### SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

#### FULL COUNCIL SESSION I

Westin Jekyll Island Jekyll Island, Georgia

March 6, 2023

### **TRANSCRIPT**

#### **Council Members**

Dr. Carolyn Belcher, Chair Laurilee Thompson Gary Borland Tim Griner Kerry Marhefka Tom Roller Spud Woodward

#### **Council Staff**

Myra Brouwer John Carmichael Dr. Chip Collier John Hadley Allie Iberle Kelly Klasnick Roger Pugliese Nick Smillie Christina Wiegand

#### **Attendees and Invited Participants**

Rick DeVictor Frank Helies Dr. John Walter Nikhil Mehta LT Patrick O'Shaughnessy Trish Murphey, Vice Chair Mel Bell Chester Brewer Judy Helmey Jessica McCawley Andy Strelcheck

Julia Byrd Cindy Chaya Dr. Judd Curtis Kathleen Howington Kim Iverson Ashley Oliver Dr. Mike Schmidtke Suzanna Thomas Dr. Julie Neer

Dale Diaz Dewey Hemilright Dr. Jack McGovern Thomas Newman Monica Smit-Brunello

Other attendees and invited participants attached.

The Full Council Session I of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Westin Jekyll Island, Jekyll Island, Georgia, on Monday, March 6, 2023, and was called to order by Chairman Carolyn Belcher.

DR. BELCHER: Good morning, everyone. I would like to welcome you all to day one of the March 2023 council meeting, and we're going to start with the Full Council meeting through lunch today, just to go over some of our early introductory information.

To start off with, I would like to at least recognize our guests today. We have Dale Diaz from the Gulf Council, Dewey Hemilright with the Mid-Atlantic Council, and we have the two gentlemen with Blue Matter, who are going to be talking to us a little bit later about the MSE approach, which is Tom Carruthers and Adrian Hordyk, and we're looking forward to hearing the information from them. I've heard they have a great wealth of information to present, and so I'm looking forward to that presentation later on.

At this point, I'm asking for an adoption of the agenda. Are there any changes that need to be made, or suggested edits to the agenda, as it's currently written? Any objection to it? Okay. Seeing none, we'll adopt the agenda as written. The second item would be to approve the transcript from the December 2022 meeting. Are there any edits that need to be made to that document? Any objections to the transcript, as currently published? Okay. Seeing none, that also will pass as approved. The first item up is going to be reports from our partners, and we'll start out with the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement.

LT. O'SHAUGHNESSY: There's not a whole lot new to report from things that I've reported in the past. For this period, we had nine cases that were referred to NOAA General Counsel. Of those nine cases, one was fishing in the Oculina Bank, six were right-whale-type cases, and two others were permit-type cases. The six right whale cases were both commercial merchant vessels, as well as private yachts going up and down the east coast and going through the slow speed areas. Of that, there was also twenty-four summary settlements, and the majority of those were retention during closures or undersized species, ranging from \$300 to \$2,500.

The \$2,500 were trade monitoring program, or SIMP violations, and that's the Seafood Import Monitoring Program, which my officers do a lot of work in our major ports, ensuring that other countries comply with our requirements, such as using TEDs and other countries that prevent them from using wild-caught shrimp, bringing it into the United States, as well as a host of other fisheries that they have to report what vessels caught them, where they caught them, before they can be brought into the United States to compete with our fishermen. The last was fishing in a National Marine Sanctuary, and so, with that, the majority were no-violation boardings or compliance assistance, and that is our focus for the more minor violations, that we can assist folks with complying, and that's our goal.

Highlights, as I said, the port inspections and IUU efforts. SIMP and IUU is becoming a much larger focus. Just this last period, we had folks in the Philippines, and I have one of my officers going to Peru next month, working with down-island countries, to ensure they're meeting our requirements coming into the United States.

Right whale outreach, right whales are becoming one of our most important aspects of our enforcement program, and we did a right whale outreach down in Florida, at the right whale festival, and we had our large vessel there, as well as talking to everybody there, and we've done a lot of Large Whale Take Reduction Plan patrols, checking sea bass pots and crab pots, traps, to make sure that they're required -- The weak link, or hog ties, and have the proper markings. We continue our partnerships, through joint patrols, with our state partners, TED inspections, both dockside as well as offshore and a host of trainings up and down the coast.

Referrals across the Southeast Division, we had forty-four overall enforcement referrals from our JEA partners, and it's still an outstanding program that we work side-by-side, and, this period, we had FWC, South Carolina, and the U.S. Coast Guard submit cases that we took for action.

Special ops, we did Op Blue Runner, which was focused in Florida and the U.S. Virgin Islands, again for imports that were coming in, competing with our imports, to make sure that they met all the requirements, and we see a lot of conch coming in from the Virgin Islands into south Florida, and so we're definitely following that. Acorn was an operation that we did in the Keys, the Lower Keys, looking at all of the SPAs, to make sure people are not fishing where they're not allowed and they're following all the other National Marine Sanctuary requirements.

Current spotlight, I already covered trade monitoring, and that's taking up more and more of our enforcement officers' time, as well as our special agents. We're actively involved in the observer safety and compliance, ensuring that observers get treated properly when they're onboard, and then North Atlantic right whales, and we continue to enforce both speed requirements, using the AIS system, as well as on-the-water enforcement, as well as the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan, checking for traps and pots.

Current spotlight, SEFHIER outreach and enforcement, and the program for the South Atlantic has now been in place for over two years, and so we have stepped up our enforcement efforts, particularly for those who have never reported, despite being talked to by the SEFHIER program a number of times, and so my officers have been out working with those individuals, and we have started writing some summary settlements for failure to report, and then we continue our unpermitted charter operations, and we work hand-in-hand with the Coast Guard, checking for master requirements, that they're properly documented, and we are ensuring that people that are taking charters are getting the South Atlantic permits, so they're competing fairly with those that are purchasing those permits.

Again, this slide has all of our resources there, and you can see all of the highlights. The report, twenty-something pages, lists a host of other enforcement, and so, if anybody has any questions on anything you see in those reports, I'm here all week, and I would be more than happy to take your questions at any time. Thank you.

#### DR. BELCHER: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you for that. I was curious, and is the Coast Guard involved in monitoring any of the right whale take exemptions by vessels that are engaged in the wind exploration?

LT. O'SHAUGHNESSY: I couldn't answer that question, and I would defer to our Coast Guard partners, to see what involvement they actually have on the wind side.

DR. BELCHER: Are there other questions regarding the OLE report? Okay. Thank you. Our Coast Guard report is going to be held until a little bit later in the week. Right now, Lieutenant Box is not able to get here to give his report, and so we'll circle back around in the next council session, later in the week, and we'll move into the Council Liaison Reports, and so we'll start with Dale for the Gulf.

MR. DIAZ: Thank you, Madam Chairman. The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council met in Baton Rouge, from January 30 to February 2 of this year, and the first thing I'm going to talk about is actually not in the report, and so I've talked to Allie for just a few minutes this morning about yellowtail, and we're at a point where we're ready to start a joint document with the South Atlantic on yellowtail, and I think everything is teed-up to get that started in June, and I think you all are going to take it up in June, and we're also going to take it up in June, but I just want to urge the South Atlantic to try to help us move this through as efficiently as possible.

The terminal year on yellowtail, for the stock assessment, is 2020, and, basically, and Allie can correct me if I'm wrong, but the path we're on right now -- It looks like we'll probably finish that document up, with the final approval from both councils, in late 2024, and so it will probably be submitted to NOAA in 2025. NOAA takes a while to get it through NOAA, to actually get it implemented, if we can get something worked out, and so, in reality, I mean, we might have something going into place for yellowtail in 2026, from 2020 data, and so we don't -- It's already -- We're already a little bit behind on that, and we need to try to work on that as fast as we can, and, if there's any opportunities for efficiencies, we should take advantage of them.

Next up, I'm going to mention a little bit about gray triggerfish, and so the council took final action on a framework action to modify gray triggerfish, the commercial trip limits, and the council chose to increase the trip limit to twenty-five fish per commercial trip, and the gray triggerfish annual catch limit was increased in 2021, and the commercial sector did not harvest its annual catch target in 2022, and so we're trying to bump that up so they can have a chance to catch their annual catch target.

For the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary proposed rule, the council heard recommendations from its Coral, Reef Fish, Spiny Lobster, Shrimp, and Migratory Pelagic Advisory Panels on the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary rule. The council incorporated the recommendations from these advisory panels into a comment letter, and that will be submitted to the sanctuary as it develops its proposed rule, and I think you all might be on a similar track with that.

Red grouper, the council was presented with the results of a red grouper interim analysis, which is used to track the abundance based on National Marine Fisheries Service's bottom longline survey, and the interim analysis was performed to provide an update on stock health between stock assessments and, when warranted, used to modify catch advice. The red grouper interim analysis was reviewed by the council's Scientific and Statistical Committee, and the SSC noted that the index of abundance is relatively unchanged in the last ten years, and the biomass level remains low. As a result, the SSC did not recommend any changes to catch limits, and the full stock assessment for red grouper is set to begin in 2024.

I will have to say that these interim analyses I think has been something that's very positive. You know, we just talked about data getting stale and us working off of sometimes a management plan that has a terminal year that is way out of line, and these interim analyses I think are very valuable, and we're trying to use those wherever we can, and I want to thank everybody involved for helping to make that a reality, and hopefully we'll continue to incorporate that for every species that we can.

Gag grouper, the council continued to work on Reef Fish Amendment 56, which considers revising catch limits, sector allocation, rebuilding timelines, and the recreational fishing season for gag. The most recent stock assessment, SEDAR 72, determined that gag is overfished and undergoing overfishing. Additionally, the assessment identified that the proportion of males in the population is less than 2 percent, which negatively affects the stock's ability to reproduce. The council is obligated to end overfishing and develop a rebuilding plan by 2024 for gag, which will dramatically reduce catch limits during the beginning of the rebuilding period.

During this meeting, the council edited the alternatives in the document and removed consideration of a nineteen-year rebuilding timeline and removed from consideration a recreational fishing season opening date of November 1. The council plans to host a series of public hearings along the west coast of Florida, in Destin, Cedar Key, Tampa, and Naples, before taking final action on this document during the council's June 2023 meeting. In recognition that further management modifications may be necessary to constrain gag harvest to newly-anticipated catch levels, the council initiated work on a document that will consider lowering the recreational bag limit and establishing a recreational vessel limit for gag and black grouper and adding additional spatial areas to protect spawning gag.

With gag -- We've kind of been in a situation with a couple of species lately where basically what you're left with is no good alternatives. I mean, that's where we were at with red grouper, and I think there's going to be some discussion, later at this meeting, about maybe a court case that was settled on red grouper, but that's where we're at with gag, too. We're at the point where gag is down, and we're having to make some really tough decisions.

It does note that the document that we're looking at is looking at gag and black grouper, and so the council recently took up a document related to amberjack, and the document looked at amberjack and the entire jacks complex, and the council opted to take the jacks complex out of the amberjack document. I don't know where we're going to go with this gag amendment, but I'm sure there's going to be a discussion about whether black grouper needs to be in there. There is some concerns about people misidentifying black grouper, and, anyway, I'm sure those discussions will be had, and we'll see where that goes in the future.

Electronic logbook commercial reporting, the council continues to work on a joint amendment with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council to consider requiring federal commercial reef fish and coastal migratory pelagic permit holders to submit logbooks electronically, rather than mailing paper logbooks.

The council heard support for the transition to electronic reporting from its Reef Fish and Coastal Migratory Pelagic Advisory Panels, and it will hear from the Data Collection Advisory Panel during the April 2023 meeting. The council plans to conduct a mail-out to permit holders, following by virtual public hearings, before taking final action during the June 2023 council

meeting. All of the feedback that I've heard for us is to move on this, and folks are eager to implement this, and I haven't heard anybody speak against it to me about it, or what I've heard in public comments, to my knowledge.

The last thing that I want to mention, on my report, is we did take up liaison funding, and the council did decide to increase liaison funding for each state and the commission by an amount of \$5,000 per year, and I would be happy to take any questions, and, also, I'm here all week too, if anybody has anything they would like to discuss that I didn't mention in the report. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Dale. Questions or comments or discussion for Dale's presentation? I've got Laurilee and then Jessica.

MS. THOMPSON: Looking at that 2 percent figure for male gag grouper in the Gulf, and I was trying to find out if we have a percentage that's comparable here in the South Atlantic, but I haven't been able to find it yet, but, Dale, does that mean that all you have left is great big, giant fish, and you're not getting any new smaller fish coming in?

MR. DIAZ: That may be a better question for some of the scientists at NOAA. It is alarming that it's being reported that there is that few males in the population, and we are trying to think about things that we could do to protect those males, where we can, and I hate to put you all on the spot, but Dr. Walter, or Jack, is that something you all would want to answer?

DR. WALTER: Good morning, everyone. Thank you, Laurilee, for the question. Let me just confirm that I heard it right, and the question was about whether we're seeing recruitment come in, due to this reduced male spawning biomass, and whether that is a problem that is impinging recruitment, and, right now, it's hard to say, off the top of my head, whether we're seeing the effects of that, and we're predicting that that would affect recruitment, because not having those males in the spawning population would then be a problem for fertilizing all of the extant females, and that's basically the idea behind accounting for male spawning biomass and the percentage of males in the estimate of spawning stock biomass. Thanks.

DR. BELCHER: Jack.

DR. MCGOVERN: Just related to the percentage of males in the South Atlantic, when I was with the State of South Carolina in the 1990s, we did a life history study on gag, and we found that the percentage of males had decreased from the 1970s, from 15 percent to 5 percent in the 1990s. Now, South Carolina DNA probably has done recent studies on gag, and I don't -- Mel might know, but I don't know what the percentage of males is now, and it might be in the amendment.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks for that clarification. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I was just going to touch on the yellowtail item that Dale brought up, and so just a reminder that FWRI reran the stock assessment to add some additional years of data, and so I agree with Dale that we need to get moving before this terminal year is stale again, I would say.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks for that. Okay. Other questions for Dale on his report? Okay. Thank you, Dale. Moving on to the Mid-Atlantic liaison report, Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you. The Mid-Atlantic Council met February 7<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> in Washington, D.C., and the highlights from there was the 2023-2025 monkfish specs were approved and revised, the monkfish priorities, and there is continued discussion regarding follow-up to address the disapproved section of Amendment 22.

We received an update on the development of surf clams and quahog species, the separation amendment, and reviewed additional suggestions submitted to the advisory panel and industry members. We reviewed the results of the 2022 bluefish and dogfish research track assessment, and we received information and a presentation on a variety of topics and the reappointment of four members to the SSC. We had one long-standing member of the SSC, and a former vice chairman, that retired, and that was Dr. Lee Anderson, and our next meeting is in Durham, North Carolina, April 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup>. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Questions for Dewey? Okay. Seeing none, we'll move on to the state reports, and I will start with North Carolina. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, and so I've got quite a few things to share, but I will try to be quick. Some of the big news we have is we have a new Deputy Director, Michael Loeffler, and he started in January and replaced Dee Lupton as our Deputy Director. She had been our director for fifteen years, and so he has been with the division for twenty-three years. He actually started out as a tech on the striped bass gillnet survey, and you guys may be familiar with him as our flounder biologist, and he had recently become a biologist supervisor, but he is now our Deputy Director.

We have -- DMF has launched a new social media network, and we have Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and that started on February 1, and so I want to invite everyone to like and follow us, and we had a state record white grunt, four pounds and fourteen ounces, caught off of Morehead City. The previous record was four pounds, eight ounces, and so that was caught on January 2, and we also had a state-record common thresher shark that came in at 589 pounds, one ounce, off Oak Island, and the previous record was 185 pounds.

We did not open the recreational spring season for oscillated flounder this year. That was in our flounder management plan, and we could open -- We could open the ocean basically in March, but, because removals of southern flounder had exceeded the TAC, we decided not to, and we began scoping on Amendment 1 of spotted seatrout. That species is not overfished, but overfishing is occurring, and we are also conducting a survey on the for-hire operators that work in our state's coastal waters.

This is like a socioeconomic survey, and our commission met last month, and they adopted a resolution advocating for increased funding for and expansion of cost-share programs to assist landowners in managing and reducing the amount of nutrient runoff. This is from our coastal habitat protection plan, and we're looking at our Coastal Resources Commission, and they also adopted it, and then our Environmental Management Commission -- I know they were discussing it, but I have not heard whether they adopted it.

We had a motion, at our commission meeting, actually from Tom, to ask our division to develop rulemaking language with management options to allow for the growth of various percentage points for false albacore, or little tunny, and we also adopted the mutilated finfish rule, which will go into effect on May 24, and so that will come in after the amendment with Spanish and king, and that will allow us to allow depredated king and Spanish to be kept.

Other things, we opened our bay scallop season in Core Sound, and it's been great. We've got a load of scallops in, and our 2022 shrimp season was average-ish. It's not been like it's been the past several years, and we had landings -- Preliminary landings are at like 4.8 million, and that's all I've got for North Carolina.

DR. BELCHER: Questions for Trish? Okay. Seeing none, we'll move on to South Carolina. Mel.

MR. BELL: Very brief, and it seems like we just met last week, which was December, and so not a lot pertaining to council-related things, but what we're dealing with is, this year, our legislature is in session, and we were asked to provide a report on the status of the blue crab fishery, which we did, with recommendations for regulatory adjustments, and we're hoping that the general assembly will be introducing a bill to provide some additional regulatory capacity for the blue crab fishery, and so we'll see how that goes in this session.

Recall that we were -- We're still in the process of standing up a southern flounder stocking program, and so that's moving along with all the necessary things that need to happen, both with facilities and the science to allow us to eventually stock southern flounder, and that's moving along.

We'll be involved in an upcoming red drum stock assessment, the commission process and all, and so that's a big fishery for us, again, inshore, and of interest also is we're -- Recall that -- I think both North Carolina and Florida both have stock assessment scientists at the state level, and Georgia and South Carolina don't, and so, with the help of the ASMFC, with funding provided there, we're working with ASMFC, and Georgia and South Carolina working together, to actually hire a stock assessment scientist, and they would be housed at SC DNR, at our facility in Charleston, and we're just literally in the interviewing process for that right now, and so that will be a great asset to have.

You all are familiar with the Research Vessel Lady Lisa, who is best known for SEAMAP work over the years, and I've brought this up before, and, you know, she's forty-three years old, and showing it, and so we're in the process right now of replacing the Lady Lisa. Again, we have a certain amount of state funding available, and we're seeking additional support, but the plan right now is to hopefully acquire a used vessel that we can basically get to work with, but to have funding to do necessary modifications to allow us to have -- To convert our used vessel into something that will last us for hopefully a few decades, and so that's ongoing right now, as we speak.

Those are things that are not necessarily council-managed things, but things that do touch on us, and I will say that the Lady Lisa, while, you know, primarily well known for SEAMAP work, also has done work, and does work, related to council-managed species, with the bottom longline work, as well as other collection of snapper grouper species, and so it's a multi -- While South Carolina houses the vessel, owns the vessel, it is a regional asset that supports both coastal and federally-managed fisheries, and so it's a very essential -- It's tied to a number of essential data streams that we need to keep going, and so, if you don't have a vessel, you don't have the ability to collect the data. If you don't have the data, you know, you have trouble with things like stock assessments

for Spanish mackerel, let's say, and so, anyway, that's ongoing right now, and we're hoping for -- We're hoping to find something good, and that's really all I have right now.

DR. BELCHER: Any questions for Mel? Okay. Thanks, Mel. I'm going to go ahead and go to Florida next. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, and so a couple of things to report-out on. At our recent FWC Commission meeting, which was a couple of weeks ago, the commission took final action on a descending device venting tool rule that will be effective on April 1 of this year and required the possession of a descending device, or a venting tool, in state waters when fishing for reef fish from a vessel and required the use of that device if releasing a fish that exhibits the signs of barotrauma.

Just the Gulf federal rule and the Atlantic federal rule, they did not match, and so what we're doing in state waters is kind of a compromise between those two different rules. Another action that the commission took was some -- A series of Atlantic reef fish changes for the recreational sector, going consistent with what the council did, and so these are consistent regulations for red porgy, snowy grouper, and blueline tilefish, and so the red porgy will be effective April 1, and then snowy and blueline -- Those effective dates will come after the final approval by the Secretary of Commerce.

Another couple of points, and so our Executive Director, Eric Sutton, resigned on December 31, or December 30, of last year, and so, right now, we have an Acting Executive Director, Thomas Eason, and so stay tuned. More to come on who the next Executive Director of FWC will be.

DR. BELCHER: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I was curious, and the change that the FWC has done with the two regulations for blueline tilefish and snowy grouper, to complement the council, or SERO, how long have they been in place for?

MS. MCCAWLEY: They're not in place yet, and so that federal consistency action will follow those rules after they're approved by the Secretary of Commerce.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I was getting back to -- Meaning, before this, how many snowy grouper were you allowed in state waters of Florida, before this action?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I would have to look at the presentation that we gave, just so I tell you the correct thing.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: My last thing is, once that was -- How long had that been in place for, because I had heard that it was one per person, and that it had been in place for ten years, and I was just wondering, and maybe I can follow-up offline with you on that. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I will have to look into how long that particular rule had been in effect.

DR. BELCHER: Other questions for Jessica? Okay. Moving on to report out for Georgia, our shrimp season, which closes on the  $31^{st}$ , unless we ask for an extension, and we did close our season on the  $31^{st}$ . By the time we met with our shrimp advisory panel, we were getting ready to

have a cold snap, and we were not sure what effect that was going to have, and we decided to get a little bit ahead of it. The animals hadn't quite fallen out yet, and so there was concern about what pressure we would put on them if the cold pushed them out, and the advisory panel was staunchly in support of us just letting it close on the 31<sup>st</sup>.

Disaster funds for 2018, it finally made it through OMB, and we're in the process of getting that basic pathway set up between the feds and us for being able to start getting payouts done and start working on some of the research work that we had spelled out in that spend plan, and the hope is that, by the end of this month, that we'll be able to start getting that process going forward for folks.

We had reported-out about red drum and us looking at being proactive on some changes. After looking at public comment, and being in conversations with folks in Atlanta, we have decided to wait until the next assessment is conducted through ASMFC before making any changes, and so we're still in support of what we feel needs to be done moving forward, but, until the assessment comes back with additional information, we're just going to wait, and so 2024, or 2025, is probably when we'll be looking at doing something with red drum.

Our saltwater license plate, which you can look at Spud's vehicle or my vehicle, and it's a red drum habitat tag, and it actually broke the million-dollar mark on the first of this year, and so we've been basically squirreling all of that away for a large-splash event, and we haven't figured out exactly what we're doing with that yet, because we're also waiting on our offshore permit through the Corps of Engineers, and so there's kind of a little bit of ideas of what we want to do, but, until the permit is cleared, we can't do it anyway, and so that gives us some more time to think about it, and, meanwhile, it's still accruing some more money, and so it's been a great tag. Everybody really likes it, and so it's -- We push on everybody that we can.

Bluefish is the only other thing that I can report to you. Because Doug was really working towards how we can work differently with *di minimis* states, we chose conservation equivalency, and, rather than changing our creel from fifteen to three, or fifteen to two, which is what we would have had to have done to meet the reduction requirement, we went ahead and looked at what a small break in the season would do, and, basically, we get equivalency by closing the season from March 1 through April 30, and so, again, this year, as a temporary placeholder, until we go up that mountain that is *di minimis*, this is what the state has offered up, rather than make that cut on the creel side, and so that's pretty much all of what Georgia has been up to, and so any questions for me?

Seeing none, we can move on, and, like I said, we'll circle back on Thursday for the Coast Guard report, and see if it's potentially available then, or maybe Friday, at the latest, and so, moving on, the next item on the agenda is the Joint Commercial Electronic Logbook Amendment. Myra is going to talk to us about that, with the idea that our required action is going to be considering this for approval for public hearing.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Carolyn. Good morning, everybody. This will be a short presentation, and it's only a few slides. There is, however, a draft amendment that is part of your briefing book, and it's Attachment 2b, and so that's where all the meat of things is, and so I'm going to give you a quick update here.

First of all, progress since you saw this last in December, the amendment document has been drafted, as I said, and it's Attachment 2b, and the IPT is currently conducting kind of a review of the draft document, and the document now includes the description of the current logbook program for the coastal logbook program, and this is for the commercial vessels. It includes discussion of overlapping programs in other regions, and it describes the data fields and how they would change when you went over to the electronic platform, and I know we did spend some time talking about all of that, the data fields in particular, in September and December of last year.

There is also a lengthy description of the commercial fisheries under the various FMPs, and so remember that this covers Snapper Grouper, Dolphin Wahoo, Coastal Migratory Pelagics, and Gulf Reef Fish, and so it's four FMPs, and so there's the econ description of all that. The social description covers the distribution of permits by community, for all four FMPs, and so it's a pretty hefty document, and then we do have in there some economic and social effects analysis, and, of course, there's not a whole lot to say, in terms of biological analysis, and I will walk you through a summary of these effects as well.

One thing that I wanted to spend a little bit of time talking about is this timing. This is what we are suggesting that you consider, and so what we've struck through there is the South Atlantic Council approving this in June, and the reason for that recommendation would be we, you guys, the South Atlantic Council, is the lead council for this amendment, and so you're the administrative council, and so, typically, the council that is the admin lead for an amendment takes final action last, right, and we heard from Dale, just now, that the Gulf Council is going to be ready to take final action in June.

Additionally, Snapper Grouper Amendment 48, the one that addresses wreckfish, is also including an action that would do the switch between paper to electronic for that fishery, and what we've heard from the Science Center is that they would like for those two things to kind of come at them at the same time, and so, if we change the timeline, if we revise it, as it's currently displayed on your screen, that would put the South Atlantic Council taking final action on this amendment in September, and so I will just leave that up there for you to talk about, or think about, rather, and keep moving along.

As I said, the summary of biological effects is -- There aren't any, and this is an administrative action, and so it's not expected to have any direct effects in the biological environment, and there may be some good long-term things that come out of it, and so the timeliness of the data, and we're hoping that's going to improve, that there's going to be fewer errors, and that submission is going to be easier, which could reduce recall bias and make things better, and then, of course, the improved compliance is the expectation there.

For the econ, I'm going to spend a little bit more time, and I'm looking over here, because I've got my notes on this tiny little screen over here, and so, you know, the main thing that fishermen are going to experience is they're going to need to have internet, and they're going to have to have a device, and so that means a laptop, a tablet, or a smartphone, and so there would be some costs incurred for those that do not have such a device, but we -- It's likely that most folks already have access, and there is going to be some postage cost savings that are estimated to range from \$208,000 to \$390,000, and I have a statistic here for you. During 2022, the center received approximately 26,000 commercial logbooks, and then the postage for those -- The fees ranged from \$8.00 to \$15.00 apiece, and so there's a good chunk there.

There will be a time savings to submit this information, and that cannot be quantified right now, but we are working on it, and so the document that the Gulf Council sees at their upcoming meeting will have an estimate for that. We do estimate that electronic submission is eventually going to eliminate handling and data entry and that sort of thing, and so, when the program is fully implemented, the processing burden, as well as the costs, will be lower, and hopefully the availability of logbook data will be timelier, and so there will also be benefits from increased data accuracy, and we're looking at e-forms preventing erroneous entries, and also better reporting of discards, because that will be -- We will no longer require a separate form, and it will all be done together, and then, lastly, assurance to fishermen that logbooks or having to -- You know, the center contacting folks for clarification or corrections, through logbook send-backs.

On the social side, it's pretty much what I've already talked about. Direct short-term effects from individuals adjusting to this new process, mostly neutral, or hopefully positive, as most users are comfortable. Short-term negative effects for fishermen that are not used to, or are uncomfortable, with using the electronic reporting, but, overall, over the long term, we expect the results to be positive, as the electronic submission will simplify a lot of things and improve data quality.

The Gulf's Data Collection Advisory Panel actually met in February of this year, and so Lisa was kind enough to send me a couple of tidbits here, and I know the Gulf Council isn't going to be getting that report until they meet, but I just put up here a couple of bullets, and, basically, the AP approved of the transition from paper logbooks to electronic logbooks, and they also acknowledged that there might need to be some level of training, or they said that they would be advantageous, to help program participants, and they suggested that some training be conducted prior to the implementation of these changes, and so that's what that AP is offering up.

Then, finally, the last slide I've got here is just next steps, and so what we have left is obtaining input from our South Atlantic, or Atlantic, really, Dolphin Wahoo Advisory Panel. However, that AP is not scheduled to meet until the fall, and, also, there's only a couple of commercial representatives on that advisory panel, and so we're thinking about just reaching out to those folk and coordinating whatever input they have through the chair, and so we'll get timely input from them, and then we're in the process of completing the administrative description of the program, and so how the program is put together, what are going to be the effects from the costs to the agency, and so this is, as we speak, being fleshed out.

What I would want you to consider is approval for public hearings, and I think I mentioned, last time we talked, that we're recommending doing those virtually, and the intent would be to have more flexibility, hopefully, for Science Center staff to be on-hand to demonstrate, you know, some of these things, and it will be easier to do that online, and so that's what I have for you, and I would be happy to answer any questions.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks, Myra. Comments or questions? I've got Kerry and then Dewey.

MS. MARHEFKA: I have a few things, and I gave Myra a heads-up, because there's a couple of things in the actual document that I wanted to point out. One, I have gotten requests from fishermen, and I didn't have a chance to follow-up on the specific reasons why, but that there are in-person public hearings for these, and so I forgot that we had talked about virtual, so that Science

Center staff can be there, which is obviously important, and so I might think through that a little bit and get back with the people who have asked for it, and explain to them what we're thinking, and maybe, at Full Council, come back and just address that later, and not that I will get my way, but --

The few things that I wanted to talk about in the amendment, general points are there were some questions about -- There was a statement saying that the GARFO and the South Atlantic folks may have duplicate reporting requirements, and I was under the impression that, right now, with eTRIPS, which is going to work for this, that, if you were a GARFO person, you could already submit your South Atlantic reports electronically, and so I'm curious about why there would be double reporting, and is that also considered sort of beta testing, if you will, and, if not, will there be an beta testing for the folks in the South Atlantic before it's fully rolled out? I have a couple more after this.

MS. BROUWER: What I will say is that, similar to what the Data Collection Advisory Panel brought up, and they did recommend that there be some beta testing, but we have not had those conversations. You know, how the program will ultimately be implemented, after the councils do their business, will -- You know, that will roll over to the agency, and I imagine those conversations will have to, you know, take place with center folks and such, to see if -- And ACCSP as well, if eTRIPS ends up being the platform that is used, because that's also not 100 percent. That's what is currently available, and I believe the agency would have the opportunity to utilize a different platform, were some vendors to come along and say, hey, we built this one, and how about you use this one instead, and, Jack, or somebody else, please feel free to jump in here, or John.

#### DR. BELCHER: John.

DR. WALTER: I am just getting some information from staff on whether the beta testing is actually ongoing and whether you can submit both, and I'll get an answer on the GARFO report here and get back to you, Kerry, but I just don't have that answer right at my fingers. Thanks.

DR. BELCHER: You said you had a few more items?

MS. MARHEFKA: I do, sorry, and I actually read the whole draft document, and I know it's draft, and so I don't want to get nitpicky, but there were just a couple of things that I wanted to point out. One of my sort of qualms is I didn't see a whole lot of discussion in there yet about what the data is collected now, and the data that will continue to be collected, albeit in a different manner, are being used for currently, and I would like to see, you know, are these data being used in stock assessments, or can specific examples be cited of not just the main logbook data, but the economic add-on and the bycatch add-on, and I think we need to talk about what the data is even being used for, you know, and so I might have missed it, but I didn't see a lengthy discussion about that.

The other thing, and I thought -- I wasn't sure if we didn't need to modify the purpose and need to sort of reflect that a little bit, and I'm not necessarily prepared to do that now, because that may not be appropriate, but that was just one of my thoughts, because that felt like a big missing spot for me, and then, more specifically, and, again, I know this is a draft document, but I feel like, if we don't catch these things now, we may not get to them, and I don't know if you can get to, Myra -- On my document, it's page 43 in the PDF.

I would like someone to look at all of these numbers, because, if the average landings per snapper grouper trip are really 8,200 pounds, my husband is a very bad fisherman, and then, if the average revenue of those trips that land 8,248 pounds is really \$1,800, then the business model is even more flawed, and so, you know, I don't want to make qualms over small numbers, but I don't know where else that information lies in our other snapper grouper documents, and that worries me. That's not even possible, I believe, with our current trip limits, to land that much fish, and that is eighty boxes of fish. Can you imagine? I wish, and certainly not since 2017 to 2021, and so it does make me wonder sort of the validity of the rest of the data in here.

Again, this is all well and good to have all this information about sort of what the fishery looks like, but, to me, the point of this document is not what is the economic data of the fishery, but what are we doing with the data that is collected through this, you know, and I don't think it's pertinent to collecting electronic logbook data with the actual -- What all these statistics mean, and I don't think we're laying out the case for actually collecting data, and doing it in this method, in the affected environment section, as much as I think we should, and so I think those are my big points, and I would love to find out really where those numbers came from, because that blows my mind.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Kerry. I've got Dewey and then Tim.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I was wondering if the -- Can you scroll down just a little bit, to what Kerry was talking about, and I need to see the -- That table is saying that the average snapper grouper landings, per trip, is that weight? Okay. Wow. All right, and so, back to the thing -- Yes, that needs to be looked at, or show where it comes from and how it's derived, but is there going to be no fishing reports derived out of this electronic monitoring, meaning you can electronically send in no fishing reports, and is that the outcome that we're looking at to do?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, the no fishing reports will be included as well.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Okay. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Tim.

MR. GRINER: I guess I'm just going to have to pile on here too with this data, and, I mean, it's, quite frankly, embarrassing that it ever gets into a table, that we're even looking at it, because, I mean, this is -- This is about like the data we saw that said there were 30,000 pounds of discards in the black sea bass pot fishery while it was closed. It's impossible, and this data right here is just -- I mean, I really think we need to ferret back through this and find out how this even got into this -- How this even came about, because it's extremely far from the truth.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. I've got Myra, to that, and then Laurilee.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you all for bringing this up. I will, you know, request clarification on how those numbers were arrived at. I will say that, you know, there is a chance that -- It doesn't say, at least what I'm looking at right here, if it's just SG 1 permits, or if it includes the 225, in terms of, you know why those -- Maybe there's something with how the data were queried that needs to be looked at, but we're going to look into it, and I've already, you know, jotted down exactly where this is in the document, and so I appreciate you bringing it up.

DR. BELCHER: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I just want to further complain. I mean, when you have a seventy-five-pound trip limit for red snapper, and 300 pounds for snowy grouper -- Or 200 pounds for snowy grouper, and how can you have an 8,000-pound trip?

DR. BELCHER: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: This is unrelated, and so, if there's more points to that, but I forgot that I had one more minor suggestion to add to the document, which is, on page 9, and you don't have to scroll to it, there's a nice scan of the statistical grids, and I was wondering if, before that, it might be appropriate to add a scan of what the actual logbook document looks like now.

MS. BROUWER: So that's actually one of the appendices, and I forget which one, but we do have the actual paper logbook.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Other questions or comments for Myra? What's the pleasure of the group, as far as approving this for public hearing? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: If this is going to go out to public hearing, these documents that we're just talking about, or having questions about, is that going to be in there, or is that going to be tunedup and looked at before it goes out to the public, because you can't put -- I mean, if you think we are asking questions, the public is going to look at that and ask what's up, and so you might better tune that up, or see what the problem is, before you go out to public comment.

MS. BROUWER: Yes, absolutely, and what we were -- We've got May kind of penciled-in for public hearings, and so we'll have time, you know, to address anything that comes up through the Gulf Council meeting coming up, and then we would prepare, you know, with updated information, and we would have, as I mentioned earlier, more information on costs to the agency, and also the time savings, you know, an actual estimate for that, and so all of that information will be included in the version of the amendment that gets prepared for public hearings.

DR. BELCHER: I've got Jack and then back to Kerry.

DR. MCGOVERN: I think what might be helpful for this document is to have, you know, instead of just the average, is to have like a range, and show how many trips are below this amount, this amount, and then it might be, if there's some really high trips in there, that's kind of skewing the average, and so just to show a table, or a graph, that shows the range I think would be helpful, like we did with the bag limit analyses and trip limit analyses.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Jack. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I see what you're saying, Jack, but I just think that, even if there -- I don't even think there could be an outlier that could be 8,000 pounds, because we don't have -- If you add up every trip limit, if everything was open at the same time, and you added up every trip limit, you could not have an 8,000-pound trip, and so -- Again, that makes me worry about the original -- Like is there a flaw somewhere, and so, as long as that's investigated, I trust you all to flesh that out, but I don't think this is a case of an outlier, because that's impossible.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. I've got Chip and then Tim.

DR. COLLIER: I just did the numbers, real quick, and, if you look at the text in the paragraph above this, it was indicating that there were nineteen vessels, and so, if you read the statement, during the five-year period, the SG-permitted vessels that reported snapper grouper landings made an average of nineteen trips, and each trip landed an average of 2,800 pounds, or 2,848, and that's actually an annual amount, and so, if you were take that nineteen and divide it into the 8,248, then you would get around 400 pounds per trip, and that seems more like it, and so it's not per trip, but that's, per year, what each vessel is landing.

DR. BELCHER: I think the language needs to be cleaned up though, because, as I'm reading that, it says that they made nineteen annual trips and each trip landed an average, and it's not all trips, and it's each trip, and so I think that -- Obviously, it's miswritten, for sure, and so -- Tim.

MR. GRINER: That clarifies it, but I do think the language is not indicating how you just explained it to us.

DR. BELCHER: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Do you want a motion? I am willing to make one, but I didn't want to cut off discussion. I move that we approve the electronic logbook, whatever it's called, for public hearing. I don't know the number.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Jessica seconded. Is there further discussion on this? Comments? Okay.

MR. GRINER: With the language cleaned up.

DR. BELCHER: Right. Okay. **Does anyone object to the motion?** Okay. **Seeing no objection, then the motion will pass.** Okay. Is that all for Myra? Okay. Thank you very much, Myra. Since it's five minutes to twelve, I'm going to go ahead and let's break for lunch, and, when we come back from lunch, we'll get Roger to come up and give his report on the climate summit, and then we'll continue on from there, and so we'll break until 1:30, and we'll start back at 1:30.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

DR. BELCHER: Let's come back to Full Council, please. We have one agenda item left from Full Council, and Roger is going to come up and talk to us about the climate scenario, and, from there, we'll go into Snapper Grouper. Roger.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay. Good afternoon. I'm going to be actually fairly short and sweet, because there's a lot to be coming with what's going to be produced, based on what just happened, and so, as I've been reporting up until now, the scenario planning initiative had moved forward into the application phase, and we're just coming off of a summit that was really kind of the pinnacle of the discussions with all the councils and the commission and NOAA, the Northeast Region, the Northeast Center, the Southeast Region, and the Southeast Center, advancing to provide guidance to the future.

At the summit, we had a table of about fifty-five representatives from all the different components to move forward with discussions on what -- How you look at some of the different scenarios that have been laid out and focusing-in on major topics pertaining to governance, to flexibility and management, and to data interactions, and the way the whole summit proceeded is we had breakout sessions, where they divided members from all the different components, and so we kind of mixed all the different groups up and addressed major questions on each one of those, with the intent of getting enough discussion that there can be some beginnings, or highlights, on highest priority types of areas to be considering to move into the future on all those different tiers.

We ultimately voted and provided some guidance, and what's going to happen now is, based on that type of -- All that information, we have the core team that is compiling the report that's going to go to the NRCC, and that document is also going to -- It has a companion that's going to be somewhat of an implementation, or an action, plan, with some items, some draft components of items, of next steps, where to go beyond here, and so that is all under development, and so I'm not going to spend a whole lot of time, because once -- We'll get some of the real meat that came out of that and a look to the future on next steps, on how we address the changing climate and what's going to be some of the big priorities for our region and beyond, and so that will be coming to the NRCC meeting.

Then we'll have a report at the CCC, also. At the same time, the CCC, I think, is going to have a presentation, and the one that is supposed to be looking at all of the operations under the councils, that different trajectory that was looking at how to address the actions of the councils and the individual plans, et cetera, and so those pieces of information will be all coming in the future, and so more to come, is basically what I'm seeing here, and I'm going to keep it fairly short, and we'll be getting the kind of -- The core team is in the middle of putting all that down and having it advance, and so the NRCC will be doing it, and John will be attending, and hopefully we'll be able to get that detail either addressed at the June or the September meeting. Any questions?

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Roger. Questions for Roger? Okay. Seeing none, we will recess Full Council, and we will start with the Snapper Grouper Committee, under Chairwoman McCawley.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on March 6, 2023.)

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Transcribed By Amanda Thomas April 19, 2023

# SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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# FULL COUNCIL I (OPEN) 3/6/2023

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FULL COUNCIL I 3/6/2023

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# SAFMC 2023 March Attendee Report: Council Mtg (3/6-10/23)

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## **Attendee Details**

Allenuee Delans		
Attended	Last Name	First Name
Yes	Aukeman	Trip
Yes	Bailey	Adam
Yes	Bell	00 Mel
Yes	Berry	James "chip"
Yes	Bianchi	Alan
Yes	Borland	Gary
Yes	Brouwer	Myra
Yes	Bubley	Walter
Yes	Byrd	01Julia
Yes	Calay	Shannon
Yes	Cathey	Andrew
Yes	Cermak	Bridget
Yes	Chaya	01Cindy
Yes	Christoferson	Jill
Yes	Coggins	Lew
Yes	Cox	Derek
Yes	Cross	Tiffanie
Yes	Crosson	Scott
Yes	Curtis	Judd
Yes	DeVictor	Rick
Yes	Dukes	Amy
Yes	Finch	Margaret
Yes	Fitzpatrick	Eric
Yes	Foss	Kristin
Yes	Franco	Dawn
Yes	GLOECKNER	DAVID
Yes	Gentry	Lauren
Yes	Gervasi	Carissa
Yes	Glazier	Edward
Yes	Gore	Karla
Yes	Guyas	Martha
Yes	HARRELL	RYAN
Yes	HEMILRIGHT	DEWEY

Vee	HILDRETH	DELAINE
Yes Yes	Hadley	John
Yes	Hall	Michael
Yes	Helies	Frank
Yes	Helmey	Judy
Yes	Howington	Kathleen
Yes	Hudson	Joseph
Yes	Hull	James
Yes	Huynh	Quang
Yes	lverson	Kim
Yes	Kappos	Maria
Yes	Karnauskas	Mandy
Yes	Kellison	Todd
Yes	Kelly	Bill
Yes	Klasnick	01Kelly
Yes	Knowlton	Kathy
Yes	LARKIN	Michael
Yes	La Belle	Sarah
Yes	Laks	Ira
Yes	Malinowski	Rich
Yes	Marhefka	00Kerry
Yes	McGovern	Jack
Yes	McPherson	Matthew
Yes	Mehta	Nikhil
Yes	Morales	Harry
Yes	Murphey	Trish
Yes	Neer	Julie
Yes	Newman	Thomas
Yes	O'Shaughnessy	Patrick
Yes	Oliver	Ashley
Yes	Peterson	Benjamin Cassidy
Yes	Peterson	Brett
Yes	Pierce Pitts	Nicole
Yes	Poston	Will
Yes Yes	Ralston	Kellie
Yes	Ramsay	Chloe
Yes	Records	David
Yes	Roller	00Tom
Yes	Sauls	Beverly
Yes	Seward	McLean
Yes	Shertzer	Kyle
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Yes	Snyder	Dave
Yes	Spurgin	Kali
Yes	Stemle	Adam
Yes	Takade-Heumacher	Helen

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Yes	Travis	Michael
Yes	Vecchio	Julie
Yes	Walter	John
Yes	Wamer	David
Yes	Waters	James
Yes	Williams	Erik
Yes	Withers	Meg
Yes	blough	heather
Yes	brewer	00chester
Yes	collier	chip
Yes	moss	david
Yes	sandorf	scott
Yes	thomas	01suz
Yes	thompson	laurilee
Yes	vara	mary