated, Jeffrey Oden, Jack Cox Jr., and Antonio Giambanco filed a civil complaint in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia against U.S. Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick and the National Marine Fisheries Service.

The plaintiffs challenged the May 5, 2026 issuance of exempted fishing permits to the states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida under the Administrative Procedure Act. These permits exempt anglers fishing off the respective states from specific federal regulations governing the recreational harvest of red snapper from the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone in the 2026 fishing season.

The exemptions effectively allow the states to manage the recreational harvest of red snapper by anglers fishing from their respective states during the 2026 fishing season under the auspices of testing new data collection programs intended to provide more timely and accurate estimates of the recreational harvest of red snapper.

The plaintiff's complaint seeks declaratory and injunctive relief, including preliminary injunctive relief and eventual vacatur of the EFPs, and so declaratory relief is an order declaring that the agency violated the law, in this case the APA, in issuing the EFPs. Injunctive relief is an order preventing the agency from authorizing the requested activities under the EFPs, and the

preliminary injunctive relief is the same type of relief, or the same type of injunctive order, but it is issued without the benefit of all the written arguments, what we call the briefs, that are presented by the parties as to the merits of the case. It is also temporary, and usually lasts only until the merits are decided. Vacatur is a final remedy. It's judicial nullification of an administrative action taken by the Executive Branch. The plaintiffs are seeking all of those types of relief.

The EFP that was issued to Florida authorized its fishing season to begin May 22, 2026, with the other state seasons authorized to begin on July 1. Then, on May 10, 2026, the plaintiffs filed a motion for a preliminary injunction, or stay. Stay, in this context, is merely different terminology for the same judicial outcome as a preliminary injunction.

The Environmental Defense Fund and The Ocean Conservancy requested amicus status and filed amicus briefs in favor of the motion for preliminary injunction. Amicus status is a non-party litigant who files information that's supposed to help the court decide the case, but they're not an actual party to the litigation.

The American Sport Fishing Association and Coastal Conservation Association moved to intervene as defendants and filed a motion in opposition. They moved to intervene, and so they're actual defendants. They're actual parties in the case.

The states of Florida, South Carolina, and Georgia, led by the state of Florida, requested amicus status and filed a brief in opposition, but they filed at 9:00 p.m. the night before the hearing, which was well past the filing deadline. The brief was not considered by the court in deciding whether to issue the preliminary injunction.

The court held a hearing in Washington, D.C. on May 20, 2026. The next day, May 22, at about 6:00 p.m., the court granted the plaintiff's motion, and issued an order and opinion, and joined the EFPs from taking effect, and ordered the defendants to notify the states immediately. NOAA and NMFS officials that night immediately notified officials with the respective states, the state agencies, via telephone and via email. That notification included all of the state representatives on this council. Since then, on June 2, 2026, FWC filed a motion to intervene in the case moving forward, and that's where we sit now, and that concludes my report. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Shep. Does anybody have any questions for Shep? All right. We will move on to our reports. First, we'll start with Matt, with the NOAA OLE report, and so I'll turn it over to Matt.

MR. WALIA: All right. Thank you, Madam Chair. My name is Matt Walia, Compliance Liaison with the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement. As usual, I just want to give you our biannual updates, kind of where we are, some notable casework. I do note our most recent council report should be in the briefing book. There's a lot more detail, and so please take a look at that as well.

I would like to highlight these are our JEA referrals with our state partnerships that we've had over the past quarter. You see encompassing all -- It's fifty-two within here in the South Atlantic, thirty-seven from Florida, three from Georgia, two from South Carolina, and one from the Coast Guard and Southeast. These are a smattering cases. We rely on these to get our casework done with our staffing.

Florida was a big mix of Magnuson Act, some endangered species, sanctuary cases, and Georgia had a couple Magnuson as well, and then Coast Guard. You see what's out there, but I do want to say we do a lot of trainings. We've been going to the academies. We've been doing ad hoc trainings with the officers when we can, and so we really rely on that relationship to get the work done.

I put this in as a reminder. This kind of came up during the Amendment 60 talks. There was some talk about VMS, and so this is just a general kind of where we are, to give a refresher of what a VMS is, and how it works, because, a lot of times, there is confusion of the process, and what it is, but, essentially, those are the devices on the right. They are pretty small now compared to what they used to be in years past. It's secure satellite, and it can be cellular-based as well. All the data is confidential. LE does have access, but even our partners sign NDAs to it as well to not use it.

Reimbursement, it always comes up. As it is now, we have a reimbursement fund. That's a line item that we get through Congress, and it's up to \$3,100 per unit, per new owner, or if it's a new fishery, and so it is a reimbursement. It's something you pay upfront, and you fill out some paperwork with the Pacific State Marine Fishery Commission at this time, is who runs it, and you get reimbursed after the fact.

After that, the owner is responsible for general monthly maintenance, just like a cellphone plan, you know, and that can vary vendor to vendor, but, essentially, what it is, on the bubble you see on the left, is there's always system requirements of what a VMS is, and so all that never changes. That talks about how it stores and receives messages, how it's secure, how many messages it gets, and then you decide, you know, the use and non-use, and is it going to be on all the time, twenty-four-seven, or is it going to be on in certain locations, or only on when you're underway.

It has capabilities to do all that, and so the FMP is -- That's when you make your decision, if you do decide to incorporate a VMS into a fishery, of all those specifics of when and where and how it would be used and tailored out, but the key thing too is that there are two-way communications, and I've got an example later to show you. We can communicate with the fishing vessel, with the captain offshore, and vice versa, for messages, notifications, season closures, stuff like that, and so, in general, that's how it is.

When there is a new fishery that comes online, we usually have the opportunity to kind of bump that fishery to the top of the line for reimbursements, and so we kind of can give them preference at a national level as well, and so I just wanted to highlight that.

Highly migratory species, I know this really isn't on the council purview, and I actually just did this at the Gulf Council as well, but we had some notable cases. We're still responsible for enforcing all the regulations for that, and I wanted to highlight that there was a commercial case we had in North Carolina involving bluefin. It was a charter boat, or a commercial boat came in. They had their daily bluefin limit at one. They sold it, and they actually got boarded by the Coast Guard coming in the inlet. They saw it, and then they observed the sale.

Afterwards, we found out they had another hidden bluefin on the boat as well, and so our agent did a really good job. He went down to the dock, and he inspected the boat. The captain and crew had plenty of time to come clean. He gave ample opportunity to, you know, hey, what's going on, and what are you doing, and they stuck to their story, and you see, in that picture, they had another bluefin onboard as well, and so they exceeded the daily limit. They were going to sell that other

one as well. They had multiple bags of filets of tuna on deck, and the big one is that they also lied to law enforcement, and so it's one of those things where it's not rare for this to happen.

We've heard cases of people trying to keep within -- Beyond the daily limit, and their goal is to maybe not go fish the next day, if the weather is rough, or keep it and then go sell that at the market. This individual, we worked with our General Counsel Law Enforcement, and he received a \$16,200 NOVA for this case of retaining that second fish, and we actually seized it as well, and sold it back to the auction, and recouped the cost for that. It's something that we know that's coming out there, and I just want to highlight that that was really good casework.

Tournament registrations, just a reminder, and we've had a handful of referrals from the HMS line office staff. You're actually required to register up to four weeks ahead of time before a tournament, and there's a handful of tournaments that operate in the Atlantic that have not done so repeatedly over the time. That's a \$1,000 summary settlement, and the big thing is, obviously, we want that registered, and to report the catch. HMS uses that catch data as well of what's getting caught, and the status of the stocks, what the interactions are, and so just to highlight that as well.

Recreational fishing, we always like putting reminders out of how to fish properly in the Bahamas and coming back, especially at summertime, and this highlights of what happens when you don't. These are some great state referrals we had from FWC, with some boardings and interactions at the dock.

As a reminder, so we charge with the Lacey Act, and, essentially, that's interstate or foreign commerce, if something, a product, comes in or out, but, to declare properly, you see what you have to do on top. That should be familiar to a lot of folks of what you have to do. There was a few folks that didn't do that, and the picture on the right is a recreational -- Or on the top is a recreational boat that came in. They exceeded the bag limit from the U.S. and the Bahamas regulations.

They had all those fillets. They had -- I think it was thirty-seven or thirty-eight bags of fillets that you see there, with no skin on any of them, and it ended up being eighty-eight fillets, and so, you know, we consider two fillets as one fish. They were way beyond the bag limit, what they needed, and they also had whole fish beyond -- Twenty is the cap from the Bahamas, and they had more than that, and so they received a \$5,000 NOVA for that case.

The one below is another individual that we've actually stopped in the past, and so there's repeat history, and you see the picture. He was beyond the twenty limit of fish as well, and had some fillets on there, and so, instead of a summary settlement, he ratcheted up to the next time, and he had a \$2,500 NOVA, and so it's something we come across that boats -- We're seeing repeat offenders, when we can, and getting the word out to how to fish properly with the Bahamas.

There's a closed area case I wanted to highlight as well, and this came up -- This involved a shrimper that was fishing inside Oculina, and, initially, what we did is we detected it by our VMS system. It looked like the boat was slowing down, moving slow, and wasn't just transiting, and it looked like it was at anchor as well. We were able to work with our Coast Guard partners. They got out there on scene, and that's the picture, on top, that they saw as the boarding party approached, and so they were able to see the lines off the bow.

It was anchored. It was within the bank, and you see the doors are up. They had product onboard. They were able to verify all that when they went through their inspection, and, when they did that, they also found -- You see the picture on the left, and all their BRDs were sewn on all four nets. Their TEDs were sewn on all four nets. They also had multiple red snapper, whole and bags of fillets, that they were keeping as well, and so there was a slew of violations that they had.

They left, and, actually, within two days, they were doing the same thing again. The Coast Guard went back out there with another boarding party and documented the violations, and so this was a big case, and, also, with the VMS, I mentioned the two-way communication.

When we tried contacting the owner, he had no way to get ahold of the captain. He says he doesn't have his VMS tablet with him, and I don't know how to get ahold of him, and we don't have a sat phone, and so that's another important reason to have that communication. That ended up being a little over a \$33,000 case that we had with our General Counsel on that, and so just to highlight a closed case of what we can do with our technology and getting folks underway on scene on the water.

This is another interesting one I thought as well, and it's stuff we hear at the council. This is a multi-year investigation. This took some time, and this involved tournament sales of mackerel. This was down in southern Florida, at a pretty prominent tournament, and it happened to be going on for years.

We had our investigators saw it from 2018 to 2021, and were able to document that the recreational catch coming in from the tournament was then -- He took it and sold it wholesale to the dealer. He knowingly did it, and he actually worked with his son. He knew he didn't want to have beyond the limit in his truck, and so they split it up purposely on two trucks to drive the fish to the fish dealer after that, to stay under the daily bag limit of the catch, and you see the totals. It was pretty substantial. It was over almost 6,000 pounds of catch and \$20,000-plus that he made off of that, off the recreational sales.

That was a good case we had, and we did end up charging -- By the time the case was reviewed, and we were able to work with our lawyers on it, the statute of limitations ran out on some of the charges, and so we did charge for 2021 violations, and that still was, joint and several, a \$54,000 summary settlement, and so it was pretty substantial. They settled out to \$40,000, but it was a good awareness and getting it out to stop that.

These are just some general reminders to put, and the snowy grouper just closed yesterday. Recreational gag is open through the August 2, and the big one to highlight is, and this is new for everyone, effective July 6, the aggregate limit is changing with the scamp and yellowmouth, and so just a reminder that it's only one of scamp or yellowmouth within that aggregate bag limit, and there is now a commercial trip limit as well set at 300 pounds.

In the report you'll see there's eighty-five incidents specific to the South Atlantic, and we actually have 53 percent compliance among those incidents we have in our case system. A lot of that is boardings, interactions with fishermen at the dock, and we've had a lot of boardings, HMS inspections, up in North Carolina that account for that too, and so we're getting really good compliance across the board on most folks, but hopefully those cases highlight some of the good work that our folks are doing in the area, and you can see what we're up to.

We always have our reporting tip on the next slide. We always encourage that. That's anonymous. You can always get in touch with us. I'll be here for the next couple days, and we'll have some other folks floating in between as well, and so please find us if you've got an issue or something, and I'm happy to take any questions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Matt. Is there any questions for -- Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Matt, what does it take for someone who is doing so many egregious things, like the rock shrimp violation, to actually lose your permit?

MR. WALIA: It can happen. It's rare. That's mostly -- I would defer to General Counsel on that. We've had some pretty big cases, but that's within the rights. We can revoke their permits. Whether it rises to that occasion, that's usually us working with General Counsel, and so this is stuff we charge civilly. You know, we're not escorting this vessel back into dock, but, yes, that's their call, as far as how and when to kind of go to that extreme of doing it.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other questions for Matt? All right. Thank you, Matt. Next, we have Lieutenant Pease. He's online. He's going to give us the Coast Guard report. Is the Lieutenant on?

MS. BROUWER: Actually, it doesn't sound like we're going to be able to get that presentation from Lieutenant Pease. Where he is, in the facility that he's at, he's not able to join the webinar. He can't hear us, and we can't hear him, but I'll say that he provided a presentation for you all. It's in the additional materials folder, and I guess that's all I can say about it.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Well, we will miss Lieutenant Pease, because this was going to be his last meeting as well. All right. Well, since we aren't able to hear from the Lieutenant, we'll go ahead and go to our council liaisons, and so I'll turn it over to Sonny to tell us all about the Mid-Atlantic.

MR. GWIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council met April 7th through the 9th in New York, New York. At this meeting, we approved the Omnibus Essential Fish Habitat Amendment for submission to NOAA Fisheries. We took final action on the recreational tilefish permitting and reporting framework, selecting the preferred alternatives to streamline reporting requirements.

We agreed to initiate a framework action to address scup Winter 1 quota management, and we also agreed to initiate an omnibus federal management plan amendment on multiyear specifications to consider revisions to specification frequencies, documentation requirements, and other measurements to improve efficiency, and we endorsed the committee recommendation to discontinue the scoping process for potential monkfish and/or skate wings IFQ programs.

We also received updates on two council-sponsored projects, the spiny dogfish ageing and sturgeon bycatch reduction dogfish gillnet fisheries. We received updates on habitat activities of interest in the region. We recognize Peter Hughes as the recipient of the 2025 Rick E. Savage award.

We agreed to send a letter to NOAA Fisheries and the Department of Commerce leadership expressing serious concern about the delay in finalizing the recreational measures setting process framework, which has been settled with a lot of letters to delegates, senators, and congressmen. That was fixed, and we had some clarified -- We clarified intent on the Atlantic mackerel possession limit for crew on for-hire trips.

(There is a brief gap in Mr. Gwin's comments.) -- For the great job they've been doing, and allowing me to serve here, and thank you, Andy and your staff, for allowing me to serve here, and I thank all the council members for allowing me to come and serve. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Sonny, and we have loved having you here, and spending all the time coming to share your Mid-Atlantic Council stuff with us, and creating such a --The great rapport that we have between you and this council, and so thank you for coming for all those times. I guess we'll go to C.J. Sweetman, who will go through the Gulf Council.

DR. SWEETMAN: Thank you Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to be here, and so Gulf Council has actually had two meetings since your last meeting, and so I'll briefly go over some of just the high-level things that happened in April.

There was two abbreviated framework actions where the Gulf Council took final action. One was for modification of Gulf lane snapper catch limits, and that was simply done based on an interim analysis approach that was taken utilizing the G-FISHER video survey index, and it showed that the population was increasing, and could sustain additional levels of harvest, and I think it actually contributed to about a 200,000-pound quota increase, and so trying to be more timely in our management over there.

The other action that was taken was the red grouper IFQ set-aside quota holdback, and that was actually done kind of as a precursor to what I am about to talk about now, that happened at the last Gulf Council meeting, and so, relative to commercial red grouper, the Gulf Council, at the last meeting, which was just last week actually, took final action on Reef Fish Amendment 63.

This developed a three-year pilot program that would set aside a portion of the red grouper commercial quota for distribution of participants within the IFQ program. Effectively, what is happening here, and this would start in 2027, is that we have seen a very positive increase, nearly double the quota, for red grouper in general, and so what was approved at the last council meeting was basically, if the commercial annual catch target in 2027 was above 4.28 million pounds, the quota pool would then be divided -- Or it would be populated with 50 percent of the quota with any increase above that 4.28 million pounds.

We have some requirements associated with it. Annual allocation is going to be non-transferable, and would be distributed to commercial reef fish permit holders that have at least 500 pounds of landings of red grouper during a rolling two-year reference period. Then half of that quota pool would be distributed to active red grouper fishermen without red grouper shares, and then the other half would be distributed to active red grouper fishermen with red grouper shares, and so this one was final here, and it will be transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce, and then put forward as soon as possible.

Greater amberjack regional management was another discussion we've had. The Gulf Council has had some serious challenges with this fishery. It's overfished, undergoing overfishing, and has been for decades. I feel like the Gulf Council has thrown the kitchen sink at this here, and so the council started discussing potential regional management, and/or state management approaches, and we're just kind of highlighting a lot of the major discussion points that would need to occur in order to make that a reality, whether it is state or regional, how allocation would be discussed, or decided, different data currencies, things along those lines.

Moving on here, and we're going to continue to discuss this in the future, the for-hire data collection. This was an update that's definitely relevant to this council here, and so the council reviewed a public hearing draft for a generic amendment in order to develop a Gulf for-hire data collection program. If you all recall, SEFHIER in the Gulf was ultimately shot down by a court, and so this is considered SEFHIER 2.0, if you will.

Basically we've selected preferred alternatives that include submitting a trip declaration for each fishing trip, and it does not include non-fishing trips, as well as some electronic reports for each one before it's offloaded, and some economic data that would sample a subset of the entire population there.

Recreational reporting and deepwater grouper, similar to you all, we continue to be challenged by rare-event species, and so we had some, over the last couple of council meetings, some discussions about potentially how to navigate some of those. Nothing has certainly been decided there.

More on IFQ programs and permit requirements, and the Gulf Council has been working, for many, many years, trying to reform the IFQ fishery. Amendment 59A is one of them, and this one basically tries to address participation requirements within the IFQ program, essentially saying that -- We selected preferred alternatives over there that require shareholder accounts to be associated with a valid or renewable federal commercial reef fish permit, and so that's basically one of the main points in there, was that now people associated with this fishery are going to have to have that requirement.

Private red snapper accountability measures, we are reviewing, at the Gulf Council, several mechanisms for private recreational red snapper flexibility for the individual states themselves. Presently, if a Gulf state's landing exceeds its specific quota, state-specific quota, then, in the following year, that has to be removed, but the council is looking on potential mechanisms related to each individual state and how that relates to the overall private recreational quota.

Mutton and yellowtail, we'll talk about that today. We selected some of our preferred options to move over to you all following that positive stock assessment for mutton and yellowtail. We've selected different options for jurisdictional apportionments that you all will consider here. Hopefully you all view that positively, and we did not touch Action 3 or 4, which is sector allocations for you guys.

Shrimp, we got some positive stock assessments for shrimp, and so we're working on updating some limits there, but we also discussed some topics here relative to the protected resources interactions with some of the Gulf federal shrimp trawls. I know you all have a similar working group that you're all working on relative to the South Atlantic, and so we just populated that group

here, and hopefully there will be some interaction between those groups in the South Atlantic and the Gulf.

Other topics that we talked about, we approved some AP members, discussed some essential fish habitat, as well as turtle release gear. That had a longer than I thought discussion at the council table last week, but some frustration about some of the turtle release gear that's required on some of the federally-permitted for-hire and commercial reef fish vessels, and so just a discussion about that, potentially trying to minimize some of those implications there, but it was a lot. I was covering two meetings there, and I'm going to stop, and I'm more than happy to take any questions.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, C.J. Does anybody have questions for C.J.? All right. Seeing none, thank you so much, C.J. I'm sorry. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Not a question for C.J., but, given the report out about SEFHIER, and the Gulf Council potentially taking final action in August, can you remind me, John Carmichael or Myra -- Did we table the SEFHIER measures for the South Atlantic?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, we did, Andy. Back in June of 2025, the council decided that it was going to be more of a regulatory-type action, and they decided to put it on hold for the time being to focus on -- It was going to be a regulatory action, excuse me, and they wanted to focus on deregulatory actions.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks for that, and that's what I recalled. I mention this, and, obviously, the Gulf Council is proceeding, and I don't know if there's at least an appetite to have a presentation, or a discussion, at the next council meeting, since it will be potentially after the Gulf Council takes final action on some of the revisions and changes that they've made to SEFHIER, and what the process would be if we needed to untable that, versus just have a discussion around that, but my concern has always been trying to get alignment between the two programs. We're running essentially a single program, and, if this one is going to move forward in the Gulf, what does that mean for South Atlantic, and vice versa?

MS. MURPHEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you so much for bringing this up, Andy. As you know, this is a topic that is near and dear to my heart. I would love to have a discussion looking down the line. You know, a big part of our discussion was trying not necessarily to completely parallel the Gulf, but making sure that our programs were similar, or at least piggybacking on each other, and so I would certainly love to have a discussion to at least, one, have a presentation about what's going on at the Gulf, but, two, see if we have the appetite to untable this, given all of our concern and interest in better data collection.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tom. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and Andy and Tom, for this. I think I have questions about the future of SEFHIER, as it falls to your shop, Andy, with regards to funding, both short-term and long-term, and staff availability for not only SEFHIER 2.0 in the Gulf, but then making revisions to that in the South Atlantic. I would hate to move forward with a bunch of regulatory changes if the funding and the staff support to monitor and execute that program isn't there.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and certainly great points, Amy, and a couple of things that I'll note, right, and so we've talked a lot about improving recreational data collection, and certainly this administration supports improvements to recreational data collection, and so, yes, it's regulatory, but there's also support for those data collection improvements.

In terms of funding, yes, it's certainly a challenge for us. There is a House mark right now up to \$7 million for the SEFHIER program. Whether or not that moves forward, and what does that look like, is to be determined, but there is at least some congressional interest, in terms of funding this program going forward as well.

I just wanted to raise it because I recognize, obviously, there was reasons why we tabled it when we tabled it, but, now that we likely are going to have some momentum behind the Gulf program moving forward, it at least would be beneficial, I think, for the South Atlantic Council to hear a little bit more about the Gulf program and what changes they've made.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Andy. Tom, did you have your hand --

MR. ROLLER: Yes, and, again, thank you for that, Andy. I certainly agree, and, I mean, I guess the just general question I present is, while we are, obviously, looking to take deregulation where it's possible, is this truly a deregulatory action? We're simply trying to make a program work better, because I feel a lot of our fishermen are actually disadvantaged, and held hostage by less accurate data, and so, if we can make this program better, I would argue it's actually deregulatory, in some fashion, and so I at least would like to have that conversation, and, again, would love to untable this whenever, given the possibility.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Tom. C.J.

DR. SWEETMAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I certainly would support the Gulf Council giving a presentation here to highlight some of this, because I think a lot of the discussion we've had around the table is learning some of the lessons both in the Gulf and some of the challenges you all have been actively having in the South Atlantic regarding the utility of some of that data for use in assessments and management.

Those were active deliberations that we had around the table, and what the Gulf Council I feel ultimately came down to was kind of the lowest common denominator for what information could be utilized in order to reduce the burden on the anglers, and the captains, but also get us the data that we need in order to inform fisheries management, but also fisheries disasters. That's the economics component of it, because they are now included within the fishery disaster process, which is something that's relatively new.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, C.J., and we would appreciate that, if the Gulf could do a presentation, but I'll turn it over to Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Yes, and so just wondering -- One of the things that I recall kind of hindered moving forward with the amendment, when we were working on it, was the issues with the Permits Office that were going on, and so how did the Gulf Council get around that problem, or was that problematic at all for you guys?

DR. SWEETMAN: For us, I mean, and I'll look over to Andy there too, but permits wasn't the issue with SEFHIER 2.0 in the Gulf. The reason why that was vacated in the courts was relative to the VMS requirements, and there was another component that I'm sure Andy is much more familiar with, but it wasn't a permit issue on our side.

MS. MURPHEY: Andy, did you want to add?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I'll just add that, yes, the court set aside the program because of the VMS requirements, but also an Administrative Procedures Act violation related to requests -- Or including economic questions, in addition to social and economic information, that was not necessarily laid out specifically as part of the process when we were originally implementing SEFHIER 1.0. In terms of permits, it has not hindered development. I mean, it did slow development some, because of some of the permit issues, but, going forward, we see, obviously, the system operational and running right now, and we don't see any hiccups with, obviously, moving forward.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think -- I wanted to say what Tom raised is we should definitely look at the deregulatory aspect, and is this going to move ahead if we try to squeeze it into the workplan. Remember that we're quite busy through this year, and so I think we can look at it on Friday, and think about like a presentation from the Gulf, when we can get that in, maybe in September, but I think we definitely don't want to prioritize this, and work on it, but then have it not move ahead in the Regional Office, and so I think it would really be good, if we do get something from the Gulf in September, that maybe we can hear more from the agency on, you know, where is it likely to rank, in terms of deregulatory versus regulatory, so we don't give up some other things maybe you could be doing to prioritize this.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John. That sounds like a plan, and so anything else? All right. Well, thank you, C.J. I think, next up, we've got John, who is going to tell us all about the Council Coordination Committee up in Homer, Alaska.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The CCC recently met in Homer, Alaska, just a few weeks ago, and Trish and I were there, and Jessica was participating as well. One of the big things this year with the CCC, and all of the regional councils, is the 50th anniversary of the Magnuson Stevens Act, approved in 1976, so we're fifty years. There's a dedicated page representing all of the councils at the -- It's essentially the CCC website, fisherycouncils.org.

You'll see overviews of the different councils, and there's a great bunch of photo shows. If you really want to see the glory of all our fisheries nationwide, and a lot of really cool photos, go there and take a look. We, similarly, have our own dedicated page. You get to it from under About the Council, and you can see photos that we've put together as well, and so there's a lot of great stuff. There's some funny memories in there for some of you all that have been around for a while.

One of the things we've addressed at most of the recent CCCs, and spent a good bit of time on here, is the council priorities and needs from the nationwide perspective. Each council provided an overview of what their needs are. We also discussed, as part of this, the risk-value matrix

process. Just slightly before the CCC, we were told it was essentially paused. I think the best way to put it, from what I heard at the CCC, is the effort is largely completed at the national level, but they've achieved what they can achieve, and what's appropriate to achieve.

The discussions that had caused a lot of consternation was potentially using it to adjust funding, and that is no longer going to happen, but there will be regional progress continues. That means each region has been encouraged to continue to work with the science centers, and with their regional offices, on achieving the overall regional needs. There was a motion passed by the CCC. Occasionally, the CCC does pass motions to address issues that you see there. Basically, it's reiterating this, that each council worked on aligning priorities and capacity, and then we're going to report back to the CCC regularly, with the next one being at our October meeting, coming up this October.

We always receive a budget update. Generally, this is very high level. It's a reminder of the process. The process of the federal budget takes years. We're working on 2028 right now. We just recently received all the funding for 2026, but one of the interesting pictures, that I just wanted to share with you guys, shows the historical budget trends of the councils. It goes back to FY 2014. The red line is in 2014 dollars. The big-time takeaway for you guys here is that all of the councils have been essentially level funded since 2014.

While there have been some increases, and you see, thankfully, quite a few increases, and reasonable increases in recent years, we're not really getting any additional money when you account for inflation, and some of the things that are our biggest expenses, like travel, are probably inflating faster than the overall average of inflation, and so I just wanted to put that out there, and so we get more money, but the reality is all the councils are collectively doing an awful lot to hold the line on expenses, because the reality is, in real dollars, we're not really increasing.

We also get a regular science update. This was provided by Dr. Evan Howell, who is kind of the lead scientist now in handling all of these things. We heard about the stock assessment Tiger Teams. This was a review of the agency's fishery-independent studies and advanced technologies. Most of the councils participated in some way, provided comments, and the report was provided recently, and the agency is now working on their response, and expected to have something in early summer.

We also heard about MRIP, the rescaled estimates from the FES, the much awaited. In our region at least, they're expected in August of 2026. That should hopefully open the door to get some assessments back on track, and then the other important recreational priority is what's called RAPID. That's the transition process that's being developed to transform MRIP.

The goal is to reach out to the state partners, and also to many of the constituents nationwide, to get input on kind of, if you were going to redo recreational data collection, what would you do, and so we expect to hear more on this specifically during a later presentation at this meeting from Dr. Richard Cody. and then, at some point in the summer or fall, there will be some workshops, and whether or not this is a Southeast workshop, or more of a council-focused effort, remains to be seen, but we have certainly promoted the idea that the Southeast is far too vast to cover in one workshop, and we really need more of a council-oriented effort. We'll continue to keep track of this, and keep you updated as we learn more.

We discussed executive order and international affairs, and so remember the executive order about promoting U.S. fisheries. All the councils were provided additional comments. You may recall the agency opened it up for additional comment after the closure that had occurred, and the councils were providing additional comments. We looked at them I think in March.

None of the other councils modified their response to the executive order as a result of those additional comments, and so everyone is continuing with the plans that they had, and, on the international affairs, there's a very long motion, and so I didn't bother to try and recreate it here in this PowerPoint, but you can see it if you go to the report online, and it addresses a lot of things dealing with imports and fisheries resources from other countries related to Marine Mammal Protection Act comparability, import requirements, labeling tariffs. It's fairly detailed. It's probably a much bigger issue in the Pacific, where they're dealing with a whole lot more imports than what we are here.

Another thing you may recall that has been playing out for quite a while is some revisions to the NEPA process, really intended to streamline it, make it quicker, page counts on things like FMPs and NEPA evaluations, EISs, et cetera, and so staff has been working with the agency to try to understand what all this means, how it affects us within our sort of juxtaposition between NEPA and Magnuson.

There's been a CCC-level working group working on it. There's going to be revised requirements on NEPA coming out at some point, and so the CCC passed a motion just trying to encourage the agency to continue to provide us timelines, update the procedures, and really try to expedite it.

The other point is the folks working on it offered to go to each council meeting and give presentations, and what was suggested at the CCC was, given the technical nature of this, it would be much better to have the folks from Headquarters working on this go and meet with the actual council staffs and then let us keep you, the council, updated as this progresses, but it is fairly detailed, in terms of categorical exclusions and EISs and EAs, and what's required when, and how we count pages within FMP to NEPA requirements.

All the councils felt like that would not be time well spent at a specific council meeting, and so this we will continue to work on, and keep you updated, and, at some point, we expect to be able to discuss how some of these things will change the way that we approach say FMP timelines, really with an eye toward making them operate a little bit faster, it would seem, and so I think there's some positive changes coming out of this in the long run.

There was a fairly extensive motion on S-K funding. As you recall, this is a cooperative research program. It's money that comes in from tariff receipts, and it goes to funding fisheries, and, for a long time, the CCC has been promoting full funding of that program. The funding has certainly kind of eroded over the years, and so there was a fairly detailed motion, with a number of specifics, but the gist of it was requesting the agency increase the funding support for the S-K program and have up to \$100 million in the promote and development account, which is used to promote and develop fisheries to be used through the competitive S-K program, and so the CCC continues to go to bat for collecting data and cooperative programs that involve fishermen in that.

We received an overview of the MREP program. MREP really started in the Northeast. We were about the second region that got involved, and have been doing it a long time, but, over time, it

has expanded to a nationwide program, and so remember, this is the Marine Resources Education Program, by fishermen for fishermen, to teach them about the management process.

The Coordination Committee supported the agency supporting this, and asked that they prioritize support for MREP, given its importance in the overall management process. There's a large number of people involved in councils right now that are graduates from the MREP program, and many, many more that are involved at the advisory panel level, and so it has definitely proven its worth, in terms of getting people educated about the management process and making them really, you know, good participants in that process.

Now some exciting news for you. We will be meeting, the CCC, October 20 through 22 in Washington, D.C., but the exciting part is next year we will be the host. The CCC host rotates amongst the eight councils, and it's our turn coming up next year, and so the CCC will meet, hosted by us, May 11 through 13 in Charleston.

That will have an impact on some of our staff, because the host council staff lead many of the CCC's subcommittees. Our chair will be chairing the CCC meeting. We will be preparing the briefing book and everything for that meeting, and so it will definitely provide a little bit of a burden to us, but I'm certainly excited to be hosting that, and having everybody come to Charleston, and everybody is looking forward to coming to Charleston.

It should be a little different environment than it was in Homer, where I think the average temperature was forty, and the wind blew about twenty, and we saw the sun for four hours, and so Charleston will be a little different situation for folks, and so that wraps up the report on the CCC. If you have any questions, I definitely encourage you to check out the council's website. It's available, and it's got a lot of information. If you ever wondered what a CCC was doing, all the reports and everything from the meetings are there, and a lot of good information just if you're curious about our nation's fisheries.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: John, you mentioned the MPA, Moratorium Protection Act, and did you all have some type of overview, or slideshow, or any presentation, about that, if you're familiar with it?

MR. CARMICHEAL: Yes, and that was the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and it was just referenced in that motion. I can't recall that we've had a presentation on that in a while. If it's something that you think is relevant to us, we could have somebody come here and talk about it, if you think it would be useful.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I just spent -- It's the Moratorium Protection Act. There's two acts. There's the MMPA and the MPA, and I've been trying -- It's an act that's been there for like sixteen years, and, last year, under the Biden administration, they -- There are different things you can trigger with it if nations are found to be out of compliance, and they chose to deny arrival at ports by foreign vessels.

Well, they don't want to arrive at our ports anyway, and so that was a nothing burger, and I'm just trying to get further up the chain, or somewhere who would contact that would be able to help me

understand why we haven't triggered that Moratorium Protection Act, and I'm just trying -- Maybe somewhere higher up, or something like that, because it's clearly there on the books. It's clearly there, and I'm just trying to find somebody up the chain of command that could answer my questions besides the bureaucracy.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I'm not really familiar with that. I can ask maybe Kelly Dennett, or somebody at NMFS, and see if they know, or if Andy knows anything about this.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you.

MR. CARMICHAEL: It doesn't seem him either. Okay.

MS. MURPHEY: Kerry, would you like to add to that?

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, I'm not higher up, but I know a lot about it, because this is what I do during the day, and so I'm happy to talk to you offline and tell you more about it. I can't speak for NMFS, and so I couldn't give the presentation, but I actually probably could give the presentation, and so anytime I'm happy to talk to anyone about that.

One of the things I did want to point out really quickly about the MMPA comparability findings, and just I thought the state directors might be interested to know, if they're not already across this, is actually there are a lot of sort of east coast imported species that were affected. The biggest one of all of the MMPA comparability findings was blue crab coming from Indonesia and the Philippines.

Indonesia ended up sort of getting their act together. They got a grace period, and got their act together, and Indonesian blue swimming crab is now allowed to be imported, but the Philippines is not, and so I suspect that there will be an interesting increase in demand, to the extent there can be, in blue crab from the east coast, and so I just thought that might be interesting for people here, but that's really -- That was the biggest the biggest issue in the MMPA comparability findings.

MS. CARMICHAEL: Thank you for double-dutying, Kerry. I appreciate that.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Kerry. Anything else for John? All right. Thank you, John, and now we'll move to North Carolina's Lines of Communication, and Christina will open us, and I guess we'll all talk about it.

MS. CURTIS: All right, and so thank you, guys. I am really excited to briefly talk to you about the Lines of Communication meetings that we had in North Carolina, but, before I sort of dive into that, I did want to briefly review with you all the goals and objectives of Lines, just so that sort of have those in mind as I talk, and as the North Carolina council members tell you what they learned during those meetings.

If you brought your binder back to the meeting, Allie has actually added these to the binder, and so you'll have a hard copy as well, but, just in case, a reminder that we developed these meetings as a way to build relationships with fishery stakeholders. It's an opportunity for you all as council members to have an open dialogue, and sort of mutual learning between you all and stakeholders to sort of improve communication, foster trust, increase knowledge of the fisheries management

process, and, again, in a real hope that we'll increase involvement in the fisheries management process, whether that be making public comment, being a part of an advisory panel, just having fishermen reach out to provide input to you all as council members.

Building relationships with stakeholders, and building trust, was really the key foundation of this, and so I'm not going to read all these in depth, because I've gone over them a number of times, but I did just want to bring them up on the screen to remind you that building trust is one of the main goals, and, sort of to do that, we really want Lines to become integrated into a lot of the discussions you have, and so a reminder to please do read the reports. Even if, you know, you weren't a council representative from the state where they were, this is still valuable information.

The Lines from North Carolina addressed a number of agenda topics that you guys will discuss this week, and, in order for fishermen to feel like these are valuable, this information must be used, and so, as I sort of go over what we've learned from Lines in North Carolina, I would encourage you to sort of take that to heart, and consider how that will impact what you're discussing this week and also sort of review what you learned in Georgia as well, and then, of course, we're getting ready to head to South Carolina and Florida next, and so we'll have just a well-rounded perspective from fishermen. That is my quick plug to remind you that, for these to sort of achieve their goal, this information has to be utilized in the process.

With that, I am happy to say that the Lines of Communication in North Carolina was a success. We had attendees at all four meetings. We went from Bolivia in the southern part of the state all the way up to Manteo in the Outer Banks. We had over 100 fishermen attend these meetings, and we got some really phenomenal input.

I will just sort of explain how the report is organized, before turning it over to your North Carolina Council members to talk about what they learned, but we have these notes. These are, to the best of our ability, a holistic summary of what was discussed and brought up at these meetings. That means multiple viewpoints are often represented in these notes, and they're broken up by the specific meeting we were at, and so, in this case Bolivia, Morehead City, Hatteras, and Manteo, and then they're broken up by specific exercise.

If you haven't been to a Lines meeting yet, we do sort of a sticky wall exercise, where fishermen are bringing all of their ideas to council members, and then there's a more discussion-oriented section, where we were talking about fishing satisfaction, and so those notes are broken out because they discuss two sort of separate things, but they are, again, to the best of our ability, as complete as they can be.

Again, I'm not going to go over this in detail, because staff was there, but we weren't the ones that ran the meeting. It was Dewey and Tom and Trish who ran the meeting, and, as council members, it's, I think, more important for you all to hear from them, and what they learned, than from me and what I took away from the meetings, because that's all represented in the notes, and so, with that, I'm going to turn it over to Trish and Tom and Dewey to talk about what they learned from fishermen during these meetings.

MS. MURPHEY: Who wants to go first? Tom, do you want to go first?

MR. ROLLER: Well, before I get into some of the details, there was one little interesting tidbit I took away, and I think this in terms of engaging with the public, is I think to our Morehead City meeting, and, you know, that's my home. e That's a place where I asked people to come to the meeting, and it's usually one of our best places to get public engagement, because we are a really strong fishing community, and we just had poor turnout that one particular night.

Sometimes I think it's important to remember that sometimes we just have off nights in good places, and that's the way I look at it, but we did have new people who had not engaged in the process show up. We had some really good conversation, but, also, given the involvement and participation in the other communities we went to, it's just okay. I think it's just okay to look back and say, you know, sometimes we do our best, and it's just a busy night for people.

I'll say another thing is how much I love meeting in Hatteras, and I've been speaking with the fishermen, as well as in up northern Dare County, up in Oregon Inlet. They're just such engaged people, and I'm -- You know, those are some of my big, high takeaways, but I could speak at length at some of the details, but I'm going to pass it on to somebody else, and then I'll come back, if that's okay.

MS. MURPHEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I thought it was pretty neat traveling from Bolivia to Manteo, and you saw a diversity of folks that came out, and, in some places, particularly down in Wilmington, they wanted to talk about why they couldn't catch a southern flounder, and a lot of different people, but the folks were -- Some were more engaged than others that knew about fishery regulations, or what was happening in their different fisheries. Others were there to, you know, ask questions, and learn, but it was just, in the different regions, you had folks that had different thoughts on their fisheries, and how they fish, and what they do, and what could help them.

There is one aspect of me, and particularly I don't think that we engage the public enough of telling them the lay of the landscape, and exactly, you know, here's the amount of fish that you're allocated or something, and how do you want it, and how would you want it to be used, or how would you want to report on it, or something like that, because that is -- That's one of the biggest things, I think, is, you know, we need to tell them that, but, in general, I was very -- The staff did an excellent job.

The only thing I would change is I would have the staff individually introduce themselves, and what they do, but it was a long four days of traveling. We did have a fire alarm go off at 4:00 a.m. in the morning in Morehead City, and so we got to see some of -- A little bit of everybody at their best, just being woke up to go downstairs, and that was an interesting time at 4:00 a.m. I think it was 4:00 a.m., or 4:30 in the morning, but I enjoyed it. I thought it was good, but I thought the staff did an excellent job of putting it together. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: So, on a more specific note, and I know I talked about some of the higher-reaching things, and I agree with Dewey. It was really interesting to see the makeup of these different communities. It was really interesting for me, in terms of the fishermen who came out, particularly in Bolivia, as well as Morehead City, how the conversation really morphed between state and

federal fisheries, which goes to show, in these areas, in both the for-hire recreational, and maybe not so much commercial in those sense, how those fisheries are really intertwined, and, given availability, or season openings, really shift people's focus among these different fisheries, right, that are both state and federally-managed.

I think, specifically, I can't thank a lot of the fishermen enough, and, I mean, in all of them, but I had some really great personal conversations with folks in Hatteras, in Dare County in particular, regarding their experience with different fisheries.

They wanted to come and talk to me about black sea bass, and tilefish in particular, and it was really awesome, like building upon the relationships we formed like with our mackerel port meetings. There were some fishermen who -- You know, in North Carolina, and, you, know, I'm a recreational for-hire, there's a lot of -- We have some stakeholder conflict, and what was really interesting was kind of forming some preliminary relationships with folks from, you know, the commercial sector, for me, and then having really even better conversations this time around, because that's what we're trying to do.

We're trying to build those things, and people came to me with trust, and asked me, hey, can we talk about this, right, and like we heard a lot about fishermen and their frustration, out of Oregon Inlet, regarding boats from Virginia, and the different limits with tilefish, and that's something that I learned, and something we can talk about more, right, and so I thought that was really important, and so it was a lot of these things where people brought to me, and wanted to bring me their specific experience, and also continuing to build those relationships, which is what we're trying to do here with Lines, and I guess I would say I saw a positive impact from that.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and I had another thing, and, you know, a lot of people brought to the table, and would say something, and sometimes we would have to say, well, here's how it really is, or help correct them a little bit of explaining something, and so definitely the interaction back and forth, and you don't get that all the time, and it was pretty -- You know, you had a chance to engage folks, and them engage you, and you did a lot of talking, and it was two -- Not intense, but it was two hours of getting -- Being able to have discussion that you don't never have to, in a friendlier sitting, or something like that, and people there -- You know, I think most people stayed the whole time, and, you know, people, little groups would go talking, or go asking with staff, and so everybody got a chance to talk, or air what they -- You know, to give input, which is good, and then you don't have that, and so that was very -- That was as positive as any as what went on with them.

MR. ROLLER: A couple specific issues that I think kind of prefaced both -- How both things work in the process, was, you know, one thing -- You know, in Hatteras, a lot of fishermen, you know, in the charter industry were really frustrated with the golden tilefish closure, and they brought it up to me like it would be news to me, and I was like, boys, I have been bringing this up at every meeting, and I'm hoping to bring this up in a future amendment, and we need to change the start date, and I saw some, like, expressions, like, oh, that's cool, and let's talk about it. That was like reminding people that we are having these discussions, right, and like this is on our plate already.

Another one, and I should see if I can remember what I was going to say here. Come back to me. I got it. I got it. It was also encouraging fishermen -- So some for-hire guys, particularly in Bolivia,

came to me to have discussions about certain for-hire issues, SEFHIER being one of them, asking me where we were in the process and stuff, and they asked me what I was going to do, and I was like, guys, I need you to participate in this, and I need you to come, and I need you to provide public comment if this is something you're interested in.

I think we're going to see that from them, right, because I guess folks sometimes don't realize that they have to drive that process themselves a little bit, and so, if you see, there was kind of those both things, how we were both learning from each other within that process.

MS. MURPHEY: I guess it's my turn, and so what I just wanted to share is, first of all, kind of across the state, there were similar themes, and then there were, you know, different issues, and based off where you were, but probably one of the best things for me was just I got to meet a lot of the folks here. You know, I would know their name, or I've heard their voice online, but then to actually put a face to a name, and, actually, I think for them to put our face to a name was very helpful.

Through these meetings, I've actually had more connections now. I mean, I get phone calls from several of the guys I met. I was able to put some of those guys in touch with some of our state folks, because they had questions, and that also -- Those connections kind of, you know, drizzled out to the state as well, and so I thought that was very valuable.

Overall, it seemed like that everywhere we kind of heard regional management, you know, and they really wanted to hear about regional management, or start -- For this council to start considering it, because, you know, it's a long range. Florida is very different from North Carolina. I think that was pretty much stated in all the meetings.

Black sea bass, I think that was discussed a lot in all the meetings, and there were, you know, just questions of where are they coming from, and, you know, doubts of recruitment failure. Again, talking about, you know, regional management for black sea bass, and, you know, that it may need to be managed differently in North Carolina versus the southern states, especially like Florida, and, of course, we got a lot of red snapper EFP comments.

Some were very supportive, and some not so much, but, you know, that's okay too, you know, and we -- Folks told us where they're seeing a lot of red snapper, especially down south, Wilmington to Georgetown, and we heard the comments that we hear around the council. There's concerns of how red snapper is impacting the other fish.

The other thing that was very familiar throughout the whole state was, whether you were a commercial fisherman or a for-hire guy or just a plain rec guy, you just love to fish, and you love to -- Everybody just loves to fish. It's in their soul, be it whether they want to sell fish, or just catch fish for -- You know, to carry home to cook, and it's just, across all the sectors, it just seems to be in everybody's blood, and I think that, you know, it's just a passionate sport industry, you know, pleasure.

Also, throughout -- I think there was -- I think we heard a fair amount of interest on limited entry for the for-hire industry. I think there's concerns of how this is just -- That industry is growing, and so we got some feedback on that. Other things is they feel like the council, you know, make

better -- They would like to see better use made of ecological knowledge, the -- You know, hear more, and listen more, to those folks who are out there on the water every day.

You know, let's -- They talked about ways to improve surveys, and can we use drones, and can we do cameras, depth finders, bottom cameras, you know, and let's try to be more innovative, and I think making use of those folks out there, as well as the technology that may make it possible.

We heard a lot on the two-for-one permit. One thing I've learned is that just gets more and more complicated for me to understand, but, you know, I think there's good support of getting rid of it, but there was some discussion on what happens if you, you know, make changes. I think there was concerns of -- I really need to learn more about this, but impacts on, I guess, corporations and leasing, and, you know, leasing these vessels out and everything, and then just losing value on the permits, and some things that I think we talked around here is, you know, they discussed use-it-or-lose-it, and I think that's been something that we've touched on here.

They're also concerned about getting -- You know, they want to get younger fishermen in the fishery, and so that was a -- I think that was a pretty big topic. In Bolivia, which is our southernmost area, we heard from spear fishermen. We really don't hear much from spear fishermen, but we had several that were there, and they also talked about -- I think we -- You know, the spiny lobster regulations, and the commercial industry only gets to keep two, and they're -- You know, I think they're starting to catch them more regular and regular, and so, you know, that was requested to look at, you know, if we could look at that.

Morehead City, we had -- We thought we would be getting a bigger group, but it still worked out. A lot there was just concern of loss of working waterfronts. Again, we need to get youth into the fisheries.

In Cape Hatteras, we talked about Spanish mackerel, and the north-south allocations, and the sale of king mackerel, you know, from tournaments. Golden tile, as Tom mentioned, you know, and they -- You know, talking about split seasons, because I guess they get caught up before they even get up to North Carolina, and, of course, shark depredation, and we heard a lot about that.

Then, in Manteo, and I think Tom touched on this a little bit too, is they would like to see a little bit more collaborating with the Mid-Atlantic Council, because of that overlap. There's -- I think there's overlap of the black sea bass rules, the blueline tile rules, and like, you know, they described you could be fishing right next to each other, but they're following two different rules, and I think that gets a little aggravating, and so, you know, is there a way to kind of work together better on that, and, you know, they just basically -- The biological line is Cape Hatteras, and that's probably pretty true that that's the biological line, and not the state lines, but those were pretty much the take-homes I got from this.

I enjoyed it immensely. It was great. We got invited to tour a fish house. We, you know, just -- We just got to have these one-on-ones, and it was great, and so I hope South Carolina and Florida have as good as we did, and so it was that -- It was very valuable, and so thanks.

MS. CURTIS: Well, and I would just say a huge thank you to North Carolina council members for diving in. Again, having to run a two-hour meeting is not an easy task, and we, as staff that

have worked on this, really appreciated your willingness to jump right in and facilitate an entire meeting.

Then, I guess, to wrap things up, again, a reminder, and we've talked to the public about you all using this information to set your workload priorities at the end of the week, and to inform any discussions that you are having during the week, and, again, I'll say there's information in this report, and in the one from Georgia from last year, that has information on black sea bass, headboat vessel limits, dolphin, a lot of things you're going to be discussing this week, and so I think the information that's contained in this can be incredibly valuable, and sort of used in those discussions that you all will be having, and, South Carolina and Florida, we're on our way to you next.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Anybody have any questions for any of us over the Lines of Communication in North Carolina? Thank you. It was good. It was good. All right. Well then next is the shrimp workgroup with Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right. I'll be pretty quick with the updates to the shrimp workgroup, and so, when you guys met in March, we had not yet had our first meeting, and so we held that first meeting in March, after the council meeting. We used that meeting as kind of an introductory meeting, getting to know all of the workgroup members, kind of what they were coming to the table -- You know, what their expertise was, be it, you know, a species expert or an industry representative.

Jenny Lee, from Protected Resources, gave a really great overview on the ESA Section 7 -- The ESA MSA integration policy, and kind of just the BiOp process in general, and that was really helpful to orient the group to kind of where we are in that process for these two species. Then, finally, during that meeting, we kind of went through a list of questions to help the group really say, okay, what do we need next, and, you know, at the next meeting, what do we need to get together.

This meeting is a half-day. We've got a lot on the agenda this go-round. We've invited a lot of people to present information to the group, to really help kind of dig into the details, both in the shrimp fishery and then the biology of these two species, to be able to kind of marry those two -- Or the report that will be brought to you guys.

We did have some discussion with group members about possibly holding an in-person meeting. There was talk, when we were scheduling the current meeting, about possibly holding a meeting in-person, and so this is kind of something that we wanted to bring to the council, to see if you think this would be helpful to hold an in-person meeting.

Then the last thing I will say, and you heard C.J. mention that the Gulf is starting to formulate their workgroup that will kind of have the same discussion, but with the Gulf shrimp fisheries, and I wanted to note that we have been in touch. Our staff has been in touch with Gulf staff, to kind of get the ball rolling and make sure that those two groups are coordinating, and collaborating, but we're going to let them kind of get their ball rolling first, and then we'll touch base from there, but that coordination is already in the works, and so that's pretty much all I had, as far as the updates for the shrimp workgroup, but I will take any questions.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Allie. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks, Allie. That was really helpful. To answer your question, it's the third meeting you're considering about in-person or not, and, I mean, the reason I like -- You guys all know that I like in-person meetings better anyway, but, in this specific case, I think the reason I would be very supportive of it is because you're asking this group to come up with solutions, and possible options, and I think that can be really hard for people to do over a computer, especially if they're not used to these kind of meetings.

I think they're less likely to speak up, and bounce off of each other, and have sort of that back-and-forth conversation via webinar as you would be in-person, and so I think, for that meeting, it would really make a lot of sense, and, quite frankly, the more we can get coming from the industry as solutions to this, the way better off we're going to be.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Kerry. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I couldn't have said it any better than Kerry just did, and so I'm just going to say ditto. I really appreciate those comments, and fully agree, obviously. I think, given the nature of this topic, having an in-person meeting would be, obviously, very beneficial and fruitful. I also appreciate, Allie, your leadership and the coordination with the Gulf Council. As you mentioned, and C.J. mentioned, they're just getting their working group off the ground, and they expect, I think, their three meetings to take from now until probably November or December of this year, and so, as that progresses, obviously, it would be great to continue to coordinate with them.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. Anything else? Anyone else? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Sorry, and it just occurred to me. Allie, I don't know if you've talked to anyone in the Gulf about this, but, currently, you know, there's a NFWF-funded grant using EM on the Gulf boats, and the EM is being tested to have the camera point over the gunnel, and so it's not at the back deck, which has been a huge issue for -- You know, fishermen are much more comfortable, right, if it's not pointed right at the back deck, and so NFWF is funding it. Why am I spacing out? LGL and Saltwater are involved, as well as my colleague, Megan Westmeyer, and so I wonder if that might be a presentation of interest at the second meeting, and, if you want to get with me -- It's an interesting project specifically because of the camera placement.

MS. IBERLE: Thank you. I'll definitely get up with you offline and get more information about that. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and that would be great, Kerry. Thank you. I guess we'll -- Are we okay with trying to schedule a third -- The third meeting is in-person, and is -- Okay. Well, we'll do that. John.

DR. WALTER: One of the developments, that's particularly in the Gulf that they're exploring, are potential gear modifications that I know that some colleagues in Australia are dealing with, and trying to implement also for smalltooth sawfish, and so one of our scientists, Jeff Gearhart, has been working closely with Australian colleagues, and he's on the Gulf working group, and so I think, if there are developments that are potentially valuable gear modifications, it's something to pay attention to for the South Atlantic as well.

I don't know that he needs to necessarily be on the committee, but I think we need to pay attention to anything that might be implementable, and developed, because, if there are modifications that can either avoid bycatch, or mitigate it, it's going to be something that we're going to really -- I think both regions are going to benefit from. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John. Anybody else? Are you good, Allie?

MS. IBERLE: I'm good. I'm probably going to bug people offline.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Well, we are at a break, and so let's go ahead and take a fifteen-minute break, and we'll come back to hear from NMFS.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MURPHEY: All right, everybody. We'll go ahead and start back up, and so we've got -- On the agenda next is the Southeast Regional Office and the Science Center, and so I'll turn that over to Andy and John Walter.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I'll be brief with my updates. We're going to have Jenny Lee online give an update on protected resources. A couple of things I just wanted to mention. We have been discussing doing some recreational roundtables, and working with Russ Dunn, and I know Russ talked to John Carmichael, I believe at the CCC meeting. Originally, those were scheduled for -- We were trying to schedule those for late June. We've decided to postpone those. We'll probably have a Gulf roundtable in August, and then the South Atlantic roundtable in September, and so we'll coordinate with you, John, in terms of timing of those, and let you know when those will occur.

Also, I think I mentioned, at the previous council meeting, that there was some issues with -- Because the U.S. Coast Guard -- Due to lapse in appropriations, they weren't issuing Coast Guard certificates of inspection. Obviously, that's no longer the case. The lapse of appropriations has ended, and so we have gone back to kind of business as usual with issuance of permits, and we're largely caught up with regard to issuing permits in our office, and so that's a positive development, and good news.

Otherwise, there's probably -- The only other thing I'll mention is that we have been authorized to hire three new positions. These are in our Protected Resources and Habitat programs. Two are key leadership positions for division directors, and so we hope that those will post in the near future, and so we are seeing a little bit of lightening of the restrictions on hiring, and hope that, going forward, we'll be able to support some hiring of other positions. There's also an economist position that's already been advertised with the Office of Sustainable Fisheries, and that position has been advertised for both Washington, D.C. as well as St. Petersburg, Florida.

We see us as kind of jointly sharing some of the workload with that position going forward with the HMS program, and so that can help us with some of the council work and bottlenecks that have been created due to losses of staffing in our economics group, and so I will stop there, if there's any questions, and, if not, then I'll turn it to Jenny Lee.

MS. MURPHEY: Any questions for Andy? All right. Jenny, you're online, right, and so we'll turn it over to you.

MS. LEE: Yes, I am. Thank you, and good afternoon. Just a few updates for you. I'll start with the smalltooth sawfish recovery plan. This has been updated just to reflect the timing and the fact that our goal is to have the draft of the revised recovery plan ready for public review and comment by the end of the calendar year.

In contrast, the update to the draft giant manta ray recovery plan and five-year review is just that we don't anticipate having that by the end of the year, basically to -- I think I mentioned this before, but it's now in the brief, as far as our -- Not only the national recovery plan coordinator had retired, but also our Southeast giant manta ray recovery coordinator retired, and so those positions are currently unfilled still.

Let's see. Moving forward, right below that, that's just a very brief correction date just on when we actually received the petition for Atlantic sturgeon, the petition to downlist the Carolina distinct population segment, and that's just a technicality.

If you skim down to under ESA Section 7 related actions and other ESA species news in the brief, I did highlight a little news local to you, which was that it made the news that four leatherback sea turtles have been killed by boat strikes off of Palm Beach County, Florida, reported by -- It was reported by local and south Florida news. I put a couple of links there, just recognizing that is an important nesting beach area, and adults are particularly vulnerable to vessel strikes during the nesting season, and a few tips on how boaters can help try to minimize boat strikes.

Then next on the report is we finally have the publication we've been talking about for quite a while relative to sawfish has now been published, and so the long-term random sampling confirms high-use areas and indicates declining abundance of juvenile smalltooth sawfish in Charlotte Harbor, Florida. Again, this is something that we've previously reported the findings on, and just acknowledging that that now is a final publication available.

Then the last ESA-related news is we have -- Or SFD rather has requested re-initiation of Section 7 consultation to address the effects of the live rock aquaculture program on threatened queen conch, rough cactus coral, and star corals. I'll give you a little background on this, because this might seem out of the left side of things here, but they requested a consultation because, since 1995, as you know, NOAA Fisheries aquaculture live rock permits for the deposit and harvest of aquaculture live rock at permitted sites in federal waters have been issued under your Coral FMP, as well as the Gulf Coral FMP, and that's been in conjunction with the Army Corps' programmatic general permit.

Earlier this year, the corps notified us that it would not be re-issuing this permit, because the activities authorized under the permit, which occurred beyond the three-nautical-mile limit of the territorial sea, are not actually within the corps' authority to regulate.

Previous consultations on the Coral FMPs were concluded informally, and that's based in part on implementation of certain permit conditions known as project design criteria that were in that permit, such as mandating visual inspections for the presence of ESA-listed coral species prior to

harvesting and a prohibition on harvesting ESA-listed corals. These protective measures for corals were in addition to the limitations set forth in your regulations in 622.225.

All of that means that SFD, Sustainable Fisheries Division, at SERO now has requested consultation to address the potential effects of the modified proposed action to coral species listed as threatened that do not have a prohibition on take, due to that change, and, again, in the absence of that permit, there's no longer that prohibition on take on those threatened species.

We do have them on endangered species automatically, and, our Acropora corals, we have a 4d rule for, and so it's just those particular species, but, in addition, we do a queen conch that was listed back on February 14th of 2024 that hadn't been analyzed in the previous consultations.

Originally, we were thinking no effect, but, again, due to changes, SFD has requested re-initiation to also address the potential effects on queen conch, and so the consultation is expected to be completed no more than 135 days from re-initiation. We do have an aquaculture specialist in Protected Resources that will be doing this consultation, and so that's good news, and NOAA Fisheries will continue to issue live rock aquaculture permits during the consultation re-initiation period, and I'll pause there just to see -- Andy, are you good with that, or is there anything else you would like to add relative to the council?

MR. STRELCHECK: Nothing to add. Thanks, Jenny.

MS. LEE: Okay. Great. In that case, I'm going to zoom right along to some marine mammal protection updates. The North Atlantic right whale Southeast field season is completed. It might, by the way, look like the field season, as opposed to calving season, is a typo. That is not. It's something we're doing just to recognize that we actually have some juveniles and males and non-breeding females that also are coming down for this season, and so that's the update there, but good news, really good news.

Research has identified twenty-three calves during the 2026 right whale calving season, and, as noted here, that's the highest number since 2009, and, in the brief, there's a couple of stories that you can refer to for a little more information.

Also, along those same lines in regard to information, we have some Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team webinars ongoing. Particularly, there was one on May 12th that we hosted -- Or we hosted a two-hour informational webinar on the North Atlantic right whale status and updates, a lot of really good information in that, and then there's another webinar coming up, and that is on June 22nd, on right whale monitoring and detection along the east coast. These are great opportunities to better understand right whale information, how it pertains to fisheries, et cetera, and so I encourage you to look back at the old one and check out -- Or maybe make live the new one.

From there, we have the MMPA list of fisheries. This is something we do every year, and so the proposed 2026 list of fisheries is out. There are no classification changes to fisheries managed under the South Atlantic Council, and so the comment period just closed, and there is more information on the list of fisheries website.

Similarly, the marine mammal stock assessments reports have come out. This is actually -- This is the final 2024 marine mammal stock assessment reports. They were updated primarily for updated abundance estimates and human-caused mortality and serious injury estimates, but the take-home for you all is just that there weren't any updates to the endangered whale stock statuses that you care most about, and so, if you want to look at the reports that were done, there's a link in your brief for getting to that document.

Then the last update is just the Marine Mammal Authorization Program. You may recall this is -- Our getting out mailers on the certificates has been delayed, but we now do have that complete. Mailers were mailed out, and fishermen can still access and print out the 2026 MMAP authorization certificates, and there's a hotline number, but this is just as a reminder, that, if you do own a commercial fishing vessel, or non-vessel gear that operates in one of the Category 1 or Category 2 fisheries, you must obtain a Marine Mammal Authorization Certificate each year, and that concludes my report.

I did want to just note that, as far as Jeff Gearhart being involved in the working groups that Dr. Walter mentioned, we don't have him slated for our June 30th meeting, but he is definitely someone that we would be inviting to the third meeting.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Jenny. Any questions for Jenny? All right. Thank you, Jenny. I think the next is a progress report on the e-logbook with John.

DR. WALTER: Thanks, Chair. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm John Walter, Southeast Fisheries Science Center. I'll just go on, but, before I get into this, I'll just make a couple of announcements about Southeast Center topics of interest to the council.

We have two stock assessments ongoing, SEDAR 90 for red snapper and a black sea bass update assessment. Both are scheduled to be completed in December of this year. They both also are awaiting the MRIP-FES-revised data, so that those assessments can address and use that data. In particular, for SEDAR 90, it's going to use SRFS data back in time, but it needs the MRIP-FES revised estimates to be able to calibrate back in time, and so the council should be expecting those assessment results fairly soon.

On some positive news, given that we have heard many of the concerns on shark depredation, as well as the administration has, and made that a very top priority of our upper-level leadership, we have one of our scientists who has been assigned as the Special Advisor to the Deputy Undersecretary for Oceans and Atmospheres as the shark depredation advisor, and that's Dr. John Carlson.

He's working directly for Laura Grimm to implement some of the shark depredation strategic initiatives, and one of those is going to be a study to evaluate whether the residency time of sharks in particular hotspots of depredation -- What the species composition, residency time, and then do a tagging study to evaluate how long are sharks in the area, what species of sharks, and then what individuals, to determine if it is indeed specific individuals in specific locations or whether it's a systemic problem. That's something that we can use science to address some of the key uncertainties that we have about shark depredation and then potentially inform mitigation strategies.

Also, we thank the council again for their support of the Building 2 Beaufort Lab build-out. Building 2 was demolished recently, between I think the last council meeting and now. A lot of our staff are working either remotely, or will be able to work in temporary buildings, and then we're working on plans for the rebuild of that facility in the Beaufort area.

Then other good news is that we've gotten permission to hire two stock assessment analysts, and one specifically for the South Atlantic Branch, and so that -- We have that person, who is about -- They should be starting over the summer, and so that person has been hired, and I can't announce their name, but they're very, very well qualified, and so that will be bringing capacity back to support the council's assessments, and so that's really good news on the analytical front.

With that, I will now talk about the commercial electronic logbook transition plan, and, if you can go to the next slide, and so, right now, there's a joint amendment between the two South Atlantic and Gulf Councils on the commercial electronic logbook.

This will allow commercial fishermen to report electronically, avoiding the need for the dreaded paper logbook forms, and so I know our staff will be so disappointed to not have their annual logbook mailer, which is an annual Christmastime event, but I think moving to an electronic format should streamline reporting, should speed up how we get that data into the system, and we hope should be more effective and efficient for fishermen, and so that will change the reporting for many -- A number of different federal commercial permits.

It's in the rulemaking stage, and, while the public comment period for the amendment has closed, the public comment is still open for the rulemaking, and so that public comment is open till June 26th of this year, and a lot of the feedback we've gotten from fishermen, particularly with our logbook staff, who is in routine conversation with fishermen, is that they're supportive of the switch to electronic logbook reporting, and, for many of us, it can't come soon enough.

One of the key elements of this is improving the database that's going to be able to house this information, and then decentralize and standardize the data collection in the East Coast Logbook Database. This will collect data from multiple different offices in a new integrated database system to reduce redundancy in data management, and it should align with federal modernization efforts, and this database will serve as a single source for federal logbook data for fishery partners along the entire east coast, and so a one-stop database.

One of the key elements of this reporting system is a cellphone application, or app, and so vessels will be able to report through multiple sectors, will be able to report in one place with a reporting app, either ACCSP's eTrips mobile or eTrips online. There's some other options available, including the RADfish Coastal Logbook application for Southeast coastal permit holders, but this will allow fishermen to report with their phone or with their computer.

Currently, the infrastructure status is we're developing the internal infrastructure to bring the data in from several applications, merging multiple different previous legacy applications, and one of the challenges is that the new data security requirements require multifactor authorization, and so, if you've got your cellphone, and you're trying to log into your bank account, it says you need MFA, and so you need to get a text to your cellphone, and then input the code, and hopefully you have both of those things available to you at the same time. MFA could be a little bit challenging here for this system.

Unfortunately, it's one of the new requirements of this, to maintain the integrity and confidentiality of the data that goes into this, and so we hope that people will be as equally pleased with MFA in this as they're pleased with MFA in all the other things that we have that for in our lives, and then the transition out of the paper collection into final implementation date, and we're going to have an opportunity for people to test those reporting applications.

The testing, and I think this is where some of you get a lot of questions on when can we do voluntary testing, and when can we start testing, beta testing, this out? We're looking at being able to do voluntary testing in late 2026. We need to do some of the checking and bulletproof testing of the process, to ensure that people can get in and out of the system, that it can maintain the integrity of the confidentiality, and that it integrates with the permit database, and so, right now, we're in a process of working that through, so that we hope that, in late 2026, fishermen will be able to start the process of voluntary testing, and then priority would be given to those who have expressed interest in the past. If you are interested, talk to our logbook staff about getting on the list to be one of those initial testers.

In terms of the communication plan, one of the key elements of it is the communication we've been doing to the council, such as this. Permit holders are also going to be contacted through physical letters and emails announcing the launch of the logbooks. We're going to be creating outreach materials, including user manuals, infographics, guided demo videos, and recorded webinars will be made available. We're going to try to do outreach meetings either in person with fishers, or online if we can't get to the meetings in-person. Logbook staff will be available during business hours to answer general questions, and then the software help desk will provide online support for user questions.

One of the things that we do have to at least be cognizant of is that we've had some substantial staff losses, which has hurt the Science Center and SERO, who are also our partners in implementing this, and so that has slowed down some of the implementation of this process, and so bear with us as we work to get this executed.

The timeline, again to reiterate, we're hoping voluntary testing in late 2026, with final implementation for early 2027, and one of the key things is that this needs to talk directly to the permit data integration database, and so that's been another one of the internal challenges we've had as the permit system has been revised, and so we're working through some of the kinks and bugs with integration of those, but, again, we hope to be able to execute this on the timeline noted above, and I think that's it, and so I'm happy to take any questions. Thanks.

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

MR. HULL: Thank you. Hi, John, and so my question is about SEDAR 90 and red snapper, and, at the recent data workshop that was completed, the State of Florida Reef Fish Survey was accepted for use in determining the recreational sector's discards, instead of the MRIP-FES survey, and what I understand is that the SRFS survey shows 56 percent lower discards in the recreational sector, and, also, it shows a 22 percent decrease in red snapper landings, and so, in simple math, that's a lot of fish that could be available for harvest and recreational opportunities.

You have this information now, and SEDAR 90 is scheduled to be complete in December, I think you said, and then there's, of course, a lot more to the process. This new, better information, it seems to me that we need to get this sooner, and is there any way that there could be some type of an update to either expedite SEDAR 90, or an update to the previous assessment, the SEDAR 73 update, with this new, better information, so that we could have more current numbers to work with for the agency and for the council, in regards to management decisions? In other words, how can we get this information faster than the full run of SEDAR 90, because it's really important changes.

DR. WALTER: Sure, and thanks for the question, and so how can we get it faster, in terms of integrating through the process? I think it's going to be really challenging to get it through the scientific process any faster than SEDAR 90 is already ongoing.

One comment on the difference in the total magnitude between SRFS and MRIP-FES, and, when we have evaluated something like that change in magnitude, and so we've done a sensitivity run where we cut the landings and discards for the recreational fleet in half, essentially about similar to those numbers you quoted, and then run SEDAR 73 evaluating that impact, and so, if you cut that in half throughout the entire time series, what that does is it scales the total biomass down by less.

It says the landings were less in the recreational fishery, the discards were less, but the end result is about the same answer in terms of stock status, and then, in projected catch, because you've scaled that down, you would then say, okay, now you project the recreational ACL, and it would also be commensurately lower, and so it's not just that, now that SRFS came in, because you have MRIP-FES and then SRFS come in, and it's not just a 56 percent reduction.

What we have to do is then convert it to a particular currency for the time series, and, in this case for SEDAR 90, we're using the SRFS currency back in time, but we need the bridge of MRIP-FES for the time series. The scale is going to be given by SRFS, and the bridge back in time by MRIP-FES, and so that's what's going through SEDAR 90 right now.

Now, to come back to, can that be done on an accelerated timescale, I guess the question would be what would that then -- How would that work through the process? It would have to go through an SSC, and it would have to go through some review process, and I just don't see that we would have the time to be able to rerun SEDAR 73 with those numbers, and get it through the process for anything in time, and it seems like using SEDAR 90 right now, and allowing that process, and maybe trying to fast-track SEDAR 90 when the science comes in, trying to fast that through the management advice framework for next year, might be the most reasonable way that management could act on the best and latest available science. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, and so, I mean, it just shows that -- So, the more discards you have, the bigger the spawning stock biomass is in the population, and, when you have less discards, that's what's driving the model to determine the SSB, and so, I mean, it's just -- For a fisherman, it's just hard to understand. When you reduce these discards, you know, those should turn into landings. Instead, it reduces the size of the biomass, and it offsets all of that, and so it's just tough to comprehend all that.

MS. MURPHEY: Jimmy, I think we actually went through that process ourselves, didn't we? We asked to try, and so, John, you can probably talk about it better.

MR. CARMICHAEL: You know, Jimmy, it's because the stock assessment just uses whatever the removal from the population is, and, for whatever reason, it just scales it up, and you sort of back then calculate how many fish there must have been, and that's why people always struggle with it, because people tend to think you first go out and figure out how many fish there are, and then you look at what was caught, and you remove that, but it's kind of stood on end. It's like you figure out how many trees are in a forest by counting the logs that showed up at the mill, but that's not really how you do forestry. They count how many trees are in the forest, and then they decide how many to cut.

Fisheries is totally the opposite. It's pretty opposite of a lot of, you know, natural resources management, and so it does work just as you say. If the amount that you estimate, because we don't really know -- Like there's some amount of fish that were killed. There's a truth out there, and we estimate it, and our estimates change, as we've seen with the MRIP, and so our perception of what was removed changed.

What was actually removed is not changing. It's just, you know, our best guess at whatever it was, and so, as that changes, that affects the underlying stock structure. If you killed more, well, then there must have been more. If you killed less, then there must have been less, and it's like -- Unless you're doing this every day, like some of us do, it really is completely counterintuitive, and so I can totally understand that, but that's just the best way to think of it.

All it does is scale, and so it makes these things work out entirely opposite of what people often think, and we've seen that in the stock assessment. We've seen that, if you look at the time series, in years when the catch estimates were brought down for various reasons, you know, the historical time series of catch was brought down, then the population abundance back in those years has come down as well, and it just leaves people scratching their heads.

MS. MURPHEY: Like I said, I think we kind of -- We played with that in getting ready for 35, and let's see if we cut it 50 percent, and it just does exactly what you said. It was just like we cut it 50 percent, and it just scaled down. It's mathing, man, and so -- Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: It's good conversation, and I really appreciate the question, Jimmy, and, you know, I'll add, in terms of the stock assessments, that -- Obviously, I don't have to tell you this. They're complicated, and there's a lot of pieces of information to it, landings and discards being, obviously, an important component, but age composition, size composition, overall, you know, magnitude of, obviously, landings, and data, obviously, is important, but then you have to put all that together.

The commercial landings obviously aren't changing as well, right, and so they're just being modified slightly, and, at the end of the day, you know, that all goes into a stock assessment, and it produces results, and so I appreciate the interest in trying to expedite it. I wish, you know, I saw a path forward where we could do something with that this year.

I don't see it happening this year, given all the steps we typically have for getting approval of a stock assessment, but I think John raises an interesting point, which I don't think we're at the point of maybe discussing at this meeting, but, when we come to September, looking at the schedule for this assessment, when the assessment is going to be reviewed, when the SSC is going to meet, you know, and we probably wouldn't see this before us until March, but, if we want to act on this assessment quickly next year, you know, what does that potentially look like, if there is a substantial change for management, and when do we actually do that, and are we going to need a special meeting emergency rule?

You know, I'm just throwing it out there as ideas right now, but I think it's worth having that conversation, and trying to front load some of this, knowing that this assessment is going to be delivered late in the year.

MS. MURPHEY: Jessica, did you have your hand up? Okay. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: If we're done with red snapper, I have a question for John.

MS. MURPHEY: Jimmy, are you --

MR. HULL: Yes. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Go ahead.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, and so, John, I'm thinking we have a couple of -- At least a couple of APs that are coming together this fall, and I'm wondering if you guys already have a number of volunteers for testing the commercial e-logbook, or if you, you know, have a contact, or -- I just want to make sure that we have information for potentially getting AP members to test it.

DR. WALTER: Yes, and our logbook staff has actually a pretty long list of people who have wanted to volunteer, and had been wanting to do this, so, and, if more people want to, please contact the logbook staff. They're keeping track of them, and they're going to honor the promise to get them on the list, because I think that a lot of people do want to move to this, but I appreciate the reach-out.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and, John, I appreciate the presentation. I know this is a long time in the making, but two questions. Can you remind me which of the federal commercial permits are going to be shifting with this? Is it all of those that have logbooks in the South Atlantic? Then, I think the follow-up question has to do more with the East Coast Logbook Database project that you did with your IRA funding, and this idea of the one-stop shop. I just want to ensure that this one-stop shop goes beyond council boundaries, and that it will be applicable whether you are fishing in the Gulf, the South Atlantic, the Mid-Atlantic, or the North Atlantic. Thanks.

DR. WALTER: All right, and so which of the reporting systems are covered? I'm going to have to get back to you on specifically one of those, because I don't want to get quoted on the record for missing one, and then, on your second question about the one-stop-shop reporting, if that is outside

of just the East Coast, I think I'll need to get back to you on that one, and so if I could get the exact wording, and answer, so I don't get misquoted, and then maybe I'll respond back. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, John. I would appreciate that. Some of it just needs to be a refresher, because it's been a long time in the making, and then, from a selfish plug from your communications plan, your outreach techniques, I love all the ideas of having the manuals and the user guides and what have you, but boots on the ground is going to be super important.

This isn't a huge group of folks. They are pretty centralized to common areas where the commercial boats tend to aggregate, from a landings perspective, and I really think it's going to be vital for this to have some in-person, one-on-one, one-on-one fish houses.

I don't know how you're going to do it, but getting people in front of this commercial fisherman is going to be the key to this transition from paper to electronic, and I would just strongly encourage you to also include your state partners in figuring out how we can figure out ways to help facilitate and get in front of the fisherman at the right time. I know the guys in South Carolina know that this is coming. They keep asking my staff about questions about it, and so making sure we get the right information to the fisherman is going to be really vital. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, John.

DR. WALTER: All right, and so it is federal commercial permits for Gulf of America reef fish, South Atlantic snapper grouper, Atlantic dolphin wahoo, and coastal migratory pelagic resources in the Gulf and Atlantic must complete and submit paper logbooks, and I'm reading this on the key messages as of November 2025 on the initial request for comments.

Then on the -- I think we definitely would want to lean on our state partners, who may be able to assist with this, and be out in areas that we can't get to. I think, if we can get our staff, or someone to the APs to demonstrate the reporting that could like actually go through it, and I know I actually downloaded the reporting app and did it on my phone. It's a good thing to be able to just see that happen, and so I think, the more that we can get hands-on opportunities, the better, and, if we can't get staff there, due to travel, if, you know, state partners can do that, that would be excellent.

MS. MURPHEY: I would like to just add to that. For North Carolina, that was actually something I did here in our Lines of Communication as well. They would like to see some training on filling out -- Well, even filling out the paper ones, but the electronic stuff too, and so I know, in North -- There were some folks that expressed a need for that, and so I think I had -- Myra, did you need to --

MS. BROUWER: I'm good. I was just going to answer Amy's question about which permits were affected, but John got it.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Okay, and so I've got Charlie, and then Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Yes, and I just want to second what Amy was saying too, because I think what's going to happen is you're going to find state agencies are going to be the fallback for this, and so

getting state agency reps trained up on this is going to be also critical, because I think if you -- Especially if they're dealing with a press 1 now, or press 2 now, system, they're going to be looking for somebody that they can talk to, and they're probably going to hit our office before yours.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and very good point. Amy, to that.

MS. DUKES: The TIP samplers are the big ones that we really need to get in front of, both state and federal.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I keep thinking about, you know, our discard mortalities and things like that on red snapper, and I talked to John about it earlier, and I think he said we might could get to have a presentation on how it's figured on the east coast, how it's figured in the Gulf, and then I look at the mutton snapper in the decision document, and there's so much mutton snapper available, and it makes me wonder how is discard mortality done there, because I think Florida does that stock assessment, and are there differences, or just trying to figure out why red snapper seems to be such an outlier. That's just me.

MS. MURPHEY: Does anybody want to -- John, any thoughts, or we just move on? I think it's a big question.

DR. WALTER: It has got to be the color.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Anything else for John? If not, we'll move on to Carissa. Are you online?

DR. GERVASI: Yes, I'm here. Can you hear me?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, ma'am.

DR. GERVASI: Awesome. Okay. Thank you, everyone. I'm Carissa Gervasi, an affiliate with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. It's been a little while since I've talked about this Shrimp Futures initiative, and I apologize I couldn't be there in person this time, but I'm really excited to share some updates on this project and what we have upcoming.

Just as a little overview, our objectives for this project are kind of split into these four buckets, and so the first step is really understanding what's going on with the domestic shrimp industry in the Southeast. We know that it's been facing a myriad of issues for a long time now, and we wanted to fully characterize both the financial state and the regional issues that are happening throughout the Gulf and South Atlantic, and so this includes analyzing data that we had on economic and social trends, issues, roadblocks, and also strategies and ways that people are continuing to survive despite all of these challenges.

Then, from there, their next steps are going to be to identify a future vision for this industry, and so, over the past year, we've kind of been in that first step of trying to figure out -- You know, get a full lay of the land, what's been going on now, and then the next step will be bringing people together to figure out what is the future, and so what do industry members want this industry to

look like in the future, and then we'll work together to develop some future scenarios for what that might look like, and then, from there, identify and prioritize actions that will help achieve those future goals, and we'll be taking into account actions that are robust to future uncertainty, as well as considering the feasibility and investment needs.

The first part of this project, which is what we've really been focused on for the past year, has been supporting the shrimp industry and understanding the nuances of the challenges in the present, and so, really, before we can think about the future, we have to get a full lay of the land of what's going on right now.

The first product that we rolled out was our economic analysis and snapshot report. It was specific to the Gulf. We will be working on a South Atlantic version as well, but the trends and issues are going to be very similar to what we see in the Gulf, and so this gave a really nice overview of the economic state of the industry in the context of the long-term trends, and really put to paper, in black and white, some of the things that people have been talking about for a long time.

The next product that we're going to be rolling out soon here is our industry perspectives snapshot report, and so this is a report that's based on interviews with both subject matter experts and shrimp industry members throughout the Gulf and South Atlantic, and it's going to highlight, again, all of the nuances and the challenges that people are facing, and some of the innovative strategies and solutions that people have come up with, and, along with that, we have a communications expert on our team who is working to highlight the industry and the issues, via web stories, blog posts, et cetera, really just trying to get the word out to the public and to other people within our reach about what's going on with this industry.

I just wanted to really quickly highlight -- This was an email with some feedback that I received from a shrimper in the Gulf, just letting us know how important the economic snapshot report that we put together was, and just seeing those figures in black and white was really helpful when they were pushing for changes in state legislation, and so it was really great to get that feedback on the product, and we're always looking for other feedback from industry members of what's useful, what's not useful, and what else we can do, and so I just wanted to highlight that quickly.

Then a little bit more on this upcoming report, which we're calling the industry perspectives report. This is based on over 100 interviews we conducted over the past couple of years. We did site visits to shrimping communities throughout all eight states in the Gulf and South Atlantic, and we also had virtual interviews with key subject matter experts, and so this included state agency representatives, Sea Grant members, academics, et cetera, and so we're really trying to get, you know, a full picture from a variety of stakeholder groups.

This is just a little bit of an overview. On the map here, you can see some of the communities and areas that we visited during these site visits, as well as some of the virtual conversations that we had, and we are putting together this report now. It's almost completed. It should hopefully be rolled out in the next several months, but we kind of were able to split the challenges the industry are facing into sort of these three main pillars, the first being the market landscape, which includes the challenges of import competition, consumer awareness, et cetera.

The next pillar is the operational landscape, which is more like the issues around costs, deteriorating infrastructure, workforce shortages, and then the third pillar is the external and

regulatory landscape, which includes the regulatory burdens shrimpers are facing, changes in the environment, and bureaucratic hurdles, and so we're really trying to lay out how all of these challenges vary regionally, and the different nuances that are being faced by members of the supply chain as well, and so we've talked to people who are harvesters, processors, dealers, et cetera, to really get a full vantage point, and, through sheer necessity, a lot of people have come up with some really innovative strategies and ideas, and so we want to use this report as well to really highlight all of those.

From there, and that's kind of what we've been working on up until now, and really laying the foundation for what is going on with the shrimp industry in the present day, and so the next step is going to be thinking about the future of the industry, and so we're going to be holding a series of scenario planning workshops.

This will be a two-part in-person series, with also some virtual workshops in between, and, during the series, key stakeholders will work together, through a series of activities, to identify visions for the future of the industry and actions that could be taken by individuals, organizations, and governments to realize those visions.

Importantly, we're going to be including members from other NOAA offices, or agencies, with the potential to bring ideas, funding, leverage, et cetera, so we can really have a full conversation about not just, you know, what the ideas are, what might help the industry, but who might be able to help, and how we might be able to actually implement those actions.

Just some of the anticipated deliverables from this project, engagement with other agencies is going to be really key. For example, there was a lot of talk about USDA, and how there's a lot of tools and resources available to farmers that are not available to commercial fishermen, and so working with USDA and other agencies is going to be really helpful for us charting a path forward.

We hope to identify both short and long-term goals for the industry, analyze some of those success stories, or at least people who have been able to survive despite all these myriad of challenges, and how they've done it, to get some recommendations for policies, programs, and other actions, and also sort of lay out industry trajectories under different policy and economic conditions, and so we hope that this can, again, really lay out in black and white what will happen to this industry with sort of this failure to transform and what, you know, could happen if we have these possible intervention scenarios.

Just a little overview of our timeline here, and so, right now, we are sort of, again, wrapping up those snapshot reports. Over the summer, we are working to plan and coordinate the workshop series, and so, right now, we are putting together a list of potential invitees, and we will share that list out with council staff, and so, if you guys have any, you know, recommendations, people who you think really need to be at these workshops, we want, you know, all that advice.

We're planning on hosting the first round of in-person workshops in November, and then the second round will be in February, and so still TBD on exact locations and dates, but that is our plan thus far, and then we're hoping to be sort of wrapping up with a report and final action plan in the spring of 2027.

Just to sort of wrap up, I just wanted to give you guys an overview of our Shrimp Futures team. We have a really diverse group of people who are working on this project. You can reach out to any one of us if you have any thoughts or questions or anything, and we do have a shrimpfutures.noaa.gov email address, and so we welcome feedback, ideas, and, if anybody wants to be just added to our email listserv for updates on the project, you can reach out to that email address as well, and, with that, I think that was my last slide, and so I'll take any questions.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Carissa. Anybody have any questions for Carissa? Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Hi, Carissa. It's Myra. I was just -- Remind me, and does this project encompass rock shrimp, or is it just the penaeid fisheries?

DR. GERVASI: We're focused largely on the penaeid fisheries, since those are, you know, the main fisheries targeted in the Gulf. We have had a couple of conversations with people who target the rockfish industries, but it's really largely the focus has been on the penaeid.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Carissa. Any other questions or comments for Carissa? Okay. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Hi, Carissa. I kind of don't know how to articulate it. I'm a little disappointed with where we've gone in the South Atlantic with this. We haven't heard anything in a couple of years. I looked at the number of docks that are on the east coast, and we haven't had a summit. We haven't had anything, but yet our docks are eroding. We just lost another dock in Georgia. Now, we were up to like ten docks, and now we're down into single digits on docks, and rolling out in another two years is just going to kill this industry.

It's taking a lot of time and effort, and I know the states have been trying. We've got some work that's wrapping up here in this upcoming year, that's hoping to get a little bit more in the pipeline to them to help stand them up, but this fishery is really, really struggling, and I think it needs to be expedited. It's bleeding out, and, by the time you guys finish your work, we're going to lose more people, and so sorry to kind of be a little bit of a downer on it. I just wish that there was more that was being done for the industry.

DR. GERVASI: I really appreciate that feedback, and I know this has definitely been a lot slower than we were hoping. We lost our lead social scientist on this project with, you know, the firings, and we did -- We had some issues with the government shutdown, and it kind of delayed a lot. Our economic snapshot report took months to roll out, just due to all the, you know, steps it had to go through for approvals, and so it is moving slow, unfortunately, and I know even a lot of the people that we interviewed last year aren't shrimping anymore.

We've kind of -- We've heard some updates from people that, you know, things definitely are -- We're very cognizant of that, that things are changing, and deteriorating rapidly, and so, you know, we're really doing the best we can, and we hope that at least we can do something to help this industry, whoever is left, by the end of the year, but, yes, I'm really cognizant of that, and, you know, I wish things could move quicker, but that's -- You know, that's all we can do.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and I'm going to echo a lot of what Carolyn just said, because it is very much an industry that is struggling in the South Atlantic. I know we had some correspondences, and provided some information about docs to visit, people to talk to, and I was just curious if you could provide any sort of overview of what that industry perspective has looked like, and then how much you have been staying in contact with those folks that you've interviewed through the process, to make sure that they're not sort of waiting out on the cliff to try to figure out what this timeline looks like, since it has been extended for quite some time. Are you emailing them, keeping them all up to date, like on a one-on-one capacity, that kind of thing?

DR. GERVASI: Yes, and so I do have an email listserv, and we have been sending out some emails to people, especially like when our economic snapshot was published. We did forward that on to everybody that we interviewed, and we have, this year -- Just a few weeks ago, we made some phone calls to follow-up with some of the people that we interviewed in-person, for one, to kind of, you know, give an update on the project, but also to see what has changed since they were interviewed, since, you know, obviously things are changing rapidly.

We know shrimp prices are actually up a little bit this year, but that seems to be more because there's less people shrimping, and just higher demand, and fuel costs are really a huge issue presently, and so we're trying our best to keep in contact with people, and, like I said, we are putting together a invite list for the in-person workshops right now, and so we're reviewing it at the moment. I'm hoping to send it out, and I'll share it with Allie, probably in the next couple of weeks, and we hope to get that pinned down.

We will -- In between the two in-person workshops, we're going to open up some virtual workshops, so that we can get some feedback from people who are unable to attend in person, and so we're doing the best we can with the funding that we have to try to do everything that we have in our wheelhouse.

MS. DUKES: Thanks. I appreciate that update, and then, just out of curiosity, you said two in-person workshops, and I take it -- Is one going to be somewhere on the South Atlantic, and one on the Gulf side?

DR. GERVASI: We're actually doing four total, and so there's going to be two South Atlantic and two Gulf, and these will be sort of follow-up workshops, and so we're actually hoping to have the same group of industry members attend both, if possible. We will be providing reimbursements, and honoraria, but it's going to be like -- Both workshops will be about one-and-a-half days, really in-depth workshops.

We have a facilitator, Joy Hazel, who has worked with -- I know she has worked with the Gulf Council quite a bit, and possibly you guys as well, but she's done a lot of facilitation work with fisheries groups, and so we're really trying to get -- Go a step beyond just sort of bringing people together to list out the problems and ideas, and really workshopping what those solutions need to look like.

MS. DUKES: Thanks. If you keep Allie in the loop, then Allie can keep us in the loop, and we'll take a look at those invitees and see if there's anything that a state perspective might be able to provide for something like that too, and so thank you again.

DR. GERVASI: Sounds great. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Amy, and I just have a question, and it's more North Carolina specific, and so you contacted state agencies during this, and I was just wondering who you contacted in North Carolina.

DR. GERVASI: Yes, we did contact state agencies. I had -- My former colleague, Kelsi Furman, was -- She was stationed at the Beaufort Lab, and I know she ran all the -- She led all the interviews in the Carolinas, and so I can follow-up on that and see who exactly we talked to on that side. I would have to take a look, but I can get back to you. I can get -- I can go through Allie.

MS. MURPHEY: So you all have involved the state agencies?

DR. GERVASI: Yes, we did. Before we started the in-person interviews, we did virtual calls with state agency members, Sea Grant members, sort of everybody that was recommended to us as sort of a subject matter expert, and so there were port agents, et cetera, and so we started with all those virtual calls to kind of get a lay of the land, figure out who we should be contacting in the industry, where were the important communities we needed to visit, et cetera, and so we did all of that groundwork before actually going in-person.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, and so you guys contacted North Carolina Sea Grant as well?

DR. GERVASI: Yes, and it looks like we talked to actually Scott Baker and Sarah Marabilio in North Carolina, Jocelyn Juliano in South Carolina, and we did -- Georgia DNR, a few people, North Carolina, Chris Stewart, North Carolina DEQ, and Jeff Brunson at South Carolina DNR.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. All right. Well, thanks for that. I've got John Walter has his hand up.

DR. WALTER: Yes, and I'm really excited to see all the interest in this project, but I also want to be cognizant of it is putting a lot on the shoulders of a very small number of people, with not a whole lot of resources, and so the issues facing shrimp are multidimensional. They cross the NMFS agency, in terms of there are multiple agencies that would need to be involved in the solutions that we hope this project will identify, and there's also a lot of other interested groups who are contributing to this, that we, even if we came up with the silver bullet solution, and there's not going to be a single one, the agency wouldn't be able to just implement that alone.

I think therein lies really the challenge here, and what I want to just set expectations is that I think this is something that requires a lot of our participation on, not just Carissa and the Shrimp Futures team, in terms of trying to achieve this.

I will put a kind of a plea out there is that there are a number of legislatures who are very interested in this. There's some ongoing pending legislation that is pertinent to the shrimp fishery. If there are groups who are interested in that, then pay attention to that ongoing process, because we can't really get involved in that, but that's something that, if you are interested, pay attention to it, in terms of how that might be working through the process. They relate to foreign imports. They relate to supporting the shrimp fishery in other different ways, and then there's a lot of the shrimp fishing groups who are really helping to promote some of those processes.

We'll do what we can from the side of the fisheries agency, and NOAA Fisheries, but we can't do it alone, and so we certainly need the partnerships of the state agencies, and then concerned stakeholders also need to advocate as best they can for things that they see as the solutions, and so we hope, through this process, that we're going to be able to help outline those things that would turn the corner, and would make a difference, but, again, it's going to take a concerted effort, and it's going to take an effort in both the short, medium, and long term to achieve the goals, and I just want to set the realistic expectations. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John. I had Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Yes, John, and, just to add to that, Georgia is going to have a very comprehensive assessment that has been done for the State of Georgia. That's vessels and dockside, and it's expected to come out at the first of the year. It's Jennifer Sweeney-Tookes and Bryan Fluech with Georgia Sea Grant that have done the work.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Carolyn. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, and next week I'll be in Charleston for a workshop for sustainable fisheries, and, you know, it's -- If you've got a packing house, I tell them it doesn't matter if you're packing fish or tomatoes, and you've got to pack volume to make the numbers work, and, otherwise -- You know, our commercial amendment, which helps, you know, put more fish across the dock, whether it be snapper boats or shrimp boats, and some of these docks actually pack both, and there's -- We've just got to figure out a way to put more fish across the dock, and/or do things like, you know, have buoys or something for, when you run short of dock space, people can tie up.

I've got shrimp boats up in the marsh that ran out of dock space, and they're anchored up, and a storm comes through, and pushes them in the marsh, and, the next thing you know, they're sunk, and they're wrecks in the marsh, and so, had they had a good buoy to tie up to, maybe they probably wouldn't be a wreck in the marsh now, and so there's going to be multiple answers to the question.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Charlie. How about we go ahead and move on? Thank you, Carissa, for your presentation, and we look forward to hearing more. I think we can move on. Is Marcel here? There's Marcel. Okay, and so we'll move on to Marcel, who is going to provide items from the SSC that will not be covered by committees.

DR. REICHERT: All right. Thank you, Madam Chair, and it's good to be here with you all one more time, at least for now. The SSC discussed a variety of topics in our April meeting, and, in the first presentation, I'll highlight some of those that I'm not covering in my other presentations later this week to the Snapper Grouper and Dolphin Wahoo Committees.

In April, we received an update on the progress of the resilient fisheries project, and, as a brief reminder, this is a national project that's focused on ecosystem information review to address, among other things, how fisheries management councils utilize ecosystem data and tools. It's also intended to identify best practices and expand the use of ecosystem information. In addition, the project will address some practical requirements for implementation.

It also evaluates opportunities for cooperative data collection and develop ecosystem indicators specifically for regional needs, and the overall goal is to develop strategies for integration into the council's management process, and, ultimately, it's meant to strengthen that management.

The SSC noted that this council in particular is well positioned for incorporating ecosystem information into its management, but we also recognize that a lot of work is still needed. You have several products, including the ecosystem modeling efforts, that can be leveraged to support including ecosystem aspects into management.

The overview that the SSC received indicated that, at least right now, most applications of food web modeling are focused on hypothesis testing, and that these models are, unfortunately, rarely used directly for management, and as you know, this is true for this region, also. In addition, because of the lack of data and full understanding of the role of environmental effects, it is the trends in recruitment that are often used as a proxy for environmental effects. However, this also means that they're not providing predictive insight, or, in other words, it's very difficult to use them in projections. Overall, it was recognized that more work is needed to make model outputs more relevant for management and provide fishing level recommendations.

The SSC discussed several challenges, including the lack of standardized guidance for interpreting and scoring ecosystem components, the limited availability of environmental indicators for direct inclusion in risk tables. As you're well aware, the SSC, the APs, and also you as a council, have repeatedly struggled with scoring these in our ABC control rule risk matrix, and, last, but not least, it has been difficult to incorporate environmental drivers into our stock assessments.

In most assessments, to my knowledge, the only way environmental factors are included is in temperature, and that's used in the standardization of the index, in particular the fishery independent indices. Given these challenges, the SSC is looking forward to future updates and more discussion on this project.

The SSC also received an update of several key fishery-independent surveys by Dr. Tracey Smart. The SSC really appreciates these annual updates and applauds the various research teams for their considerable and critical ongoing monitoring efforts. The committee also appreciates that Tracey this year included not only the SERFS video update, which was traditionally included in the annual update, but also the SEAMAP coastal trawl survey and the South Atlantic Deepwater Longline survey.

We had some good discussion and asked about potential for spatial and temporal stratification in the SERFS video trap sampling design, and Tracey mentioned that efforts to investigate this are already underway, in collaboration with the Beaufort Science Center staff, to analyze a true randomized stratified sampling design, and the preliminary results indicated that the difference may not all be that different, and we hope that we can perhaps get an update when analyses are further along.

The SSC also recommended that the survey team assesses the center of abundance distribution for a variety of species, and that was already going -- That research was already underway, specifically to track movement over time, and so, again, we are looking forward to further analyses.

The committee also noticed that it would be useful to compare the Northeast bottom trawl survey with the SEAMAP coastal trawl survey, and the Northeast HABCAM with our trap survey. This may be useful to compare species encounter rates, and it may also allow tracking of certain species northward moving, and perhaps detect shifts in center of distribution. It may also be possible, and that would be really cool, to investigate the continuous abundance estimates for some species across regions.

You mentioned shark depredation earlier this afternoon. The SSC also asked about that, and the Deepwater Longline Survey team mentioned that this information is indeed recorded, and this could provide some important information for depredation rates and changes in those rates over time.

Tracey provided the 50 percent female maturity-at-size in many figures, and the SSC noticed that, for almaco jack and gag, the minimum size limits were smaller than the 50 percent maturity, and, as an example, I show here the gag abundance trends. This is a figure from Tracey's presentation. This is the CPUE trend, in red, and in red is the 50 percent female maturity at twenty-nine inches, and the green arrow indicates the twenty-four-inch minimum size limit. The SSC mentioned that the council should look into species that have a minimum size limit that is smaller than the 50 percent maturity, because that could be biologically risky for the sustainability of those species over time.

Then, last, but not least, the SSC expressed considerable concern about the downward trends in CPUE in many presented species, and, again, on the lower-right-hand side is a figure from Tracey's presentation, and this is just an example of scup, and, here again, you see, in red, the CPUE trend with the downward trend in recent years. Actually, in scup, it's quite a few years that we've seen a low CPUE relative to the long-term average.

In my last two slides, I will highlight some of the miscellaneous items that the SSC discussed. During the overview of the amendments, the SSC noted that a possible removal of species from the snapper grouper management unit will affect the ABC rule control risk rating, and, as a reminder, that risk rating is a relative scale, and, if you remove species, they are most likely species with a lower risk, and that means that it will change the relative risk of the remaining species in this risk table.

We also reminded ourselves that we urgently need to address the ABC control rule procedures for species in the control rule Tiers 2 to 4, and, generally speaking, as a reminder, those Tiers 2 to 4 are for species that are assessed through means other than a statistical catch-at-age or a similar complex, or relatively complex, quantitative model. Given that it is likely that the SSC will see more of those non-statistical catch-at-age models in the future, it's important that we start addressing this soon to make sure that we approach this consistently.

Judd also updated us on some SEDAR procedural developments, including the fact that the technical teams were no longer part of the SEDAR process, and the SSC discussed this a little bit, and we expressed some concern that, without technical teams, the SSC's ability to provide feedback during the assessments may be more limited. This in turn can lead to discussions during the SSC review after the assessment is completed, which in turn may result in requests for additional analyses and model runs.

Based on experiences in the past, and this has happened in the past, this can lead to possible delays in providing fishing recommendations to the council. However, we also recognize, and realize, that our collaborations with the Science Center will play an important role in this.

Relative to black sea bass, the SSC asked for, and received, a clarification of the current ABC control rule for black sea bass and the assessment schedule, and, although the SSC is sensitive to the logistical and financial implications, we requested scheduling an in-person meeting, rather than a webinar, for the review of the black sea bass assessment by the full SSC, and, if I remember correctly, I think you actually mentioned that in one of your previous meetings, also.

Finally, as you can see by this vermilion snapper, I was quite disappointed that we postponed the review of the vermilion snapper terms of reference until our next webinar. We also discussed and updated our SSC workgroups and SSC participation in SEDAR panels. As a quick reminder, we have nine workgroups and committees, with twenty-six appointment slots. We also have ten, currently ten, SEDAR panels that the SSC is involved in, and there's forty-three appointment slots in those ten panels.

I realize that you're aware of many of these, because you made many of those appointments, but I just wanted to highlight that many of our SSC members are involved in SSC-related activities besides our regular two in-person meetings and one or two webinars during the year, and, last, but not least, because the two-year term of my unexpected chairmanship, as well as that of the vice chair was up in April, we had elections, and we elected Vice Chair Dr. Wally Bubleby as the new chair, and Dr. Jim Gartland as a new vice chair.

Wally is a marine scientist with South Carolina DNR, and he's no stranger to many, or probably all of you. He's been involved in many stock assessments, the deepwater longline survey, the video trap survey, and several other fisheries-related research projects. Jim may be less familiar to you. He is a senior scientist at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, and has been involved in fisheries research for many, many years, including the NEAMAP trawl survey and the Chesapeake Bay Multispecies Monitoring and Assessment Program, and I really believe, with Wally and Jim, the SSC will have excellent leadership in the coming years.

Lastly, I want to mention that Dr. Fred Serchuk announced his retirement from the SSC. We thanked Fred for his many years of service to our committee. Fred was always a very active participant in our discussions, and his expertise is definitely going to be missed. I want to mention that Fred was also a member of the New England SSC, and I think it's very useful for the SSC to have members that serve in different SSCs, especially in SSCs of our neighboring councils. In my experience, this often provides a very valuable cross-regional perspective on many, many issues that the SSC discusses, and, with this, Madam Chair, I complete my report, at least this part of my report, and I am happy to answer any questions, if you have any.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Marcel. Does anybody have any questions for Marcel? Okay. You were perfect. No questions.

DR. REICHERT: All right. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Marcel. Next is the SEP update, and that's Jennifer Sweeney-Tookes, and she is online.

DR. SWEENEY-TOOKES: Yes, ma'am. I'm not able to be there in person, and I'll be joining you virtually.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Great. We hear you.

DR. SWEENEY-TOOKES: Wonderful. Thank you, Chair, and Christina Curtis is kindly running the slides for me, and so I'm Jennifer Sweeney-Tookes. I'm the Chair of the Social and Economic Panel. Thank you for allowing me to speak today, and I realize I'm one of the few things left between you and dinner, and so I hope to keep this fairly brief.

During our April SEP meeting, which spanned two days, we had our usual general updates on active amendments, and we heard details on all of the really excellent citizen science projects that are happening under Julia Byrd and Meg Withers and their whole team, and also introduced one of the new resilient fisheries projects with the South Atlantic fishing communities. I'm excited to be a part of that very large team of many people at the University of Florida and across the region, and so we discussed those things, but, to get into more details about things that are more relevant to you, we'll go ahead and head into the meat of it.

We spent some time in discussion of the snapper grouper MSE, and the economics component of that. We know that it will have an economic component to the landings and the discard streams that will allow the council to make a comparison of estimated net economic benefits between various management scenarios to be able to evaluate tradeoffs here, and so you're familiar with this, and so all I'll be doing throughout this presentation is just adding in some of SEP's recommendations about each of these different things.

Upon evaluating this, we did suggest a few things, firstly that a meta-analysis of studies that are currently available, and sensitivity analyses that are currently available, might help determine if changes in the willingness to pay would result in any significant changes to the relevant outcome.

We were also -- I think it was the vice chair was really familiar with recent research out of Woods Hole that looked at angler willingness to pay for harvested and discarded fish, including black sea bass, and so he did suggest that you explore, or that they explore, the applicability and use of that study for the South Atlantic context, and then our last recommendation was to investigate historical MRIP data, to look at discard data when biomass was at an equivalent level, to try to determine where economic estimates should be placed.

We heard about some of the new work coming out of the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and they were able to provide us details on analyses being used to evaluate economic value of South Atlantic Council-managed species, and we, as an SEP, definitely agree that this effort could be a good indicator of the economic contribution of the GDP, but we're a little worried about, or a little wary of, needing to be careful about thinking about what goes into that calculation.

We did note some careful consideration needs to be given to weighting on economic contribution estimates versus social aspects, right, and we can't make it all about the economics, and that's not really how it works in fisheries, and then we did have a little bit of concern about using value added, given the distribution of the trips, and the excess of value, and that economic contribution analyses that are coming from input-output software might be missing some essential fishery

contexts, and so these were just a few small concerns that we did raise with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center staff when we spoke with them that day.

We also spent some time working through the social value analysis component of that. We were very excited, as an SEP, to see that such a tool was being developed, and, regardless of what happens to other components of the economic and environmental parts of that risk-value matrix, we really strongly, as an SEP, recommended the continuing development of this tool, and, in particular, we did note though that we would love to see sufficient time and resources allowed to the Science Center to continue to work in this direction.

It has a lot of promise. One thing that we did spend some time discussing was the design of the survey questions about the species groups, that this really does add to the complexity of trying to evaluate for people responding appropriately to the survey, and so we did recommend including a question about how confident respondents were in their responses to account for their self-identified knowledge, or self-identified lack of knowledge, about each of those species, but, overall, we're really excited to see these tools being developed.

We did hear a presentation on citizen science, in particular with the SMILE project, and, as I'm sure you all are familiar with, in 2025, REEF collaborated with social scientists to develop a structured survey, because they wanted to identify the factors that would interest and motivate snorkelers and divers to engage with the SMILE project, and so they presented those findings to us, and then asked for recommendations for further analysis of this, or where to go next, and so some of the recommendations that we did offer were things like reviewing open source digital libraries of non-app-based citizen science work and contextualizing those findings to marine-based work.

We also suggested that this would be such a great place to explain the management process, and to identify and explain the management council in those training materials, and, in this way, making sure that citizen scientists see where their data can become meaningful, and we did feel that -- They asked about future research and what sorts of things they should prioritize, and we really did, as an SEP, think this was a great place to test out how recruitment might change, based on how data is shared back to these communities.

Council and SEDAR staff have developed a new fishery performance report tool that's using automated text analysis to summarize key trends and themes that are being found in the meeting minutes. This is an exciting development. This has a lot of potential. Of course, we always have huge ideas, and then we get caught up in the weeds, and so we did that as an SEP.

Some of the things we discussed were this idea of lexicon or sentiment analyses, right, that we know, when people are coding data, that we handle things differently than perhaps machine coding might, and so we discussed some concerns about how automated analysis would handle terms that could be positive or negative, depending on the context, and that words don't tend to really be neutral in this process. Of course, human-conducted qualitative data analysis is preferable, but this is extremely time expensive. It's extremely expensive, and it's extremely costly in terms of time, and so we understand the desire and the need to try to use AI technology.

We have a new member of SEP who has great experience in the technology field, but also in anthropology and social sciences, and so it was a really rich discussion talking about how we could

really make this all work well for council staff, but, ultimately, the SEP felt strongly that this type of analysis could really be a huge help for public comment, for reporting back rapidly, and to making sure that participants know that they're being heard, and it's being recorded in a substantial way.

The last key thing that we spent time discussing was another really great new program through council staff, where they're developing an introductory presentation for fishermen on the role of social science and economics in the management process, and so this is sort of an educational module that they are putting together, workshoping, and we, first of all, lauded this.

We thought this was great, and we're very excited, and, of course, had a million other things we would love to see inserted into the modules, which would not be possible, but did offer some small feedback, in that this is really a chance to drive home to stakeholders, to fishermen, that their opinions matter, and that those filter into the management process. This is an opportunity for fishermen to provide information directly, because, without fisher participation and engagement, data collection just falls apart.

It is important to be really clear in this process, and this is a great place to teach and clarify this, that social science is not voting, that it's not going to be I told them it should be X, and therefore X will happen, but it will also show that communities can be affected in a lot of different ways, and that hopefully will experience positive changes, and that, really importantly, these modules have the chance to show that, in the long run, information, or a lack of information, can really affect management decisions, and this is a great place to have interactive activities to make this really clear, or to give real world examples.

Ultimately this is really a great new program, and the SEP is really excited to see where it stands when we meet again next April, and so, with that, I think that is the summary of what you should have heard from me for the SEP, and I would love to answer any questions that you might have.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Jennifer. Does anybody have any questions for Jennifer? All right. I'm not seeing any hands, Jennifer. Thanks so much.

DR. SWEENEY-TOOKES: Thank you very much.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. I think the last thing on the list here is -- I think this is something that we've decided to add to our agendas, is species outside our jurisdiction, and so Dewey, Amy, Charlie, I don't know if you all have anything you'd like to share with us regarding -- Well, we can start with ICCAT, with Dewey, and would you like -- Do you have anything to share?

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Just that the annual spring meeting of the IAC met in Florida, in Fort Lauderdale, where it met, or Dania, Florida, and it was -- It's where you have the working groups meeting and discussing, strategizing for the upcoming November meeting of ICCAT, and so you get science reports, and different things like that, and this particular looking at is this year, and so you're developing concepts, and having species working groups and stuff like that, and so that's kind of what took place there. It happens, and there will be another meeting in October, the fall IAC meeting in October, for preparation for going to ICCAT for its annual meeting.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Dewey. Any questions for Dewey? Go ahead, Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and Amy Dukes was there for her first meeting representing the council, and so we welcomed her with open arms.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and thank you for attending, Amy, as well. All right. I'll go ahead to HMS, and that's Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair. I did not attend the HMS AP meeting as a representative of the council. I think that was actually Tom. Were you online, Tom? I don't want to take your thunder if you were online.

MS. MURPHEY: Tom, would you like to --

MR. ROLLER: So I can add in briefly, and, Amy, I may need to back you up on this. I didn't attend in-person, but I had a conflict with the North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission, and so I was only able to attend half the meeting online. I will say that, you know, it was -- I was looking and just trying to remind myself of the agenda.

You know, the first day was a lot of discussion of -- It was just discussing about what happened at ICCAT. There was a lot of discussion about, you know, bluefin, and some of the management measures. Day two, the really cool thing was, and this is, unfortunately, when I had to log-off, was the recreational roundtable, and I really wish I could have participated in that, and not just virtually, but in-person, but, again, I had that schedule conflict, and so --

MS. MURPHEY: Amy, can you talk about that?

MS. DUKES: Sure, Madam Chair, and I'll add to that a little bit. A couple of the highlights, and the meeting was May 12th to the 14th in Silver Springs, and the ICCAT, the recent ICCAT, recommendations for quota changes were discussed. The biggest one, I think that will have the biggest positive push to the United States, is that the proposed annual total for the United States for bluefin tuna quota is actually increasing about 230 metric tons, which is a decent increase, and so there will be some proposed rules coming out by HMS to address that.

We spoke a little bit about Amendment 15 becoming effective in early April. For those of you that don't know all those numbers in our heads, Amendment 15 for HMS was about the spatial management and electronic monitoring cost allocations for fishermen to be able to access closed areas, and so the closest to our section would be the Charleston Bump. It is closed for commercial effort from February to April.

Now fishermen, if they choose to pay for EM, have extra observers on their boat, and do that extra effort, they can now fish in that area. Unfortunately, that rule didn't come into effect until I think April 2nd or 3rd, and so it was just the month of April, but there were several fishermen that did enter that area, and participate in that program, and very little bycatch.

That is the biggest, coolest thing that this is showing, is that they're fishing in the closed area, and they're doing all this electronic monitoring, and they're showing that they are not having interactions with other species, which is exactly why we're doing this. They're actually targeting the catch of swordfish, and they had very effective trips, and so that was cool to see.

They discussed things that we're discussing, headboat limits, equitable access, thinking about ways that they may be able to have HMS look at different limits for headboats for different fisheries, and they talked a lot about the one-stop shop reporting initiative that continues, specifically with the electronic logbook specific to for-hire. We had presentations by HMS in the past about this upcoming final rule, and we should be seeing something later this year about it, but it sounds like this idea of, programs that are already in play, they're going to try to mimic things a little bit, and so I'm fingers crossed and hopeful for that.

Lots of conversation in that recreational roundtable about shark predation, how it's an agency priority, lots of conversations about cooperative research and citizen science, and how that too is a tool in our toolbox, and how NOAA Fisheries, specifically HMS, wants to start to utilize that a little bit more from a cooperative science, good science perspective.

Lots of conversations in that roundtable too, and I'm actually looking at my notes a little bit too, was kind of that state consolidation of data, looking at ways that we can actually standardize approaches and characterize shark predation. They talked about maybe a workshop looking at technology as a solution for this, strategies that address the industry.

We did talk about Amendment 60 a little bit, and so Bob Zales was there, and so was I, and so we discussed Amendment 60 that's being considered here, with this idea of being able to have different gear types. The big thing also would be -- I just lost my train of thought, and I don't know, and I think that's kind of it. I don't know, and that was probably way more than you wanted to know.

MS. MURPHEY: No, and thank you, Amy. Any questions for Amy? Go ahead, and then we can have Dewey.

MS. DUKES: Matt, back to your presentation, and thank you. Thank you very much for actually looking at the tournament compliance that's coming out of HMS. As a tournament director of HMS tournaments, I know the amount of time and energy that goes into applying for those, and then doing the data on the backside, and, the fact that people aren't doing it, and now are getting tickets, thank you. I appreciate that.

MR. WALIA: Yes, and I'll pass on to our folks. I appreciate it. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Matt. Dewey, did you have a question?

MR. HEMILRIGHT: No, and I just wanted to point out that the areas that Amy was talking about, that has given access to fishermen under enhanced monitoring, have been closed for twenty-six years, and so they were reasonable, and they've been finally opened under the enhanced monitoring, and paying it forward, and so that's a small positive that has happened. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Dewey. Charlie, you got anything for take reduction teams?

MR. PHILIPS: Not really. Unfortunately, I missed the last webinar. I was in D.C. at another meeting, but, while I was up there, I talked to one of the other members on the take reduction team from the Northeast, and they are still expressing a lot of dissatisfaction with on-demand gear for the lobster fishery, because of just the difficulty of making it work with the way that fishery is

prosecuted, whereas black sea bass, obviously, is a really good fit for on-demand gear, and then there was -- I'm not sure whether they're still working on it, but they were working on towers on the hill, so they could monitor AIS.

I've talked to a couple of people in Georgia that were -- They were trying to put towers on the hill so they could monitor AIS, so that, if boats were actually going too fast, they could send messages to them, so they would know that there might be whales in the area, and things like that, and so that seemed to be some pretty promising technology that could help the whales, and still work well with fishermen and people, you know, on the water, but, obviously, a lot of the regulations that were kind of being floated have been backed off on with the current administration, and so I think they're going to have an in-person meeting coming up in the next few months, and so we'll see where things go from there.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Charlie. I've got Sonny.

MR. GWIN: Thank you, Madam Chair, and, just to add to that, there's going to be an in-person meeting December 1st through 3rd, to be determined where, and also there's going to be another spring meeting, and there's some -- What do you call it, but asking everybody where they want to -- The date they want to have, and so that will be in the next year.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thanks, Sonny. Anybody have any questions for Charlie? All right. Well, thank you, guys, for being able to do a kind of an impromptu update. I appreciate it. We've got 15 minutes. Are you all feeling like just go ahead and breaking for the evening? I don't know that we've got anything else to --

I'm going to let John go through the staff report and highlight a couple of things, since we've got a little time. Usually we just have that as reading material, but, while we've got a chance, let's let the staff shine a little bit.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Thanks, Trish. I just want to give a shoutout on a couple of things that are in there, and so we have the Sea Grant Extension Fellowship that we did, where they helped with communication, and it was kind of related to the council and the red snapper, but, you know, it extended over a number of years.

It was a really great program. It just recently ended, but we have met, as noted in there, with the Sea Grant folks from around the region who were part of it, and there seemed a lot of interest in doing something like this again, and so we're pretty excited about that, and I think it would be great to get that in there. It's a good opportunity for young people, and it has also worked out really great for us. It helped us expand our outreach quite a bit.

The other thing is to say keep an eye out on the content related to the MSA 50. That's mentioned in there, but things will be coming out during the course of the year, feature articles and things in the newsletter et cetera acknowledging that, and so just, you know, keep an eye out. It's kind of a nice thing to talk about for a change, and we don't seem to have enough of those.

Then I also want to just put a bug in your ear and say that MREP will be in Charleston in February, so this is another thing that, you know, I'm personally pretty excited about. For years, it has been

held down in the St. Pete area, and it's going to be really great now to consider doing some workshops up in Charleston.

We have great resources from South Carolina DNR. Thanks, Amy, and thanks, Marcel, a retiree from that great organization, and our SSC chair, Wally, Tracey, all the great people there that are able to, I think, really step in and do the science aspects of it. I think it's really great that we're going to do that, and Christina is spearheading that for us, and so we'll have a busy year in 2027, but it's some really good stuff going on. I guess the final thing, as always, is there are a lot of citizen science activities, and so take a moment and just keep up with all the things that Julia and Meg seem to pull off. It's pretty impressive, and so thank you, Trish.

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

MR. CARMICHAEL: Chip said the pages regarding our resilient fisheries projects are updated. A lot of things are going, and we finally have all of our projects out. We have a few that are pretty close to getting us information, and, you know, we'll start moving into the next phases of that. A lot is coming, particularly with pertaining to the governance and the operating procedures and stuff.

We'll be working with our other councils to the north, and so those are out there on the website as well. You can take a look at that, and see how those projects are coming, and, as we actually do get final things in hand, we'll be coming here and telling you about it, and what we've learned, and how it's going to affect how we go forward.

MS. MURPHEY: We'll just go ahead and just jump to the end too, and just go touch on the 2026 meeting schedule.

MR. CARMICHAEL: As you know, it's there, the meeting schedule. As usual, we fill it out as we go. The year gets quite busy. This year will not be any different, I am sure. As you can see, October, for example, already has a whole bunch going on. Our next meeting will be in North Charleston, in September, and then, in December, we're in North Carolina. I think we're back at Beaufort, and is that what -- Yes, and I'm pretty certain. Yes, back at Beaufort, and then you see the 2027 meetings. We have all those planned, and we know where we're going, and so, probably for the September iteration, we'll put the 2028 dates and stuff, so you can mark your calendars accordingly.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. I think we have done about as much as we can do this evening, and we still finished ten minutes early, and so I guess let's just enjoy that, and so we'll go ahead and break for the day, and we'll see everybody again at 8:30 tomorrow, and so thank you, everyone.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on June 8, 2026.)

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JUNE 9, 2026

TUESDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Council Session I of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the World Golf Renaissance in St. Augustine, Florida on Tuesday, June 9, 2026, and was called to order by Chairman Trish Murphey.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Good morning, everybody. Back to day two. I think we're going to start out with a brief -- I think it's going to probably be a brief update on the risk-value matrix, and we've got John, Andy, and John Walter, and so, if you guys are ready, Andy or John Walter.

MR. STRELCHECK: All right. Well, I'll go ahead and lead off, and I know John Carmichael has already talked some about the CCC meeting. The risk-value matrix is, obviously, no longer being done kind of at a national level. We convened a meeting, once the kind of decision was made to postpone the deadline, with our council counterparts, and discussed whether or not, you know, each of the councils wanted to proceed.

There is still, obviously, some interest and value that's seen for proceeding with the data and information that we were putting together for that matrix, and so there's a couple of things now at play. One is the Science Center and Regional Office had requested for some representation on some smaller working groups with council staff, and so the councils have provided us some names that will help for reviewing the data and information that is used for creating those estimates of value and risk.

Then the Science Center, Matthew McPherson and his group, and John can talk more about this, they had actually gone out and done a social values survey with council staff, Regional Office staff, and others, and they're gathering that data, assimilating that data, and we'll have those results available as well for both the workgroups and the councils going forward.

There's also, I know, interest in how we can apply those surveys for use by the APs and other stakeholders, and trying to navigate some Paperwork Reduction Act requirements for doing surveys, and so the bottom line is the work is proceeding much more slowly at a regional level, and we're, obviously, working to collaborate, and coordinate, with the council, and so I'll stop there and let John add anything else.

DR. WALTER: I think Clay is online, and Clay wanted to brief the council.

MS. MURPHEY: Clay, they're getting you unmuted.

DR. PORCH: All right. There we go. Can you hear me?

MS. MURPHEY: We sure can.

DR. WALTER: All right. Excellent. Good morning, everyone. Andy said most of it, and so I won't repeat everything that he said. I will mention that we rolled out our methods to the SSC and the Socioeconomic Panel, who raised some concerns about the economic valuation approach for recreational fisheries, the value-added approach, but they also recognized there were issues with any other potential approach and didn't give any specific recommendations there. They also recommended continuing the development of the social values tool that Andy mentioned.

Most of the issues raised by the council in the letter they sent have been resolved. Probably the biggest single issue is how to incorporate the durable expenditures, like the value of the car that pulls the boat when you go recreational fishing, how much of that should be attributed to recreational fishing versus other uses, et cetera, which is difficult to quantify, and, if you're going to account for durable expenditures, how do you do it in a way that's comparable with the commercial fisheries, and so still looking at that and trying to figure out the best path forward there.

I think some of the work that we're doing, and discussions we're having, could have an influence on the national process, because remember that we're looking at trying to get recreational fishing value and commercial fishing value on pretty much the same metric, so it's an apples-to-apples comparison, and so that work is ongoing.

We're also working on an information sheet that will explain how the recreational economic valuation is going on. As you'll recall, there were people on the council and elsewhere who raised some examples of recreational values that were considerably higher than the numbers that we put forward, but most of the difference was actually attributable to the fact that say the ASA estimates, and others, were considering state-managed fisheries, freshwater fisheries, and everything else, whereas our analysis only focused on federally-managed species, and most of the recreational value is, in fact, freshwater and state fisheries, and so that accounts for most of the difference.

There were also some differences in how you account for durable expenditures, and so we're making good progress on that. I'm pretty happy with where they're going, but I agree that there are also more pressing matters right now before the council, and so we're kind of doing this in the background.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Clay. Does anybody have any questions? John Carmichael, do you -- John, would you like to add more to -- we've heard from Andy and Clay, and would you like to add any more to this update?

MR. CARMICHAEL: No, and I think we've get the basics, you know, and I reported a little bit on it from the CCC, and so, you know, we're not having things coming down from that level, and then what I was thinking is we'll continue to try to work through this, you know, make use of kind of the principle of it of trying to see, you know, what are our most important things, and what are our most valuable things.

You know, maybe, to some extent, we can work that into things like our research and monitoring plan, and think about, you know, what are the top priority species that we should be focusing on in that, and, you know, we could work at some into our workplan as well, and so that's sort of the way I see us using it, is folding the underlying concept into the different products that we regularly use.

You know, I think continuing to try and find a good way to value our fisheries that's equitable across-the-board is a good effort, and trying to figure out, you know, what's the non-monetary value components, because that's something that has really been lacking for many of our fisheries, and we know, with the nature of our fisheries, it can be a lot harder to just figure out what that is,

you know, than it is with some more like, you know, big industrial style fisheries with huge landings and stuff.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, John. Any questions from anybody? Okay. All right. Well, thank you, and I think now we'll move up to -- We've got Richard coming up to, Richard Cody, to talk about the MRIP updates.

DR. CODY: Thanks for the opportunity to present today a little bit on the updates that we have on the MRIP program. I also have Tim Sartwell online, who will handle a couple of slides related to RAPID, the RAPID initiative, and so what I'll do first is I'll cover the FES, and then, if there's time after Tim's talks, we can give you an update on the National Academies' review of the recreational fishing data and survey standards, as well as the review process.

So, as I mentioned, there were a few things I wanted to cover today. The first is the Fishing Effort Survey, and then the estimation schedule, and so I'll get right into that. Just a little bit of background and dealing with the motivation for the 2024 FES study. This was a large-scale study side-by-side benchmarking of the new methodology alongside the current FES survey. They used equal sample sizes, same amount of sample size, and it covered the entire range of the FES survey, and so all states that were using the survey.

This was largely driven by a response to concerns that we have heard, you know, for several years now related to recreational estimates being too high, and so, when we looked into that, and we have a research program that pilot studies and tests different factors that might impact the survey performance, and we saw some reason to pursue this further, and then, also, I'll just mention here as well that that research program is something that is something we're committed to for continuous improvement of recreational fishing surveys. Surveys are not one and done. They change over time, in terms of their performance.

What we tested in 2024 -- As I mentioned, the experimental design overlapped, and it was conducted in all states, Maine through Mississippi, and then also in Hawaii as well, where the FES is conducted. The key differences compared to the old, or the first, FES design are outlined here. Increased frequency of administration, and the survey basically is mailed out monthly, instead of every two months. We have a revised question order. The sequence of fishing activity questions is changed to improve reporting accuracy, and I'll get into a little bit as the rationale is for those changes later.

Then there's a split reference period, and so the two-month fishing wave, we'll say, activity question is separated into two individual one-month questions, and, also, there's an overlap from month to month, and so, the two months that are asked about in we'll say the first administration of the survey, one of those months, the second month, will be asked about again in the following month's administration, and so you essentially get two bites of the apple when it comes to sampling a given month, and then this allows us to combine two independent estimates for each month and use composite estimation to maximize sample size and maximize precision.

Just a little bit of showing you the changes. On the left-hand side, we have the FES questionnaire as it previously was designed, and what you'll see for -- You have shore and boat mode here, and you've got two questions, essentially. The first question, with the green box around it, basically is

asking about the numbers of days saltwater fishing in January and February of 2024, and so it could be any wave of the year, and so it asks you about two months in one single question.

Then it's followed by another question related to the numbers of trips made in the previous twelve months, and the rationale behind this order was that you could use the second question to basically look at the first question, the error rate, or to validate the first question, and this is a common practice. It also means that the easier question is asked first, where there's less recall involved, and then you ask the second question as a follow-up, and so you kind of ease into the survey, and that's a common practice with many probability-based surveys, to do this with questions.

Then, the second, you'll see it's the same design underneath there for the private boat mode as well, but, if you go to the right-hand side, you'll see that the year question, fishing trips in the year, is reversed, and so it's asked first, and then you have two months asked about separately, and so Month 1 and Month 2, and this is asked about for both private boat and for shore trips, and so they're separated out.

A little bit about the results so far. This is really the comparison of the 2024 estimates using the new design with the old FES, and so it's a ratio, and you have, in the middle there, a green line that represents, if both surveys gave you the same response, you would have the midpoint of the box plot landing right on that green line, and you can see, in both cases, for private boat and shore, particularly for private boat, that they are lower than what you would expect from the old survey, and so not quite as large of a difference as we found in the original pilot study, but there are a number of differences in the way this study was conducted that would indicate this is an accurate response.

Looking at this again, breaking up the entire -- What you looked at in the last previous plot were all states combined over the course of 2024, the year. In this case, what we've done is we've done states combined for each wave, and what you'll see are, for both modes, shore and private boat, you have a fairly pronounced seasonal effect, with the differences between the new design and the old design being more pronounced in the less active wave, and so January/February, March/April, and November/December.

During the peak seasons, you have a closer relationship between the two surveys, and so they're closer together in most cases, at least in Wave 4 in particular, and then, if you break it out by state over the course of the year, you'll see that generally states fall below the line, indicating that lower estimates are occurring for those states, but you do see some states with high error bars around them falling above the line, and so it's a general trend, and we're dealing with one year of data here for the 2024 comparison.

The model would take into account differences, annual differences, and so, although we would expect the general trend of lower estimates to occur from year to year, the relationship with states might vary a bit. Outlined here in the green box are the South Atlantic states, and you can see North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida all fall below the line, except for Florida shore mode, where you have it more or less agreeing with the previous survey.

Key findings and conclusions of the study, the new FES should increase accuracy of the recreational effort estimates by mitigating potential over-reporting of trips, and you'll note that this was more pronounced in the lower -- The differences in the survey designs were more pronounced

in the lower-activity waves, and so we think that reporting accuracy is impacted by the numbers of trips, or the frequency of trips, that an angler will take.

Anglers want to report their trips, and so, during the lower-activity waves, I think where there are less trips to report, there's probably a greater tendency for anglers to telescope trips from periods outside of the reporting period into the current period to be able to report a trip. This is less the case in the higher-activity waves, where there are more trips to report, and so there's less chance of telescoping.

What we found is that, generally, as I mentioned, the estimates are lower. Differences are more pronounced for private boat in low-activity waves, as I mentioned. There are still differences also for shore mode as well. The primary driver is the revised question order. It created a beneficial bounding effect to mitigate over-reporting, and what I mean by that is that they're asked to report their annual level trips first, and so that suffices -- Or it satisfies the need to report fishing activity, or the desire to report fishing activity, and also it creates bounds of what they would report at the monthly level, and so they're able to identify as anglers without biasing the primary trip count questions.

The study itself demonstrates the feasibility of monthly sampling even for a mail survey, a national-level or a regional-level mail survey, and also the benefits of composite estimate design. As I mentioned, we get two chances to sample each month, so the added benefit there is greater precision and stability of the estimates.

So, 2026 implementation, the calibration model peer review and implementation, the model itself builds on what we've done in 2018, and, in that case, we used what we call a small-area approach. We have upgraded that in some respects. We've gone to a Bayesian hierarchical model approach, which allows us to resample and improve precision through that methodology, and, you know there's some benefits there to getting that additional sample, in terms of precision.

We did the public peer review workshops in September of 2025. The peer review panel agreed that the proposed method was reasonable, and represented a state-of-the-art methodology, and that it fully addressed the complexity of the survey data to rescale the historical time series, and so all terms of references for the review were met in part, or fully, and so they encouraged us to revise and fine-tune the model as needed following the peer review recommendations.

The calibration results, as I mentioned, are not going to be a simple reflection of the 2024 study. It's a different model, and we'll have more details in that model later this year. The status of the monthly estimation production, currently, we have the estimation framework, and then also the survey administration framework in place. We are administering the new survey monthly, but we are keeping up the wave-level estimation schedule, and the reason for that is more resource-related than anything else. Right now, we feel like the resources are better aligned, we'll say, with doing a wave-level estimate, but the idea is to get to the monthly level as soon as we can.

the impacts on fishery management, in summer of 2026, we'll publish the calibrated historical estimates. That will include forty-plus years of revised data, rescaled with the new design, for subsequent fishery management decisions and stock assessments. The updated information, we feel, will more accurately reflect the status of stocks, and so there could be changes, in terms of their impacts on regulations and catch limits.

The FES itself produces only private boat and shore mode estimates for effort, and so all the species and catch information that we get related to the FES comes from the APAIS, and so the effort information is generally multiplied by the catch information to get the estimate for each species, and that catch estimate basically functions as a batch process, and the reason I bring this up is that it's very difficult for us to tease out, we'll say, priority species, and make those the focus of estimation. As I mentioned, it's a batch process, and so all species go through at the same time, and the reason for that is to preserve the integrity of the sample weights that we use to do the estimates.

The FES milestones, the only one really that needs to be addressed here is the final one, and I have it in yellow. Originally, we had wanted the calibrated time series released in spring, and, obviously, we haven't met that deadline. The revised target that we're aiming for right now is August, and I'm pretty optimistic we'll make that target. We've had a few challenges here, you know, a government shutdown, and we had a loss of several of our staff, and so it made it, you know, challenging for us to get -- To maintain that spring deadline.

The estimate publication schedule, final estimates for 2025 have been published, and they're available since May 11th. They don't reflect the new calibration methodology, and so that will arrive later, once we get the full time series calibrated, which we expect -- As I said, we're targeting August, and things are moving along very well right now. We have done initial runs with a number of different states in the model, and the estimation process has held up.

We did our first runs with the entire suite of states just in the last couple of weeks, and are in the process right now of tweaking that. Things are going pretty well, in my opinion, and so I think that target of August is doable, and I'm optimistic we can make it. As far as preliminary 2026 estimates, we've had to kind of put those on the back burner a bit while we work on the calibration model, and so we're targeting late summer. As soon as we get the calibration work completed, we'll start working on those, or finish up working on those. I'll hand over to Tim Sartwell, who I hope is online, and he can handle the RAPID component.

MR. SARTWELL: Thanks, Richard. Can you hear me okay?

MS. MURPHEY: We can.

MS. BROUWER: We've got you, Tim.

MR. SARTWELL: Excellent. Thank you all. Thank you all for having me this morning. Again, my name is Tim Sartwell. My current role is the Special Advisor for Recreational Fisheries to the Deputy Undersecretary for Oceans and Atmosphere. All that means is I am working directly with Dr. Neil Jacobs and Laura Grimm, who are leading NOAA right now on recreational fisheries issues, particularly recreational fisheries data and the RAPID process.

What is RAPID? RAPID is not the new MRIP. RAPID is the transition process that will lead the transition from MRIP to a new recreational fishing data enterprise that improves trust and confidence in our recreational fishing data and management. The resulting enterprise, that we are building together, is going to be based on a strong state-federal partnership and combine all available recreational catch and effort data for use by assessment scientists and decision makers.

This transition will require partnership throughout the process and will result in clearly articulated roles, responsibilities, and governance model for NOAA, states, territories, commissions, and councils. We seek to empower our partners in states to use data systems that fit their needs and support them to ensure fishery management mandates can still be achieved.

One thing I do want to be clear is that the current MRIP data collection systems will continue as we go through this transition process, and as Richard just laid out with the FES updates coming alongside the RAPID transition.

I do see the interstate commissions playing a very pivotal role in helping to collect, organize, and produce the trusted recreational fisheries data, but I want to ensure that the councils are part of this process as well, and that you all, and your SSCs, are helping to inform how to best manage and use this recreational data.

We have developed a small steering committee to help guide and support the RAPID transition process. Currently on the steering committee is Gregg Bray, the Assistant Director of the Fishery Information Network for the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission; Alex DiJohnson and Geoff White from the Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Program under ASMFC; Dr. Luiz Barbieri, the Science Program Leader for FWRI Marine Fisheries Research Program; Dr. John Hare, the Science Director of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center for NOAA; Dr. Evan Howell, the NOAA Fisheries Deputy Assistant Administrator for Scientific Programs, and myself.

This core team of six will navigate and coordinate a lot of the early RAPID activities, and help facilitate the regional workshops, and truly build the strengthened state-federal partnership. I will say, as we do break into those regional workshops, we will lean on the expertise in the region, from the states, councils, and commissions, to help us organize and facilitate those regional workshops that meet the needs and goals of RAPID and the regions, but I am excited to work with this talented group and the expertise they provide.

I think many of you have heard Dr. Howell speak before, and, you know, his vision is a nationally standard, regionally-flexible approach to recreational data partnership. As I mentioned, you know, the regional workshops across the country will be the building blocks that will help us design the new partnership, and, as I mentioned, we will lean heavily on the regional expertise to help design and facilitate those regional workshops.

I am currently working with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to procure a neutral facilitator to help navigate those discussions and bring everyone together around a shared partnership vision. Bob Beal, and his team at ASMFC, have been super supportive of the RAPID, as has Dave Donaldson in the Gulf, and I really want to thank the commissions for their support moving forward, but the RFP has been published, and the request for proposals from the facilitators are due tomorrow, and so we are moving quickly to get organized and start planning these workshops. Again, we hope to start them late summer, or early fall, and carry through the winter.

We also are planning on doing multiple check-ins with the angler and recreational fishing community. We want to make sure that anglers -- That we hear from anglers about how they envision their data is collected, and how they see the system could work better. We want to build

trust and credibility with our recreational data collection and management, and so starting with the community that is affected by the data collection is the right place to start.

I think a lot of these discussions will be very in the weeds, program management roles, responsibilities, resource needs and requirements, but I do want to make sure we are transparent with our process and that the anglers have input into how their data is collected and their fisheries managed. That is it for my remarks. I think, Richard, I'll turn it back over to you. I think you've got a few more slides, but I will hang out, and take any more questions, and I think many of you have my email, and contact information, but, if not, feel free to grab them from Richard as well. Thank you.

DR. CODY: Thanks, Tim. Just a couple of other items, and these won't take very long. First of all, I want to draw your attention to the National Academies peer review. This was done by the Committee on National Statistics, and so they looked at our recreational fishing survey and data standards in a review last year.

Our national survey and data standards, their intent is to serve as guidelines on core aspects of recreational fisheries data collection and estimation, and to promote data quality, consistency, and comparability across state, regional, and federal surveys, and then also to have a shared use of the data that comes from those surveys, in terms of the consistency.

The National Academies conducted an independent review assessing the standards' effectiveness for key data uses, and aligning also with federal best practices, and so part of the driver for this was an OMB guidance for federal surveys to come up with standards for their surveys.

In January 2026, they published their report, and that's available on the National Academies website, and you can download it for free. Basically, it includes recommendations for improvement, including potential guidance related to the use of AI and modeling approaches and the integration of non-probability data. By non-probability data, I mean volunteer logs, fishing app type of data that isn't set up to, you know, operate under a normal probability-based survey design, and so they did draw attention to that, and requested that we focus some attention to it.

All right. I apologize for this slide. It's got a litany of stuff here, but, basically, what were the results of the survey, or the review, were that they found that the standards themselves were well-designed and consistent with the OMB standards, and the panel supported one of the things that we had tried to do earlier on, based on our work to address the OMB guidelines, were come up with some publication standards for our data.

They didn't recommend that we censor, or not publish data, that's highly imprecise. In fact, they recommended that we continue to publish it, that the decisions to use those data can be made at the assessment level, or at the management level, on the appropriate use of the data, and so the panel noted that probability-based survey research should continue to be the primary source of data, and so surveys, standard probability-based surveys, should be the foundation block that other survey information, and other information in general, is used to augment, and they did make that recommendation.

As I mentioned, they asked us to look into new developments, such as AI, machine learning, and we are currently looking at AI, in terms of possibilities related to imputation, where you have we'll

say missing size or biological information, better ways to generate data to fill holes in those estimation process.

The peer review report includes a general timeframe for us to address these recommendations, and there are several in there that are more near-term, one to three years, but they have identified some that could take up to ten years, such as adoption of some of the new technologies, and so we're drafting a plan right now to respond to this, and that should be available sometime in the next few months, pending approvals and so on.

One thing I wanted to draw your attention to is the new partner review procedures, and this is the last part of my presentation, for recreational catch estimates. One of the things that we have heard from our constituents, including our state partners and regional partners, is that the review process is not as we'll say inclusive as it could be, or as transparent as it could be, and so we've developed a tracking system to look at queries or questions related to -- That come up in the review process, and that need to be addressed.

Sometimes, you know, there will be a question related to an estimate, whether it's too high, too low, or not consistent with recent trend information, and those are the kinds of things that we are trying to address.

As I mentioned earlier, that we have to do our estimation process as a batch, and so all species go through at once. What we can do is focus on the priority species for the review process, so those questions related to the estimates of those species can be addressed first, or would be addressed first, and we could defer the other queries, or less high-priority ones, to a later date.

What that means is that the review process itself could be expedited a little bit to help with the process to release estimates later this year, in August, and so I wanted to draw your attention to that, because that is something we can do to maybe speed things up a little bit, and that was the final slide. Thanks for having myself and Tim here, and I would be glad to answer any questions, if you have any.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Richard, and thank you, Tim. Anybody have some questions? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thanks, and I'm just trying to digest this. It's a lot, and, you know, obviously, MRIP has taken a lot of flack, for quite a few years, and what I see is the transition to pulling in states that are now going to start trying to collect data, so that it will be a multi-jurisdictional approach to getting the answer to the question, and so that's kind of what I'm seeing on a large scale. I just want to, you know, confirm that, and, with all the weaknesses, and I know there's some strong points in there too, but what kind of long-term timeframe are we looking at?

DR. CODY: Are you referring to RAPID itself?

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes.

DR. CODY: I'll defer to Tim for that one.

MR. SARTWELL: Thanks, Charlie. I think, yes, you are correct. I mean, I think we are building a new data system that incorporates multiple data streams. We're not dependent on the single data stream, but I don't have -- I think a lot of the angst I hear around RAPID is that we don't have the answer yet, and we're going to build it together, and so, you know, it's a little bit not a great answer to say, well, we don't know what the answer is, but that will come. That will come with time, and that will come with multiple discussions in these workshops, and we'll figure out how to do it better.

The time scale is RAPID, the transition process, we envision about a year, but it's not going to just be a flip of the switch at the end of it and say, okay, now go do something completely different. You know, this is building a new data enterprise, and, for it to be sustainable, we need to make sure everyone understands where we're going, how we're going to get there, and the implementation timelines.

You know, if there are new data streams coming in to producing recreational estimates, we need to figure out how those impact the historical time series, and what we're looking at in the future, and so it's full implementation is a much longer scale than the transition process. I hope that makes sense.

MS. MURPHEY: Charlie, are you good with that, or did you want to follow-up? Okay. Thank you, Tim. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Thank you. It certainly was a lot. I appreciate the presentation. Is there a process in here that actually groundtruths any of these? Like is there a way of taking a survey and then going back and doing like an in-depth interview with the person that filled it out, to actually see how that person's responses were captured and measured by the survey?

DR. CODY: There are a few different approaches that are used to go back and check basically your homework, and so, for instance, with the FES, we do a non-response sort of a test afterwards, and so we look at the profiles of the people that have responded. We use Census Bureau data to kind of get an idea of the age makeup, and some other factors related to what the sample looked like, and we compare that to those that didn't respond. There are adjustments that we can do there that will allow us to kind of correct the answer.

Now, as far as ground truthing is concerned, I mean, surveys in general -- The reason you do a survey is because you don't have the truth available, and so you don't have an estimate that you can -- Or not an estimate, but a value you can look to and say, all right, we're on course, or we're close to what it should be. There are methods that are being looked at right now, for instance satellite imagery, counting boats, and there's some AI-related work that's ongoing where they're able to identify, you know, fishing boats with a high precision level to get a sense of how much effort is actually going into the fishing trips.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I apologize, but, even in that example, we're using more models, more assumptions, to kind of try to get to that groundtruth. Do we not have -- When somebody fills out a survey, do we not have that individual's information, and have we ever considered going back - - Pick 100 people and go back and look at -- Specifically like interview them about their responses about, and see if -- Because we're asking -- We're trying to condense this, right?

We're trying to make it easy. We're trying to make people want to respond, and make it somewhat convenient, but if you sat down with them, if you had an hour of time, you could actually ask them questions about that trip, about that day, what they caught, and I know, you know, we're relying on memory, but is that just an effort that we don't have the resources for, or it's not helpful?

DR. CODY: No, and, just related to that, we do what we call a cognitive testing, and so, for instance, before we rolled out the question order change, we got a group of anglers together, a panel of anglers, and they reviewed the questions. We asked them about how they would interpret the questions, how they reacted to them, if they thought it was an improvement over the old design, that kind of thing.

We haven't gone and done follow-ups with individuals with the FES, to find out if their answers matched what they had previously reported, because there is a recall issue there, and so you follow-up, and now the recall period is even longer than it was, and you're asking them to verify what they've reported already.

The FES itself doesn't get any catch information, and it just gets basic information on the numbers of fishing trips taken, shore and private boat, and that's it, and so, you know, we haven't gone that route of trying to dive deeper into that. We have used the survey to do some follow-ups, in terms of questions that we wanted to add additionally, or to check we'll say a state survey against the way we conduct the survey, and so there are things that we do to try and cross-validate the state surveys versus the federal survey, and so that helps us get an idea of where the error might be in one survey versus another, but that is a -- I mean, that's something that we could do. I mean, we could follow up and get more information.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I don't know if people would be willing to do it, but, you know, somebody submitted a survey and then, within twenty-four hours, it's like, hey, we're trying to, you know, confirm the accuracy of our surveys, and we're not asking you to confirm what you already told us. We just want to have a conversation with you, and almost ask separate, different questions to see what they're -- You know, it's like a game of telephone, and I see that survey, and then the model is potentially maybe losing information, and I'm wondering, if we went back to the person that started it and asked is this what they intended to convey, because I think we're kind of just pyramiding inferences here.

You know, I'm not a statistician, and I don't understand the models as well as most, but it seems to me that there is an opportunity, and if the answer is, hey, we can't -- We don't have the resources, and we can't do it at a large enough scale to make a difference -- You know, if we do it with 100 or 150 people, and that's not a big enough sample size, and I don't know, but I think we should at least consider if there is an opportunity to step back from the modeling, and assumptions, and say, okay, we got this information, and is this what the fishermen are intending to convey to us, and I think might be helpful, at least for someone like me sitting here, and that would be a little more easy to understand.

DR. CODY: I can just follow-up on the last part of that. You reminded me too that there are some uses of data that we're currently not really integrating into the surveys, and one thing we are interested in is small-area estimation, and that would benefit from a follow-up survey, in that, you know, you could get more detailed information from a focus group of anglers located in an area that you're interested in estimating catch for, and so that's something, you know, we want to pursue.

You know, there's some resource limitations here, staffing and things like that, that are at play as well, but, you know, I'll take your advice to heart. There are some benefits there that we could follow-up on, and certainly panel studies involving a subset of people that you've already sampled is a way to go.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, guys. Any other questions? Bob.

MR. BEAL: Thank you. Not a question, and more of a request for the council, and so, as Tim has mentioned a couple of times, we're going to do regional workshops to kick off the RAPID process, and ASMFC is going to sort of be the administrator to move those funds around, and we're hiring a facilitator, and Tim mentioned the proposals are due tomorrow. Then we're going to try to select a facilitator for the workshops within about ten days.

Within two weeks or so, we should know who the facilitator is, and how we're going to get up and running on these workshops, but the request to the council is that, you know, sooner or later, either me or Geoff White, who is in the back of the room, or the facilitator, or Alex DiJohnson, is going to reach out to the council and say, hey, we need to do a workshop in the South Atlantic region, and we want, you know, input from the councils, from the states that are around this table, and, you know, when should it -- When should the workshop occur, and who should attend the workshop, and all those details.

We'll, you know, be looking for -- These workshops are focusing on bringing together states, councils, commission, and the federal government to talk about what the future of recreational data collection looks like in this region, and so, you know, there's going to be -- There's going to be a lot of meetings, but the input from this region, and the folks around this table, is going to be really important for setting up that workshop, just to get -- To make sure the right people are in the room, because that's -- That really is step-one of RAPID in each of the regions, are the workshops that we're setting up pretty soon.

You know, my request could be start, you know, thinking about what that workshop and participation should look like in this region. We don't have -- We're still working, through the steering committee, on sort of what the sideboards of that are going to look like, how many people should be there, and how many representatives from each of those entities, and that sort of thing, but, you know, to get RAPID up and running, and we want to do it pretty quickly, we would like to get, you know, a number of these workshops done before the end of the calendar year, and, you know, maybe even all of them, if we can pull it off, and it might be a little ambitious, but we'll see.

Again, just a plea to this council to sort of be ready when someone reaches out and says, hey, we want to do a workshop, and I think this council is a little bit unique, in that two of the states sitting around the table here straddle, you know, two jurisdictions, and North Carolina is in the Mid and the South Atlantic, and Florida is in the South Atlantic and the Gulf, and so, you know, those states may probably want to participate in two workshops, which will put a little bit more burden on those two states. You know, it's going to be fast paced. There's a lot we need to get done over the next six months or so, and so just, you know, stay tuned, and we're going to reach out and try to move really quickly on this. Thank you.

MR. SARTWELL: Thanks for that, Bob, and thank you, Madam Chair, for having me. The one last thing I would say is Luiz Barbieri and I have talked about visiting with your SSC in October to provide updates as well, and I will, you know, follow up with Luiz on that, and, you know, as much as you all would like to have communication on RAPID, and where we're going, please don't hesitate to invite any of the steering committee members, including myself, to present on it, and so thank you all very much.

MR. CARMICHAEL: This is John. Hi, Tim, and thanks for that update, and, Bob, I appreciate calling out to have council-level workshops, and, Tim, you know, that was something that I was pretty passionate about, and I wanted to make sure that happened, and so we're definitely thinking about it, and we'll look forward to hearing, in a few weeks hopefully, the planning process is rolling, and we can start thinking about who and where and when.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John. All right. Bob.

MR. BEAL Just one quick comment that I, you know, probably can't go without saying, and, Tim, we're still waiting on the grant money, but, other than that, it's all in good shape, and so thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: I've got Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Trish. A comment, and then just a few questions for Tim and Richard and so a huge opportunity, in my view here, right, and I've been seeing the evolution of recreational statistics in the Gulf. You know, we all desire to have the best data possible to manage our fisheries, and it's frustrating, obviously, when we're being pitted against one another, that federal data is worse, or better, than this or that, right, or state data is better than this or that.

The shared governance model, obviously, to me is a huge opportunity, and so the questions I had for Tim and Richard, because I think it's good to kind of provide some insights in terms of our Gulf experience, knowing that we're kind of evolving and expanding in the South Atlantic, but one is, you know, what do you see is kind of the difference between kind of the current model and how we've been operating, especially kind of in the Gulf, where we've expanded these state surveys, versus this future shared governance model? Then, two, based on all of the state efforts to improve surveys, what lessons learned from the Gulf can we benefit from for the South Atlantic?

DR. CODY: So, Tim, do you want me to have a stab at that or --

MR. SARTWELL: Go ahead, Richard. Yes.

DR. CODY: I would say, I mean, the partnerships are there already. I would say though that the role that NOAA plays is, I would say, more top-down than we would like to see, probably. I think that RAPID will get us to a point where NOAA is a partner alongside the states, and we get more of more input from the states, in terms of their needs, but, also, that it's not as NOAA directed as it had been in the past, and I'll leave Tim to clean up after me here.

MR. SARTWELL: Thanks, Richard. No, and I agree. You know, I think there are pieces of the current MRIP program that may be working well, and pieces that I think folks would like to see change differently, and so that's part of the process, is having that discussion on what are the

partnerships, and what are the processes that are working well, and what are the ones we would like to see improve, and how can we do that together.

To answer your second point, Andy, there are a lot of lessons to learn in the Gulf, but that transition process isn't completely done in the Gulf either. We did just certify Alabama Creel and Mississippi Creel, as the LA Creel system has expanded. Florida has SRFS, and Texas is still, you know, having discussions with MRIP as well, and so it's an evolution, but it is evolving into a stronger state-federal partnership, which I think can serve as a model for other regions as well, if there's interest in pursuing a different recreational data collection system.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tim.

DR. CODY: Just as a follow-up too, I mean, the focus would be, you know, clearly defined roles and responsibilities for partners, and so, obviously, there are roles that NOAA can play, and there are roles that probably are best taken by the states, in terms of their input.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, guys. Any other questions? Not seeing any, and so thank you, Richard, and thank you, Tim, online, and that is it for Council I. Right now, we have the Snapper Grouper. We're actually a little early. We've got Snapper Grouper starting at 10:15, and I guess, for the benefit of the public, since all of this is going to be really a big deal, we'll just take a long break and come back at 10:15. Is that all right with everyone? All right. Thanks.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on June 9, 2026.)

- - -

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
July 14, 2026

SAFMC 2026 Council Members

FCI Mon 6/8/26

First	Last	Suffix	Affiliation
Trish	Murphey	✓	NC Division of Marine Fisheries
Jessica	McCawley	✓	Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Robert	Beal	✓	Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
Carolyn	Belcher	✓	GA DNR Coastal Resources Division
Gary	Borland	TBD	
Amy	Dukes	✓	SC DNR Marine Resources Division
Judy	Helmey	✓	
Francis (Dewey)	Hemilright	✓	
James	Hull	✓ Jr.	
Kerry	Marhefka	✓	
Tom	Pease	✓	Seventh Coast Guard District
Charlie	Phillips	✓	
Tom	Roller	✓	
Robert	Spottswood	✓ Jr.	
Andy	Strelcheck	✓	NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region
Deirdre	Warner-Kramer	✓	Office of Marine Conservation OES / OMC
TBD	TBD		U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Representative

Tech. issues on web no/

Shep Grimes

John Walter

CJ Sweetman

Rick DeVictor

Sonny Gwin

Mett Wallis

Marek Reichert

FC1 Mon 6/8/24

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Dr. Judd Curtis ✓
Quantitative Fishery Scientist

John Hadley ✓
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Kathleen Howington ✓
**Habitat and
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Allie Iberle ✓
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Travel Coordinator

Suzanna Thomas ✓
Staff Accountant

Meg Withers web
**Citizen Science Project
Manager**

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FC1 Tue 6/9/26

First	Last	Suffix	Affiliation
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Jessica	McCawley ✓		Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Robert	Beal ✓		Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
Carolyn	Belcher ✓		GA DNR Coastal Resources Division
Gary	Borland		
Amy	Dukes ✓		SC DNR Marine Resources Division
Judy	Helmey ✓		
Francis (Dewey)	Hemilright ✓		
James	Hull ✓	Jr.	
Kerry	Marhefka		
Tom	Pease X		Seventh Coast Guard District
Charlie	Phillips ✓		
Tom	Roller ✓		
Robert	Spottswood Jr. ✓		
Andy	Strelcheck ✓		NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region
Deirdre	Warner-Kramer X		Office of Marine Conservation OES / OMC
TBD	TBD		U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Representative

Marcel Reichert

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Rick DeVetor

Richard Cody

FC 1 Tue 6/9/26

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**Citizen Science Program
Manager**

Myra Brouwer ✓
Deputy Director - Management

John Carmichael ✓
Executive Director

Dr. Chip Collier ✓
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Christina Curtis ✓
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Fishery Scientist II

Nicholas Smillie ✓
**Digital Media and
Communication Specialist**

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Travel Coordinator

Suzanna Thomas ✓
Staff Accountant

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**Citizen Science Project
Manager**

June 2026 Council

Attendee Report: Meeting

Report Generated:

06/15/2026 08:27 AM EDT

Webinar ID	Actual Start Date/Time	Duration	# Registered
942-313-427	06/08/2026 11:33 AM EDT	5 hours 18 minutes	159

Staff Details

Attended	Interest Rating	Last Name	First Name
Yes	Not applicable for staff	Council	South Atlantic

Attendee Details

Last Name	First Name
Aines	Alex
Alhale	Sydney
Alkire	Carolyn
Barger	Jeff
Barile	Peter
Barrows	Katline
Beal	Bob
Bernier	Quinn
Blough	Heather
Blum	Catherine
Bonura	Vincent
Bradshaw	Christopher
Brouwer	Myra
Bruger	Catherine
Bubley	Walter
Bunting	Matthew
Byrd	Julia
Califf	Julie
Cermak	Bridget
Collier	Chip
Crosson	Scott
Curtis	Christina
Curtis	Judd
Dash	Mark
DeVictor	Rick
Dobbs	Jeffrey
Drexler	Michael
Dukes	Amy
Dyar	Ben
Emory	Meaghan

Figueroa	Alena
Flemming	Robert
Flowers	Jared
Foss	Kristin
Friedrich	Tony
Gervasi	Carissa
Gloeckner	David
Gore	Karla
Gray	Alisha
HEMILRIGHT	DEWEY
Hackney	Heather
Hallas	sara
Harrison	Alana
Helmey	Judy
Hilliard	Bob
Horstead	Adrian
Hull	Jimmy
Hutt	Clifford
Iberle	Allie
Jacoski	Greg
Keppler	Blaik
Kersting	Anne
Klasnick	01Kelly
Klibansky	Lara
Knowlton	Kathy
Krebs	David
LaVine	Britni
Lavine	Craig
Lazarre	Dominique
Lee	Jennifer
MCGOVERN	Jack
Mackesey	Brendan
Mackesey	Brendan
Marhefka	Kerry
Marinko	Jeff
Marks	Rick
Masi	Michelle
Mathis Jr	Robert
Mehta	Nikhil
Moore	Jeff
Muffley	Brandon
Murphey	Trish
Neer	Julie
Newman	Thomas

Nicholson	Shaun
Norcross	Jennifer
Offner	Tia
Oliver	Ashley
Ott	Emily
Owens	Marina
O'Meally	Conor
Package-Ward	Christina
Pease	Thomas
Peterson	Cassidy
Phillips	Charlie
Pike	Hannah
Ramsay	Chloe
Records	David
Reichert	Marcel
Remsberg	Loren
Reynolds	Kris
Roller	Tom
Rose	Tyler James
SCOTT	TARA
SEWARD	MCLEAN
Salmon	Brandi
Sartwell	Tim
Schlick	CJ
Schmidtke	Michael
Silvas	Rachael
Smart	Tracey
Soltanoff	Carrie
Spurgin	Kali
Stasser	Katie
Stephen	Jessica
Sweeney Tookes	Jennifer
Sweeney Tookes	Jennifer
Sweetman	CJ
Taylor	Alexandria
Thomas	Suzanna
Turley	Brendan
Vecchio	Julie
Walia	Matt
Walsh	Mick
Walsh	Michelle
Walsh	Jason
Walter	John
White	Geoff

Whitmer	Morgan
Williams	Erik
Williamson	Veronica
Willingham	Darrin
Withers	Meg
bonura	Vincent
gwin	earl sonny
sandorf	scott
vara	mary
zales	bob
zurbrick	james
Atkinson	Seth
Borland	Gary
Clawson	Jessica
Crispe	Miriam
Dubniczki	Hayden
Floyd	Brad
Franco	Dawn
Freeman	Chase
Gahm	Meghan
Graham	William
Griffin	Aimee
Huber	Jeanette
Karnauskas	Mandy
Lazo	Sarah
MCCLAIR	GENINE
McWaters	Mark
Neidig	Carole
Redd Jr	Larry
Rule	Erica
Starling	Savannah
Stephenson	Sarah
Tenore	PARIS
Wamer	David
Whaley	Dave
Wilms	Sean
Woodward	Spud
Zalys	Todd
adisa	sylvia
spottswood	000Robert

June 2026 Council

Attendee Report: Meeting

Report Generated:

06/15/2026 08:29 AM EDT

Webinar ID	Actual Start Date/Time	Duration	# Registered
942-313-427	06/09/2026 07:51 AM EDT	8 hours 39 minutes	192

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Attended	Interest Rating	Last Name	First Name
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Attendee Details

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Aines	Alex
Alkire	Carolyn
Aukeman	Trip
Bailey	Adam
Barbieri	Luiz
Barger	Jeff
Barile	Peter
Barrows	Katline
Beal	Bob
Bernier	Quinn
Bertoline	Sue
Beyer	George
Blough	Heather
Bogdan	Jennifer
Bonura	Vincent
Boots	Benjamin
Bradshaw	Christopher
Brantley	William
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Brown	Hunter
Bruger	Catherine
Bubley	Walter
Bunting	Matthew
Byrd	Julia
Califf	Julie
Callaway	Lillie
Cermak	Bridget
Clawson	Jessica

Collier	Chip
Crispe	Miriam
Curtis	Judd
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DiJohnson	Alex
DuBeck	Guy
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Emory	Meaghan
Figueroa	Alena
Flemming	Robert
Flowers	Jared
Floyd	Brad
Foss	Kristin
Franco	Dawn
Friedrich	Tony
Gervasi	Carissa
Gloeckner	David
Gore	Karla
Griffin	Aimee
HEMILRIGHT	DEWEY
Hackney	Heather
Hadley	John
Hallas	sara
Harrison	Alana
Hart	Hannah
Haymans	Doug
Helmey	Judy
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Hull	Jimmy
Iberle	Allie
Karnauskas	Mandy
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Kersting	Anne
Klasnick	01Kelly
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Knowlton	Kathy
LaVine	Britni
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Moore	Jeff
Moss	david
Muffley	Brandon
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Roller	Tom
SCOTT	TARA
Salmon	Brandi
Sartwell	Tim
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Schmidtke	Michael
Silvas	Rachael
Smart	Tracey

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Starling	Savannah
Stemle	Adam
Stephen	Jessica
Stephens	Haley
Stephenson	Sarah
Sweetman	CJ
Tenore	PARIS
Thomas	Suzanna
Turley	Brendan
Vecchio	Julie
Walia	Matt
Walsh	Jason
Walter	John
Whaley	Dave
Wilke	Kate
Williamson	Veronica
Willingham	Darrin
Withers	Meg
Woodward	Spud
Wynn	Chris
gwin	earl sonny
reese	dylan
sandorf	scott
vara	mary
zales	bob
zurbrick	james
Alhale	Sydney
Atkinson	Seth
Blum	Catherine
Borland	Gary
Crosson	Scott
Curtis	Christina
Dash	Mark
Dobbs	Jeffrey
Drexler	Michael
Dubniczki	Hayden
Farrell	Delaney
Freeman	Chase
Gahm	Meghan
Graham	William
Gray	Alisha
Hutt	Clifford
Jacoski	Greg

Krebs	David
Lazarre	Dominique
Lazo	Sarah
Lee	Jennifer
Mackesey	Brendan
Marks	Rick
Mathis Jr	Robert
Norcross	Jennifer
O'Meally	Conor
Pease	Thomas
Redd Jr	Larry
Remsberg	Loren
Rose	Tyler James
Rule	Erica
SEWARD	MCLEAN
Soltanoff	Carrie
Stasser	Katie
Sweeney Tookes	Jennifer
Sweeney Tookes	Jennifer
Taylor	Alexandria
Walsh	Michelle
Walsh	Mick
Wamer	David
White	Geoff
Whitmer	Morgan
Williams	Erik
Wilms	Sean
Zalys	Todd
adisa	sylvia
bonura	Vincent
spottswood	000Robert