

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL SESSION I

**Villas by the Sea Resort
Jekyll Island, Georgia**

March 4-5, 2024

Transcript

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Observers and Participants

Other observers and participants attached.

The Full Council Session I of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at The Villas by the Sea Resort, Jekyll Island, Georgia, on Monday, March 4, 2024, and was called to order by Chairman Carolyn Belcher.

DR. BELCHER: Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to the March 2024 council meeting here in Jekyll. I would like to welcome all of you all from far and wide, and hopefully we will have a very good and productive meeting this week. I'm going to start out with some of our upfront introductions with our Gulf Council liaison. Dale Diaz is here, down at the end of the table. Our Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council liaison, Sonny Gwin, is here, and Joe Grist will be joining us, I'm assuming, at some point this week for the Mackerel Committee.

The next item on the agenda is to approve the agenda. Does anybody have any modifications they would like to see made to the agenda at this time? Any objection to the agenda, as currently published? Okay. Seeing none, the agenda passes. Moving on to the approval of the minutes from the December 2023 council meeting, are there any changes that need to be made to those minutes? Okay. Any objection to the minutes? Seeing none, the minutes also pass from the December meeting. The next item on the agenda is to go into our basic report-outs, and we have the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement first, and Officer Carrodegua, if you would please come forward.

MR. CARRODEGUAS: My name is David Carrodegua, and I'm an EO out of Cape Canaveral, Florida, filling in for, or trying to fill in, for Lieutenant O'Shaughnessy. If we want to go to the next slide, I will give you guys a quick snapshot, and so we've opened 125 incidents since the last council meeting. Sixteen of those were referred to General Counsel or to the Department of Justice. Thirty-nine summary settlements were issued, ranging from \$275 to \$2,000, and most of those were retention during closure cases, ARS, and sanctuary violations. 44 percent of those were no violations, which is showing a high rate of compliance, or it was minor violations that were handled through compliance assistance.

Some of our enforcement highlights, the photo on the top-left is our EO from Savannah, Georgia doing a joint operation with Georgia DNR, and well as CBP's Antiterrorism and Contraband Enforcement Team. They boarded two cargo vessels at the Port of Savannah. The shipping containers had freight onboard that were not going to be imported into the U.S., and so they were searched for contraband, including marine products, looking to see if they had any kind of endangered species onboard or, you know, such type material.

We highlighted shrimp and rec boardings during operations, with a high compliance rate that was observed. The Right Whale Festival, pushing out information on the speed zones, the seasonal management areas, the distance rules, and we also took the opportunity to push out information on best practices and other OLE highlights, things that we work on and trying to get the mission out to the public. The same was done at another outreach event that was focused on teaching children about conservation, and the same was done at the Sebastian Police National Night Out, and again focusing on pushing information to the public, bringing kids into it, and doing that type of outreach work.

There's a big focus on our enforcement partnerships, and we work heavily with FWC, Georgia DNR, South Carolina, all of our partners, the Coast Guard, the FDA, CBP, and, during this first quarter, we had twenty-six overall enforcement referrals, and that encompasses the entire

Southeast Division. I believe twenty-two of those were from FWC, which was a mix of bag limit, ARS, undersized, sanctuary cases, and we had two from Georgia that were retention during a closure, and then another two from the Coast Guard, which was retention, as well as TED requirements.

This is, again, just expanding on our enforcement partnerships and referrals. It shows the work that we did with the Coast Guard, and we had an EO, out of Niceville, that attended a Gulf Coast Illegal Charter Taskforce, and received an award for working with the Coast Guard on those charter enforcement actions, and we had another EO, out of St. Petersburg, that initiated a living marine resource training with the Coast Guard, and kind of just teaching those new LMR officers investigative techniques, so that they can enforce fishery regulations when they're out and about on patrols.

This showcases, again, the work that was done in Savannah, and another EO that spoke at the South Atlantic Regional Fisheries Training Center, and brought to the Coast Guard how to do federal case packages, how to put them together to refer them out.

We've had targeted operations, during this time, and Operation Whale Watch was a multiday operation enforcing the northern right whale seasonal management areas, from Myrtle Beach down to Jacksonville. At times, when we did not have vessels necessarily in that area, we also took the opportunity to do enforcement for either shrimp vessels that were out and about or MPA boardings, and we also did pot gear inspections during this time, and we did have a pleasure boat that was exceeding the speed zone, down in the Jacksonville area, which has been referred to GC, and we had the Coast Guard put out a notice to mariners, which actually increased compliance from the large container vessels almost immediately. You could see them dropping on AIS, and on the radar, where it was immediate, once that went out.

Another targeted operation was SPA Watcher, down at the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, and there was a big focus on charter, on charter requirements, sea turtle release gear, permits, decal requirements, things of that nature.

Our current spotlights, we have SEFHIER and headboats. We use compliance assistance when it meets that threshold. We want to give people the opportunity to become compliant before we start issuing violations and fine, but we have used fines as a tool as well, and I've issued a few summary settlements for SEFHIER cases myself. It is time-intensive. We get large amounts of these referrals at once, and we're stretched pretty thin, and you have to do a lot of follow-up work to be able to catch up with these captains, go through the processes of it all, and then, you know, there needs to be a degree of information sharing between the programs, to be able to effectively do that.

The old reporting portal was useful, in the sense that it showed every contact that was made between the program and the captains, and that significantly made enforcement easier. The current portal does not have that option, or I haven't been able to find it, but that level of information sharing was critical, when we had it.

Again, right whales, we're doing a lot of outreach, and I know, myself, I will go out and give out the distance cards, all up and down the east coast, pretty much. During the season, I will stop at boat ramps, and put it on vehicles that are parked there, to try to get that information out as much as possible, to get people to comply, and then we're running our patrol ops as well, and then, again,

charter enforcement, the sea turtle release gear, permits, decal requirements, and this is just to showcase, on the charter enforcement that we're doing, there was a NOVA issued to a headboat case for not reporting in a timely manner that resulted in a \$4,750 NOVA.

This is an ongoing case that we have right now, an investigation, where a sawtooth, or a sawfish, was found dead with the rostrum cut off. It's an active investigation, and we're looking for leads. We've got a \$20,000 reward for any information on it. It's one of our priorities on the moment that we wanted to highlight.

This is how they can report that, and, obviously, this hotline is always available, twenty-four-seven, and the information that we look for when they make these reports to the hotline, and we want location, time, date of the activity, a description of the activity, name, vessel, owner or operator, anything that they have that can help us. The more information we can get, it significantly increases the outcome of enforcement, and, with that, that is the end of the presentation, if anybody has any questions.

DR. BELCHER: Does anybody have any questions at this time, relative to the OLE report? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thank you for being here. I'm Andy Strelcheck, the Regional Administrator for NOAA Fisheries, and two things. One, you mentioned the portal for SEFHIER, and so my team can help connect you with that portal, because it is still up and running and accessible. My second question, and so we are spending a tremendous amount of time on the customer service end, trying to build compliance, obviously, with that program. Any guidance, advice, input for us, now that you're taking the next step of kind of meeting with the charter captains, and the headboat captains, in terms of things that maybe we could help you with?

MR. CARRODEGUAS: So what I've found, in the cases when I get the referrals sent to me, right, is, when it goes to noncompliance, and their permits start getting shut down, I immediately start getting calls that we want to get into compliance, and I don't understand the program, and can you meet with me, and teach me how to report, and, you know, what app do I use, but just that trigger alone really ramps-up calls for compliance, and then to follow-up with them, right, and, I mean, every time I board a charter, I ask them if you guys are up-to-date, and, well, I'm maybe a week or two behind, but I'll get them in, and, you know, life caught up with me, and I've got to get these reports in, but I will get them in.

That's typically what we find in that end, but there was a point in time where the portal had so-and-so called so-and-so, and stated that they needed to get in compliance, and the person acknowledges it, right, and I've issued summary settlements off of cases where the captain tells me that, well, nobody ever called me, and I'm like -- I read to them verbatim what the person copied, and they're like, oh, and that takes it to a step where compliance assistance isn't going to be the route, and we went with a summary settlement on that case.

DR. BELCHER: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks. On one of your slides, you said one of your targeted operations was in -- It says "shrimp/Charleston Edisto MPA area", and I'm wondering if you have any insight at all on how the boardings within, or surrounding, the Charleston MPA went, the Edisto MPA went.

MR. CARRODEGUAS: I don't believe they found any violations in the MPA. They patrolled the MPA, for enforcement purposes, but I don't believe they found any violations in that particular operation.

MS. MARHEFKA: Excellent. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Any other questions at this point? Okay. Seeing none, thank you for your presentation.

MR. CARRODEGUAS: Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: The next item is the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel report from Captain Scott Pearce, the AP Chair.

CAPTAIN PEARCE: Good afternoon, Dr. Belcher and council members. Thank you all for having me this afternoon, and the rest of the week, and I hope I will be able to provide some good insight to any of your questions that you may have, but we'll go ahead and move into the PowerPoint here.

All right, and so the LEAP met in Charleston, South Carolina on January 29 through 30, 2024. The members present were myself, Captain Scott Pearce, Florida Fish and Wildlife; Major Michael Paul Thomas, South Carolina DNR, Vice Chair; Captain Chris Hodge from Georgia DNR; Captain Garland Yopp from North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries; Lieutenant Pat O'Shaughnessy was represented by Michael Lind, and that was with NOAA; Jamal Ingram with NOAA General Counsel Enforcement; Lieutenant Andrew Loeffler with the U.S. Coast Guard; Bruce Buckson was represented via virtual, online; Tracy Dunn was there as well, retired from NOAA; Kevin Roberts, recreational fisherman; Joshua Burton, recreational; Michael Freeman, commercial; and Alanna Harrison, commercial.

The topics discussed were snapper grouper amendments, which will be presented during the Snapper Grouper Committee, the wreckfish, private recreational permit and education requirements, on-demand gear for black sea bass pots, and red snapper and recreational discards. Tournament sales of kingfish and Spanish mackerel will be presented during the Mackerel Cobia Committee. Compliance updates, SEFHIER compliance, was an agenda item, and then agency updates and other business.

All right, and so compliance updates. In general, for descending devices, in general, the number of vessels with descending devices onboard has increased. However, they are not always readily available, and agencies are continuing to educate the public and conduct outreach about the requirements for the descending devices. We need more education on how to use descending devices, and why, and we need more education on what "readily available" means and why it is important. The recommendation is to clarify the readily available requirement on the council's best fishing practices webpage.

Most descending devices onboard recreational devices are store-bought, and more of the do-it-yourself descending devices were found on commercial vessels, and then I think it's important to note that the educational part of this is not only for the general public, we do feel like, across-the-board, we need to make sure that our law enforcement officers, that are representing the agencies

when they're out there on the vessels, have a -- That they have what they need to be able to clearly explain to the user how these devices work, why it's important to use them, and what "readily available" means.

All right, and so, moving on to the marine protected areas and the spawning special management zones, closed areas that are far offshore continue to be difficult to enforce. For the U.S. Coast Guard, fast-response boats are best suited for enforcing MPAs, but they are concentrated in south Florida and tasked with border patrol and illegal immigration. The U.S. Coast Guard relies on state partners to enforce fishery regulations, including closed areas.

North Carolina, which does not have a JEA, is not sending patrols to the EEZ. Closed areas not being marked make them more difficult to enforce, and to apply enforcement, and the AP had additional comments regarding closed areas during discussion of Regulatory Amendment 35, and the AP requested that the council be more specific in their inquiries regarding enforcement for closed areas, so agencies can better respond. The idea would be to send out surveys, to get an idea better on how you want that enforcement to look.

Agency updates, I will probably skip over the NOAA update, because you had a much better, in-depth version of that just now, and so we'll move on to the other states and the Coast Guard. For South Carolina JEA activities, the Saltwater Enforcement Team has doubled federal referrals from the previous year. There were fourteen cases related to red snapper, three descending device violations, one marine protected area violation, six dealer violations, and one charter captain with an expired permit and possession of red snapper.

The Georgia JEA activities referred twenty-six cases to NOAA, mostly red snapper, eight descending device violations, two TED violations, several undersized black sea bass. Six new positions have been created, and there are approximately twenty officers dedicated to coastal enforcement.

For North Carolina, there were no JEA cases on descending device violations, and they're looking at obtaining additional watercraft and adding two investigators. Again, North Carolina does not participate in the JEA program.

For Florida, for statewide, during the last contract period, the total hours were 6,000 hours of JEA activities, including 1,300 hours dedicated to the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. We had over 267 citations, and 290 summary settlements, for Florida. Then you already heard from NOAA, and so I'm going to skip over that one.

The U.S. Coast Guard, the agency's focus is on combatting drugs and illegal immigration, IUU activities, and search and rescue. There has been a decline in recruitment and retention across the agency. The focus has shifted away from fisheries, and so the U.S. Coast Guard relies on partner agencies communicating priorities, and so, basically, they're going to be shifting, obviously, their efforts to other areas, but, if we communicate with them, they will work with us, as needed.

On Other Business, in Florida, we brought up a discussion on Caribbean red snapper and some of the things we've been seeing in Florida. Since we've had that discussion, we've had further discussion in Florida, and other information has developed, and so we don't feel that it's the issue we thought we were looking at, and we're just going to keep monitoring that, and see if anything

changes, but we were hearing chatter, on the internet, of people claiming to catch Caribbean red snapper, but now we're realizing that's not accurate. Any questions?

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Captain Pearce. Questions for Captain Pearce at this time? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Two questions, and so there's a lot of reference to red snapper cases, and these are out-of-season retention, primarily recreational vessels, or is this commercial and recreational that we're referring to?

CAPTAIN PEARCE: So I believe the majority are probably going to be recreational, but, if you're referring to the other states, the information I have is what I have, and so I don't know, and I can't speak for them on that.

MR. STRELCHECK: Okay, and then the discussion about enforceability of spatial area closures, and I think the statement was area closures far offshore, or something like that, and can you discuss like what distance are we talking about, or was there a definition of that?

CAPTAIN PEARCE: I knew we were going to talk about this a little bit more further on in the agenda, but so we all agreed that, the further offshore, the more difficult it is to patrol these areas, and so, you know, I think, when you're looking at anywhere out to twenty miles, you probably -- Anything within twenty miles of shore, you're going to increase your level of patrol, for the most part. You know, some states are still going to be limited, but, for the most part, anything within twenty miles, you're going to be good. Outside of twenty miles, you're going to be limited to what type of vessels the agencies have that can get out there and do it.

You know, with Florida, you know, we have our offshore patrol vessel program, but, in some areas, that might be one or two boats that can get out there and do it, and so, the further offshore, essentially, the lower frequency of patrol you're going to get. The closer to shore, the more frequency of patrol you're going to get.

DR. BELCHER: Additional questions at this time? Okay. Seeing none, thank you for your presentation.

CAPTAIN PEARCE: Thank you, all.

DR. BELCHER: The next report is from the U.S. Coast Guard. Lieutenant Stackhouse, are you giving that presentation, or is it being given remotely?

LTJG KRAISS: This is Lieutenant Junior Grade Kraiss, and I'm just going to be speaking real briefly, on behalf of the Coast Guard, for District 7.

DR. BELCHER: Go ahead, Marisa.

LTJG KRAISS: Okay. Good afternoon, everyone. I apologize that I could not be there in-person. I'm Lieutenant Junior Grade Kraiss, and I am the LMR, living marine resources, officer for Coast Guard District 7, and so one of the updates from the last council meeting is that I have replaced Lieutenant Box as the LMR officer, and so I'm here to listen and learn, and I'm available for any questions.

As was mentioned in the previous two reports, the Coast Guard is facing a retention crisis, and so some of our priorities are shifting. However, with that being said, the fisheries mission is still very much something we're involved in, and we do rely heavily on our partners. There are two cases recently that occurred, the first of which was a case out of Sector Jacksonville, where we worked with Coast Guard, NOAA, and Florida Fish and Wildlife, and that case resulted in the seizure of 9,665 pounds of fish and a \$2,000 fine to the fishing vessel that was involved.

The second case was a case out of Sector San Juan, where the Coast Guard interdicted a vessel that was originally suspected of counternarcotics trafficking, but, upon arriving on scene, we discovered that there were actually about 110,000 American eels being smuggled out of the United States to the Dominican Republic, and those were adolescent eels, and they're worth about \$2,000 per pound. NOAA actually wanted, or requested, to prosecute the case, under the Lacey Act, and so we transferred all of the contraband, and any evidence, to them, and so those are two great examples of the interagency and partnerships that we have that are crucial to our missions, and so, with that being said, that's all I have, and I have Lieutenant Dustin Stackhouse here, and he is visiting from District 5, and he's their LMR officer, and so he will also be participating in the conference, and available as well, if anybody has any other questions. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you for your presentation. Any questions at this time? Okay. Seeing none, we'll move on down to the council liaison reports. Dale, if you will tee us up with the Gulf report.

MR. DIAZ: Thank you, Dr. Belcher. I appreciate you all having me. I'm going to run through this report, and I'm only going to hit the things that I think are relevant to you all here at this meeting, and I'm probably going to read a little and talk a little bit. I do want to say that, at our last meeting, you all were well represented by Kerry, and she did a good job relaying the good work that you all are doing here, and I think it's valuable that you all keep sending people to our meetings, and that we come, where we can learn from each other, and I plan on trying to soak up as much information, and copy, and plagiarize, and everything else you all are doing this week.

The first thing I want to talk about is I want to let you all know that we started a recreational initiative in the Gulf, and that initiative aims to evaluate the efficacy of current recreational fishery management practices and develop innovative management approaches and guidance to prevent overfishing, address discards, and to better account for uncertainty in recreational fisheries data that is used in management. The way I've always approached my whole career is, no matter what we're doing, we can do a better job, and, if we're doing a bad job, we can do a better job, and, if we're doing a good job, we can do a better job.

I'm excited about this initiative, and I think we're going to get a lot of input from stakeholders, and hopefully we can come up with some better ways to manage our recreational fisheries. I think, Andy -- This was Andy who originally made the motion to do this, and I am really hoping that we get some good discard information in the Gulf. Like the South Atlantic, discards is a major problem in the Gulf, and it holds us back on harvesting more fish, and so we're going to keep an eye on some of the stuff that you all are doing, especially with discards and other things, and see if we can't plug those in and use those in our recreational initiative.

Another thing that I wanted to let you know about is there's a title here for our Scientific and Statistical Committee, and the main thing I want to bring up there is we're just adjusting it a little bit, and so now we can have up to twenty-one members on our SSC, and we're trying to get a little bit more focused on economists and social scientists, and we're going to include those in our standing committee, and now we can currently have up to four economists, and up to four social scientists, and we're making that a little bit more of a priority on our SSC.

The next thing that I want to talk about a little bit is electronic reporting, and I think most of you all know that, in the Gulf of Mexico, there was a court case that we lost, probably a year or so ago now, and we basically don't have a charter boat reporting system in place currently, and so we had the SEFHIER program for a short period of time, and so we're in the early stages of refining the SEFHIER program, and we do have an Ad Hoc Charter-for-Hire Data Collection Advisory Panel that recently met for the first time, and they gave us some input, and we're looking at the input that they gave us, and we're trying to get started on a document.

I envision, when all of this is done, we're going to have something that's going to be equivalent to like a SEFHIER lite, compared to what we had before, and we'll take into account the court decision, and we're getting a lot of input from the public on things that they didn't like, and I'm sure some of the things that they didn't like will not be in there, and we're taking an extra special hard look at the economic data that was asked for before, and I'm not sure where that's going to end up, and so the council is discussing exactly how much of an emphasis to put on economic data in the future in our program that's coming up.

I did want to talk about recreational catch and effort data, and so National Marine Fisheries staff presented a preliminary 2023 recreational landings estimate from the federal Marine Recreational Information Program Fishing Effort Survey for gag and red grouper. For both species, the landings estimates, in the MRIP-FES units, exceeded the annual catch limit. After reviewing the preliminary landings data, and hearing considerable public testimony on the issue, the council decided to write a letter to NOAA's Office of Science and Technology and the Gulf States, escalating the review and evaluation of recreational effort extrapolation methodologies between the federal MRIP-FES program and state-specific surveys. The council requested that the finding from the review be presented to the council's SSC as soon as possible.

At our public testimony at our last meeting, we had more recreational fishermen sign-up for public testimony than I've seen in a long time, or maybe ever, and a lot of it was the fact that they are concerned about some of the numbers that are affecting the closures of gag and red grouper in the Gulf of Mexico, and one thing that was cited in public testimony a lot is there was one -- I believe it was a gag encountered on the shoreline mode, and it threw a really big number, and that's happened before, with other species, where we'll have just a small amount of intercepts sometimes throw big numbers, and we've just got to figure out a better way to deal with those types of things, and that's what we're trying to -- One of the things we're trying to do is to encourage that Science and Technology and the Gulf States work together to get this review done and see if we can't do a better job with that, or look at some different ways to address those things when they happen.

Gag grouper, I know you all are looking at gag at this meeting, and so the council reviewed a presentation which showed that the reducing the daily bag limit from two fish to one fish is only expected to increase the duration of the recreational gag fishing season by 10 percent. Further, the recreational bag limit reduction is expected to correspond with an increase in regulatory discards,

as approximately 20 percent of the private vessels currently land two gag per person. Given these results, and in consideration of the council's goal of avoiding increasing discard mortality on gag, the council decided to stop work on a framework action that considers adjusting gag grouper management measures.

There's a few other things in my report that may come up during the meeting, and I'll just address those as you all go through your agenda, and I will just jump in there and talk about them, and that concludes my report.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Dale. Questions for Dale? Okay. Seeing none, we will move on to the Mid-Atlantic's report. Sonny.

MR. GWIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Mid-Atlantic Council met in February, and they approved the public hearing document for the surf clam and quahog species separation requirements, which was interesting, because that's a climate change, we believe, document. From climate change, the clams are starting to mix, and they're having a problem with quahogs and surf clams mixing, and it's always been a separate fishery, and so now enforcement is having problems with it.

We received an update on an action to reduce sturgeon bycatch, and we endorsed several packages of alternatives for further technical analysis, by putting -- They're trying to save the sturgeon, and bycatch of the sturgeon is getting out of hand, and now they're starting to do some updates on that, to reduce it, which is very interesting too, and it's going to really affect that fishery.

We also received some offshore wind update development, and we received a presentation on the black sea bass research track assessment. We received an update on efforts to increase awareness of compliance with recreational tilefish permitting and reporting requirements. We received a briefing on the Magnuson-Stevens Act financial disclosure and recusal requirements, and that was very interesting, on recusals and financial disclosures, and then one of the big things that we did, I thought, was recognize Captain Jimmy Ruhle for all the work that he's done, and I don't know if anybody has ever met Jimmy Ruhle, but, for what he's done for the fishing industry, and for management, and he's been instrumental in fisheries management.

I'm going to touch base on this sturgeon framework. They have an AP meeting tomorrow, and a committee meeting on the 13th, and that will go to the April meeting at the Mid-Atlantic, where they will make a final rule, and, in June, they will make the final rules. Also, I will touch on the black sea bass assessment. The council received a presentation on the black sea bass research track assessment, which passed peer review in December of 2023, and several improvements were made for that assessment, including a new model, and so if anybody is interested in that. I think that's it, if there's any questions, and the next meeting is in April, the 9th through 11th, in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks, Sonny. Are there questions for Sonny at this time? Okay. Seeing none, we'll move on to the state reports. Jessica, would you be willing to start with Florida first?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sure. Just a couple of things that I wanted to highlight, and so, later this week, our new Chief Conservation Officer, George Warthen, will be here, should be here, starting tomorrow afternoon, and he just has never been to a council meeting, and he wants to understand

the council process, and so he should be here tomorrow, and then just a heads-up that our FWC Conservation Social Science Team will be conducting interviews, in the near future, with commercial lobster fishermen, to try to understand a little bit more about the fishery, and what they want to see for the future of the fishery, and a number of items, really, but I just wanted to give people a heads-up on those two things, and that's all I've got.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks, Jessica. Trish, do you want to do North Carolina next?

MS. MURPHEY: All right, and so the Division of Marine Fisheries just recently issued \$1.2 million of CARES Act II funding to eligible members of the fishing industry, for economic losses due to COVID, and so this is CARES II, and these funds went to commercial fishers, aquaculture operations, seafood dealers, and processors.

The other thing that went on is our Marine Fishery Commission met last month, and so we selected options for -- They selected options for the draft striped mullet FMP, and that includes weekend closures for commercial fishers and bag and vessel limits for recreational fishers, and then this FMP is scheduled for final approval in May. They also selected proposed language for future rulemaking that would allow the division director, with the commission's concurrence, to issue a proclamation to cap harvest of false albacore through recreational bag limits, recreational vessel limits, and commercial trip limits, and that's if the false albacore fishery landings exceed a preset threshold.

They also sent an issue paper that is pertaining to the protection of submerged aquatic vegetation through shrimp trawl area closures to our various advisory committees for stakeholder input. They also approved, for the Marine Fisheries Commission Conservation Fund Committee, to expend \$40,000 to assist the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in stocking striped bass in Albemarle Sound. The commission also recommended that the division seek multiple sources of funding, and possible alternative methods, for monitoring of shrimp trawls, through an observer program.

Also, on March 20, the division is going to be hosting the North Carolina Southern Flounder Symposium. It's free to anybody that wants to come, and you just have to register. We've got speakers who will be talking about life history, movement and migration, habitat, and management in North Carolina, and as well as some ongoing research, and I believe our own Executive Director, John Carmichael, will be speaking at that as well, and so you can go to our website, and you'll find an agenda, and you can register there.

The other big news for North Carolina is, this past fall, our legislature passed rules, or passed legislation, that impacts both our recreational and commercial fishers, and it basically requires any person who is recreationally harvesting, and this is recreationally harvesting, red drum, flounder, spotted seatrout, striped bass, and weakfish, to report that harvest to the Division of Marine Fisheries, and it also requires any person that is holding a commercial fishing license, who engages in a fishing operation, to report all their fish, shellfish, and crustaceans harvested, and this also includes any landings that aren't sold.

The division received a one-time legislative allocation of \$5 million for the development of this harvest reporting system, and, unfortunately, it does not include additional staff, and we are also on a tight timeline to implement this by the end of the year, and we have started to get with outreach

efforts, to make sure that everyone is aware this is coming, and we'll be probably doing major outreach for this, and that's all I've got for North Carolina.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks, Trish. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you for that, Trish. Is there currently an observer program in the North Carolina shrimp industry, and, if so, who funds it?

MS. MURPHEY: I mean, there's a federal observer program, but we have observers that observe our gillnet fishery. We do shrimp trawl characterization work that, you know, we use observers on, and, to be honest, I'm not -- I think those projects are finished, but, I mean, we have observers, and we have an observer program in general, but it's really about the gillnets.

MR. GRINER: Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Any other questions for Trish? Okay. Moving on, we have -- As we all know, Mel retired, and this is our first meeting without him, and Ms. Amy Dukes is here, representing South Carolina. Amy, did they prep you to have a report?

MS. DUKES: Yes, ma'am, they did. Thank you, guys, for allowing me to be here. It's really an honor, and I'm really excited about working with everyone on the council, and all the council staff, and hopefully I'm a little bit of a familiar face, and so it won't come as quite a surprise, but I would be happy to give an update from the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources.

We've got three saltwater-heavy bills currently working their way through the house and the senate. One is for blue crab fisheries, and primarily it's to establish a limited commercial fishery for that particular industry. Right now, it's classified as the wild, wild west, often, when we talk about it. Through attrition, our attempt is to try to get down to about 125 licenses over time, and that's going to be done through looking at historical landings. Exactly how that framework is going to look, it's still being worked through, and there are some amendments that have been made to the proposed legislation thus far, and, currently, it's still in a subcommittee standard, and so please pay attention for that as it comes down.

Additionally, a flounder bill is in its third reading in the senate, and this is to repeal a sunset clause associated with some regulation from 2021, and it's just in order to keep the sixteen-inch requirement, with a five-per-person and ten-vessel limit.

Lastly, from the legislative side of the house, there is a resolution for offshore species data collection, and it's an interesting one, and it's passed the fish house committee, and it's going to be read in the house, but, specifically, the resolution encourages the agency to develop a state-based marine recreational offshore fisheries data collection program, in lieu of a federal permit, that ensures more reliable data for fisheries management and facilitates access to offshore fisheries for South Carolina anglers. More to come on this.

I will also say that we are currently seeking funding for -- I'm sorry, and we're currently seeking, through some disaster funds that we received for the 2018 shrimp, and so, actually, RFPs went out to the industry for infrastructure projects, and so that's working its way, and then, lastly, we have a new stock assessment biologist position that we have been trying to fill for a little while, and we

had some great interviews in the last couple of weeks, and hopefully we'll be filling that position here shortly, and that will conclude my report.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Amy. Questions for Amy? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Hi, Amy. Welcome to the family. I think -- Did I hear you right, when you said that the permit would be in lieu of a federal permit, so that you could try to collect data, and so how would that affect our council's efforts to try to get a federal permit established to collect data? Will they need your South Carolina state permit and a federal permit to fish in offshore waters, and will you guys be sharing data?

MS. DUKES: It's a great question, Laurilee. At this point, it's a resolution, which means this is just an exploratory-type framework, and so could South Carolina DNR do this, and, if they were, how much would this program cost, what infrastructure would we have to build into the agency to be able to actually have a side-by-side data collection program, and this is very much in the infancy, and, at this point, it's more of an idea.

I believe the "in lieu of the federal permit" will get to some of the action items that 46 talks about, if a state can exempt from a federal permit, and those type of conversations would likely be a part of this resolution. Again, it's in infancy, and this is just a what could South Carolina, do, how would you do it, and how much would it cost, and there are no dedicated funds associated with this resolution, and it's just sort of a theory of let's see what we can do, and the general assembly is asking the agency to do this.

MS. THOMPSON: Well, actually, that sounds pretty good, you know, in lieu of what we just heard from the law enforcement that there really isn't anyone that can enforce the federal attempts to collect data, and enforce things, and it will be interesting to see what you guys come up with. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Additional questions for Amy? Okay. Seeing none, I will give you the report-out from Georgia. We're light on federal projects, or at least federal-waters projects, but a couple of things of note. Our shrimp season extended through the middle of January this year. Count size was sufficient enough, and we pretty much made that decision prior to -- Well, two weeks prior to actually getting the cold snap that coincided well with that date, and so, actually, we did a better job forecasting that closure than we would have thought.

A lot more activity has gone on our artificial reefs. Right before Christmas, we got back into the sub car business, and we put two subway cars out, twenty-three miles off of Ossabaw, in one of our artificial reefs. They came from Atlanta. Atlanta has a number of cars that they would love to see us put down in the future, and so we're working through with them. Both Director Haymans and Paul Medders, who is the lead for our habitat program, is working closely with them for future projects that involve those cars.

Then, on the 17th of February, we also put a steel-hulled sailboat down on one of our artificial reefs, about sixteen miles offshore of Cumberland, and so we're still putting some effort into putting, I guess, supplies on the bottom. It's interesting to note, and I'm sure that you all have seen with your social media, how trends go, but, initially, we had a lot of really good feedback

coming through, but, by the time you got down to the bottom of the list, you could see that there's a lot of misunderstanding about what we do.

There was a lot of folks that really felt like we were just putting junk on the bottom, by the time we got to the end of our 3,000 comments, but, initially, we got a lot of really strong feedback on it. Any questions for me from Georgia? All right. So, seeing none, we will move on to our first meeting item, which is Best Fishing Practices and 2024 Outreach Update from Ashley Oliver.

MS. OLIVER: All right. Hi, everyone. Good afternoon. We wanted to start off, here on Monday, talking about some of the outreach education that we've been doing this year, not only, you know, best fishing practices and citizen science, but we also want to share what we're seeing out there and talk to you about kind of what we're seeing change over time, since we really started to push this outreach, and about a couple of years ago is when we started kind of a more aggressive outreach approach.

Since I do have the floor, I want to just give you guys a quick update on two of our best fishing practices projects that are upcoming and ongoing, but I will spend most of the time talking about those outreach efforts that we've completed this year thus far.

The first project is the What It Means to Me project, and you guys remember that this is the video project that I'm working on with Nick, and, ultimately, we're just sitting down with fishermen, and we're just having conversations with them, and, you know, learning what their fishery means to them, and, you know, why they think it should be preserved for the future, and so, really, on this slide, I just wanted to give a big shoutout, and a big thank you, to all of our participants thus far. Since we've spoke last, we've added Robert Spottswood, Jr. to the list, and we just can't thank these guys enough for taking time out of their busy schedules and talking with us, sharing their stories, and, you know, just digging in a little bit.

As an update for the project itself, Nick and I are currently editing all the videos, and we're planning to get a video out here soon, and it will be Chip's video, and we'll start, you know, putting more out, once we get them edited, and it will kind of go in the order that we filmed them, which is what's on the screen now, and the so the idea is we'll share this video with the participants, and we would love for them to share them on their platforms, and we'll share it through social media, put it on YouTube, and we're looking to create a dedicated webpage for the project, and also hopefully have a feature article in the late summer, and so we're really excited to see this project come together, and so be on the lookout for those videos being posted.

Then, as for an update for the Best Fishing Practices Master Volunteer Program, again, this is those regional in-person workshops that are targeting key members of the fishing community and port samplers, and the goal of this project is really to extend our reach by having these groups spread information in their communities about best fishing practices, the council, and the council projects, and what really makes this project different is we want it to be more of a -- Instead of a one-way discourse, we want it to be more conversational in nature.

We really do hope that folks learn something from this workshop, but, really, the idea is for us to kind of emphasize the main tidbits that we want them to take back, and then, for us as staff, we're really hoping to keep building those relationships, and hopefully learn ways that we can better outreach, and so, within your briefing book, there is a project document that just kind of lists

everything out in detail. If you're interested in looking at that, it just kind of goes into why we're doing this program, what it is, and who we're targeting.

I wanted to quickly cover the workshop components, now that we have kind of finalized what we're going to talk about, and the first section, of course, is going to be all about best fishing practices, and this is going to be the meat of the workshop, and we'll get into general practices, and so, you know, limiting the fight, limiting air exposure, handling practices, things like that, and we'll dig in on the Release section, and so talking about descending devices, the types, you know, the regulations and what have you, and we decided that we want to talk about venting as well. We heard from you, and we heard from our APs, and we heard from, you know, folks in our outreach that people are venting, and, a lot of times, they're venting incorrectly, and so we wanted to have a section in the workshop talking about what venting is, what it is not, and emphasize that you still -- Even if you choose to vent, you still have to have a descending device in the South Atlantic.

Then, like I said, we want this to be conversational, and so we plan to have some activities throughout the workshop. We've got some discussions planned, and we have a post-it-note activity that gets participants up out of their seats and interacting with each other.

Then the second section is going to be all about getting involved, and so, of course, this includes our citizen science projects, SAFMC Release, FISHstory, and the citizen science project portal. I plan to go over a little bit about the council, talk about Magnuson, kind of high-level stuff, and that the councils are bound by Magnuson, who you all are, what you do, the importance of advisory panels and public comment, and then a little bit about the MREP program, or the Marine Resource Education Program.

I went through this a couple of years ago, with Judy and Laurilee, and I learned so much from this program, and I honestly want to go back through it again, because it was just so helpful, and I think, you know, anybody that wants to be involved in the fishery management process -- They should really apply and try to be a part of that program. Then the last section, that will kind of wrap up everything up, is I'm hoping to partner with our state folks and just give a little information about what they've got going on and how people can get involved with them.

This is kind of our tentative, most tentative, schedule. We're still looking for places, and dates, to host most of these, but I will say that we are about to get the ball rolling. South Carolina is set in stone, and so we'll have our first workshop on April 25 in Charleston, followed by one up in Myrtle Beach on May 7, and in Port Royal on May 8, and so it's coming up soon, and I'm really excited to finally get this thing going.

It's been a work-in-progress, and so, in the coming months, or I guess throughout the whole year, I'll be sending out advertisements, and sign-ups, and, you know, one of the main, you know, groups we are targeting is key members of the community, and so that includes our council members, that includes our APs, and also all of your community members, and so we would really love for you guys to attend one of these, and bring your friends, and so, like I said, be on the lookout, throughout the year, for an advertisement.

That brings me to the outreach portion of the presentation. To say the least, we've been quite busy to start the year, and this -- You know, I am giving this presentation, but the effort is our entire outreach crew, and so that includes myself, Christina, Julia, Meg, and David, and just really all

staff, because they have volunteered a lot of their evenings, and their weekends, to help us out with these events, and, without that, we wouldn't have been able to accomplish what we did.

Then not on staff, but has given us a lot of insight and contacts in the industry, is BeBe Dalton-Harrison, and I'm sure a lot of you guys know BeBe, and she's been in and out and around the council for some time, and she's been super helpful, this year and last year as well.

We kicked off the year with a week-long outreach adventure in the Florida Keys. We really made the most of our time, and we accomplished quite a bit, and, just in general, there really is an overwhelming support for descending devices and best practices down there, which kind of is similar to what we saw the last time we were down in the Keys and did outreach.

To start the week, David and I did some tackle shop outreach, where we hit about thirteen shops throughout the Keys, and tackle shops continue to be such a major part of what we do, and, you know, people really do appreciate that face-to-face contact, and, you know, we do get some tough questions, and we have some tough conversations, but those are just as important to have as those, you know, positive interactions, and our materials continue to be very well received.

We actually ended up getting an SAFMC Release sign-up right after we left Cudjoe Sales, and I guess a customer -- She had overheard us talking to the guys at the counter, and she thought it was interesting, and she signed up, and so, again, that's exactly, you know, why we're doing this, and we're always looking for tackle shop suggestions. Robert gave us a couple when we were down there, that weren't originally on our tackle shop list, and they ended up being like awesome visits, and so please always send us your places that you go, or that you know are hotspots in your area.

Then, while David and I were busy tackle shop outreaching, Julia was busy with FISHstory outreaching, and she visited the REEF Key Largo campus, which is the Reef Environmental Education Foundation, and they've been a key partner in leading efforts for the SMILE project, and she was able to meet with REEF staff, and two other facilities, and they're actually building a new ocean exploration center, which is pretty cool, and they're looking into ways to incorporate historic photos, and so FISHstory, obviously, is the best, you know, the greatest project for that, and so they are looking to incorporate that into one of their new displays.

She was also able to visit Bud N' Mary's, and she shared information on that project. David Moss helped her connect with Captain Asbury, who is a headboat captain at Bud N' Mary's, and she's working with him to get some more photos down in the Keys.

Then, surprisingly, still earlier in the week, we did a seminar with the Tackle Box in Marathon, and this audience was great. They asked a ton of relevant questions about best practices and release, and one thing that we do, in all of our seminars, all of our events, is we always show that NC State video of the red grouper being descended, and you guys have probably seen it a million times, and so we always share that, and, every single time we share it, people are always in awe.

You know, maybe they didn't believe it worked before, but now they do, and so this crowd was especially interested in that, and it led to some great conversations, and the Tackle Box actually posted this, and it's a screenshot that I took off of Facebook, but they posted a live video of David explaining how to use a descending device, and you can see, down there, they had 1.2 thousand views, just from this one video, and so it just kind of goes to show, you know, partnering with

people like this, and they post things, and we didn't ask them to do this, and so doing this, you know, can really spread that information out there. There is only four or five of us in our, you know, outreach crew, and so, obviously, our social media is limited as well, and so just, you know, partnering with folks like this is something we want to continue doing.

Then we went on a Sea Grant media headboat trip that David organized. The idea, or the goal, of this trip was to gather media content that focused on best practices and SAFMC Release and get a published article from it, and so went out on the Gulf Stream IV, out of Key West, Florida.

We caught red grouper, graysby, lane snapper, muttons, porgies, all kinds of stuff, and we've got some great footage of it, great photos, and we've created all kinds of videos as well, and you can see, in that bottom video there, and that's actually the mate, and he was really stoked, and he wanted to get involved, and so he took me through, you know, how to rig up a circle hook, what's the importance of them, the function of them, and so that was really cool, and then Julia was a star as well, and we did all kind of bits on how to just use SAFMC Release out in the wild. Then I should also mention too that David has written an article for *Keys Weekly*, and he used a lot of the media for this trip, and that should be coming out soon, I believe.

Then we finished the trip with a weekend at the Florida Keys Seafood Festival. We had a booth talking about best practices and Release, and it was really just a lot of general -- It was a lot of education to the general public, with a few people being new charter companies and local fishermen that were especially excited and interested in what we had to say.

This was just a good opportunity to catch up with our AP members, and also to show support for the Florida Keys Seafood Fishermen's Association, and, also, there were a few seminar attendees that came by and stopped, and, again, just building that relationship there, and, as you can see, the chickens were also very interested in best practices too. We finally got one in our booth and captured a picture of it. That may, or may not, have been the goal of the day.

The following weekend, we had some folks go to the Haddrell's Tackle Fishing Expo in Charleston, and this is actually something we went to last year, and we were invited back, and so, you know, just with being invited back to events, it just is showing a transition into a more personable council, and, if you remember, that is kind of one of our goals of our outreach.

There were a lot of repeat attendees, both adults and kids, that remembered staff, and what's interesting about this event is there are a lot more kids than a lot of our other events that really cater more to adults, but these kids would come into the booth, and they would start to tell staff what a descending device is, and what's barotrauma, and then they would go get mom or dad, or their friend, and do the same, and so it's just kind of cool to, you know, see that younger generation know what's going on.

Then Meg and David partnered with Mark Phelps on two seminars. Mark is a local captain out of Charleston, and he's just been a wonderful supporter, over the years, for seminars and events, and he's always helping us out, and so they talked about bottom fishing tactics, best practices, SAFMC Release, and then Gary was even there to field some of those tough questions afterwards. But wait, there's more. Like I said, we were quite busy.

An event that BeBe connected us with was the Saltwater Sportsman's National Seminar Series that featured George Poveromo. We went to three of the locations, or there of the seminars, in Wilmington, North Carolina; Port St. Lucie, Florida; and Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Between the three of them, there were 600 to 700 attendees, and so that's just three events, and so, basically, you know, these people would go in, and watch the seminars, and, in between the seminars, they would come out to the hallway, where there were only maybe five or six booths, and we were one of them, and so, you know, you have a few hundred people in that small area, and you're getting a lot of action.

Our table was so busy, in the best way possible, and they were very interested in what we had to say. It was a really, really great event, and it was also cool, because we had descending devices laying out on the table. Folks would come up and like point to the one that they used, and start talking about it with us, or talk to their buddy behind them, and be like, hey, this is how you use it, because there were a lot of new fishermen there, too. We want to thank George and Edie Poveromo, plus their team, for having us. They just made us feel at home, and this was definitely a highlight event.

David just wrapped up a reef fish webinar series that I hope you guys were able to tune into. He had Dr. Walter Bublely talk about reef fish surveying, and then Dr. Will Patterson got into the South Atlantic Red Snapper Research Program, and Dr. Sean Powers and Dr. Mark Albins talked about the Greater Amberjack Count. There was a wide-ranging audience, both in affiliation and location. Attendees came from the industry, NGOs, research, management backgrounds, and, on top of all the affiliations, attendees came from all over, spanning eight U.S. states, and it even extended into countries like Turkey and the Philippines, which is pretty cool. I'm kind of curious how they found out about it, but I'm glad they tuned in.

The attendees made the most out of the question-and-answer session with the researchers that was offered afterwards, and they asked a ton of, you know, well-developed questions, and I believe, if you guys are interested in watching these, these webinars are available on South Carolina and Florida Sea Grant's YouTube pages, and I do plan to post the links on our social media here in the coming weeks.

The first year was, obviously, quite busy, and that's just the way we like it, and we really want to keep this ball rolling, because we are seeing a very positive trend, and so, first -- Or, well, I guess, throughout this year, we are hoping to partner with Pitman Creek again, and so, last year, we partnered with Pitman Creek, who is a tackle distributor in Kentucky, but they've been spreading out into the saltwater world, and so, last year, we sent educational informational materials to twenty-eight of their tackle shops in the Southeast. We did that four times last year, and we're planning to do that again this year.

We'll continue that tackle shop outreach. Like I said, it's super important to, you know, keep that face-to-face, and people are starting to remember us. Meg and David just told me today that they went to West Marine, and Ashley remembered them, and they remembered Ashley, and it's just finally, you know, starting to go somewhere. If you remember last year, David, Meg, Scott Baker, and Kyle Shertzer went out with Tom on his boat, and NC PBS filmed an episode with them, and that's going to be released here in the coming weeks, and so we're really excited to see what comes out of that. We've got some famous people in the room.

Something that came out of the Wilmington George Poveromo seminar was we were approached by the Raleigh Saltwater Fishing Club, and they were really interested in what we had to say, and they have invited us to their club, and so we're planning to go up there in April, and then we'll be at ICAST again this year, and so we're currently just kind of revamping up the booth and just prepping for that big event, and then a reminder, again, that BFP MVP is coming, and it's on the horizon, and we would love to have you guys, you know, be on the lookout for those advertisements.

I guess, before I turn it over, one thing I really want to stress is I know sometimes it can be negative, and you see the stuff on social media and all that stuff, and we're really seeing a positive turn, especially -- Every year we do this stuff, we're seeing more positivity. You know, folks are remembering us, and they know who the council is, and there are tough questions, and tough comments, but it does seem like it's going in the right direction, and so we do want to keep after it, but thank you, guys, and, with that, I will turn it back over to you, Madam Chair.

DR. BELCHER: Any questions for Ashley? That's definitely a great job. You guys are busy, busy, busy. I guess that's a good thing though, right?

MS. OLIVER: Absolutely.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Amy.

MS. DUKES: That was an amazing presentation, and you guys have done an unbelievable job of outreach, in a very small amount of time, and so I thank you for that. Looking forward, ahead to some of the workshops, are you going to be getting in contact with the state agencies, to identify certain personnel that might be able to assist you with those upcoming, especially since ours are right around the corner in South Carolina?

MS. OLIVER: Yes, and I've been talking with Matt, mainly, and I need to reach out to him this week, and just touch base, but I've definitely touched base with Matt.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Other questions, or comments, for Ashley at this point in time? Okay. Seeing none, thank you, Ashley. What I'm going to propose is -- I know it seems a little early, but I would rather us take a ten-minute break right now, because I want us to make sure that we keep the discussion going for the SEFHIER. It's a good number of presentations, and so, if at all possible, let's keep this short and come back at 2:50.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

DR. BELCHER: If everybody can make their way back to the table, please, and we're going to go ahead and get started. Okay. Just to let everybody know, tomorrow night, we will be -- We, meaning the collective we of Georgia DNR Coastal Resources, will be hosting dinner, at our facility again. Six o'clock is when we will be getting together over there. If folks are interested, we have arranged for folks to be able to go out on a short tour on the boats. Our big boats, unfortunately, both of those are on the hill at the moment, but the LE boat is willing to take some folks out for a tour around the sound. We'll be eating dinner at about 6:45, and so that will give people some time to go out and enjoy seeing St. Simons and Jekyll from the inside. The cost is

\$35, and Kelly said that he will collect funds, and so if you get with him, cash please, and that's what I've got for now. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I will send out a -- I'm making sure it's accurate, but I'll send out a little detailed list, and it has the menu and directions and some things like that, and I just want to make sure that I don't overpromise what we don't deliver. You're only as good as your last meal in these kind of socials, you know, and it's always tough to follow North Carolina. We're not going to have any official chefs doing this, but they are competent, and I don't think they've poisoned anybody yet, and so we should be all right.

DR. BELCHER: Like I said, hot dogs and bologna sandwiches for everybody. Okay. The next item on agenda is Potential Modifications to the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting program, or SEFHIER, and we're going to start off with a presentation from Captain Scott Pearce, which is the Law Enforcement AP recommendations. Just a reminder for the group, our required action for this item is to discuss whether a plan amendment would be the appropriate means to improve the SEFHIER program, discuss other actions the council or NMFS, or both, could take to improve reporting compliance in the for-hire sector, and this is all the overarch of where we're going with this. Captain.

CAPTAIN PEARCE: All right. Good deal, and so this will be somewhat short, and so, at our meeting in January, the advisory panel provided the following comments regarding compliance for for-hire reporting. North Carolina for-hire fishermen have expressed a desire to have a limited-entry system. We all agreed that compliance for SEFHIER, for us within the state, really relies heavily on how NOAA OLE wants us to assist them in enforcing SEFHIER.

There is an increase in penalties for noncompliance in the past couple of months, and this for NOAA. NOAA OLE is shifting from compliance assistance to more summary settlements, which I think you heard that earlier in the presentation, and so the penalty for not reporting is the same as the penalty for not having the permit, which is \$500, but, again, we go back to, as far as the states are concerned, we all agreed that, however NOAA wants us to assist them with SEFHIER enforcement, that is how we will go, and we don't really have a strong recommendation either way.

DR. BELCHER: Any questions for Captain Pearce at this time? Okay. The next presentation is the Compliance with Charter Vessel Reporting in South Carolina. Amy. Amy gets to sit on both sides of the table today.

MS. DUKES: Okay. We changed seats, and so, again, I guess a little history about myself. Within the Department of Natural Resources in South Carolina, I oversee the fisheries statistics section, and so all things fishery-dependent, recreational for-hire and commercial. Today is going to be all about our South Carolina charter trip reports, just to give you a little bit of history about where we've come from, how we've integrated with SEFHIER, and just a little bit about the compliance in the actual program itself.

South Carolina started a mandatory reporting requirement for for-hire vessels in 1993. This was actually in conjunction with when National Marine Fisheries Service required headboats to start reporting as well. Our general assembly said, if we're going to change it for headboats, we might

as well change it for charter boats, in a one-stop shop, and so a code of laws was written to actually oversee this mandatory reporting requirement.

When the program was implemented, it's trip-level catch and effort data, done through a logbook, and compliance is tracked monthly. We do a variety of outreach efforts throughout the timeframe, and they have been pretty consistent, and changed as they needed to, but really consistent outreach efforts, through multiple methods, and, again, it's always evolving, as things change, and the picture to the right is the actual paper logbook, just with some of the general information that's being collected at each trip.

As you can see, our charter licenses, and trips over time, has really taken an upward trend, and this is over the course of the entire time series, from 1993 through 2023, with an average around -- Close to 600 charter vessels are now licensed in South Carolina, and then the associated trips that are being reported have also gone up over time, and that little spike in 2021, just coming out of COVID, is everybody wanted to go fishing, and we actually saw a significant increase in the number of trips reported in 2021, which was really nice to see.

Then we introduced electronic reporting as an option, and it is not a requirement, if you are a South-Carolina-only charter vessel, to report electronically, but, knowing that SEFHIER was in the works, and there would likely be an electronic reporting requirement in the future for for-hire vessels that are federally-permitted, South Carolina wanted to jump on this, because we didn't want to lose any of our data dissemination that we've had in place since 1993, and so we partnered with Bluefin Data LLC to create VESL.

A little history about VESL, and so, kind of going backwards again, in 2014 is when federally-licensed headboats were required to start reporting electronically, which we really listened, and we gained as much feedback, from Ken Brennan and his shop, as we possibly could, knowing we wanted to do something similar, and so I really give him a lot of credit for actually helping South Carolina with this program.

We had -- Our first VESL application was ready in September of 2015, and we started really pushing it that following year, and we actually did several council, driven by staff, outreach and education sessions in South Carolina, knowing that the federal requirement was coming, when we started showcasing VESL back then. In 2020, we received approval from National Marine Fisheries Service for the South Carolina vessel component to collect those SEFHIER data elements, and so it's a single tool, run by South Carolina DNR, collecting the federal fields, and then, of course, that became a mandatory trip-level reporting requirement in 2021.

This is going to look at the percentage of all the trips reported online, and I'm going to specify it out to for-hire federally-permitted in a moment, but you can see, over time, that the number of reported trips online has steadily increased, and we're at about a 90 percent electronic reporting requirement from all of our vessels.

To give you perspective, again, just under 600, and, typically, we have close to 200 federally-permitted vessels, out of our close to 600 boats, and I'm happy to report that that last 10 percent is really made up of forty-three vessels, and they're my old-school charters, doing inshore stuff, that just don't have a desire to go to electronic, and they're not federally-permitted, and so we're continuing to collect paper from them, but it's forty-three, and so we've really done a great job,

and I think I want to showcase the fact that between when South Carolina introduced VESL and electronic reporting -- We're five years ahead of where SEFHIER is. We started in 2016, and you can see where we are in 2023. The table on the bottom just shows the number of total trips coming in over time, the percentage of those online, and then the last column will be those that are just those federally-permitted vessels.

This table is going to be representative of just the South Carolina boats that are dually-permitted, those that are federally-permitted, and you can see that number has stayed relatively consistent over the last three years of the SEFHIER program, the number of reports due weekly, and the reports received weekly, with the last column being the mean weekly reporting compliance.

I did not separate this out, and so this will be inclusive of both did-not-fish reports as well as positive fishing reports, but 84 percent of the federally-permitted vessels in South Carolina are reporting and meeting the weekly mandated reporting requirements. The other 15 or so percent, of course, are our troublemakers, and so we try really hard to work with them, but you can see the vast majority of our boats are in fact compliant.

This will show you the compliance rates by weeks, in 2023, of those federally-for-hire-permitted vessels. It kind of waxes and wanes there in the beginning of the time series, but where you start to really see that upwards momentum, of almost hitting 90 percent compliance at the weekly rate, really kind of corresponds when boats are getting geared up to start fishing, and it's the end of March, and they're fishing, and so they're reporting pretty much live. We have a large suite of boats that are actually reporting within hours of when the trip ends, and so that data is coming in almost real-time, which is great, and you see that the momentum, close to that 90 percent compliance rate at the week, continues until around July 4. The holiday kicks in, and the summer is kind of slowing down, and then we start to see some oscillation there with our reports, but, overall, we're still hitting that mean of 85 percent, which is great.

How do we get compliance? Outreach, outreach, and more outreach. It doesn't stop, and we do it multiple ways, and through multiple methods, and along different fronts, depending on who the charter captain is in front of, and so, when you guy your South Carolina charter license, you immediately get a summary of laws. That summary of laws outlines everything that's going on, and there is a dedicated page specific to, hey, do you federally fish for these species? Then you need to be aware that there's some additional permits, on the federal side, that you need to procure.

We also provide handouts, from an electronic reporting standpoint, because we want people to know that we're there for them, that, if you have questions along the way, if you jump into the system and you're a little lost, give us a call, shoot us an email, and we're there to be able to assist you. This is the federal reporting requirements section of the summary of laws, and it breaks down who you need to contact and where you need to go to get those permits.

Once a license has been issued, they get an email from VESL that says, hey, you have been invited to join our electronic reporting platform, and so they're getting paper from us, and they're getting an email from us, and then they're also getting an email from VESL, and so it's kind of hitting them from multiple points, over the first couple of days of when they buy that license, and so, as far as the matching metrics go, if a boat is federally-permitted, and South-Carolina-permitted, South Carolina DNR is assisting with that matching effort, and, if we have questions, the SEFHIER

crowd has been wonderful to have constant communication with, to be able to make sure we're matching all the South Carolina boats that are also federally permitted.

We also do a ton of outreach, as Ashley was talking about, with our for-hire fleet. We call, and we email. At license renewal, you cannot renew your South Carolina license unless you're up-to-date with your reporting requirements. It's very similar to the Southeast Regional Office saying that you can't renew your federal permit unless you're also in compliance, and there's a lot of outreach techniques that we can do at that point.

We tend to spend a lot of time on the fishing docks, and it doesn't matter, and a lot of time at tournaments, because, if you are a recreational fisherman -- I'm sorry. If you're a for-hire fisherman, oftentimes, you're recreationally fishing as well, and so we do a lot of outreach on the fishing docks and during tournaments, and we also hold public stakeholder events.

Sometimes we partner with council staff, but, just recently, we did a series of charter summits throughout the state, where it was a dedicated time, with our for-hire captains, to be able to have a dialogue exchange of what's going on in your world that you don't agree with, or you do agree with, and how can we help, some general fishing updates on status of stocks, and then we also had about a ten-minute presentation by Elizabeth Gooding, all about for-hire, the tips and tricks of how to report, questions and answers about problems with the platform, and then the South Carolina Fishing Guide Association is also somebody we partner with pretty regularly, to ensure that -- That is a standalone body of charter captains in South Carolina that formed this association, and we try to ensure that we're staying in communication with them, because, if talk to one person, typically, and relay information, it's gone to a broader audience, just through the telephone game, which is great, but we just want to ensure that that information is, of course, accurate.

Then, in the upper-right-hand corner, you see that we have a support system, and so, while you're logged into VESL, if you have any questions, or concerns, you can send an email to the charter reporting email at DNR, and a telephone number, and there's a series of staff that respond to those emails in a very time-efficient manner.

If you don't report, what happens? We try to give you as much information when you buy your license, and we try to send you emails through VESL, and we try to find you, where we can, to have communications, but, ultimately, if you don't do your reporting requirement, you're eventually going to make your way onto an affidavit list, and this list is generated from the Office of Fisheries Management. Although we are monitoring the compliance tracking for federally-permitted vessels at the week, it still reverts back to state law, which is trip-level reporting at the month.

This generated affidavit list will include state-only-permitted vessels, as well as federally-permitted-for-hire vessels, but it would be the federally-for-hire-permitted vessels that are, at that point, not meeting the state requirement of trip-level monthly and not the federal requirement of trip-level weekly, but this is also a great way to get now officers in front of those that are delinquent, and that list goes out each month, typically towards the end of the month. Officer discretion applies, and sometimes it's a phone call from the officer to the for-hire captain, letting him know that he is not compliant, and trying to figure out why, and sometimes it's a meet-and-greet at his house, on the docks, at the boat landing, and sometimes it's a written-warning ticket, and sometimes it's a verbal-warning ticket, and sometimes it's a hard citation.

If a citation is written, and there is likely to be a court appearance, officers will contact the Office of Fisheries Management, and staff will actually go to our magistrate's office on the day of the court, and it's, one, to provide evidence and support the officer's actions of writing that citation, but, honestly, it's an opportunity for my staff, or myself, to get in front of that charter captain and be like, dude, what's going on, and what is happening, and why can't we report, and why can't we report electronically? What are the stopgaps?

A lot of times, the stopgaps are just they're scared, and it's change. Change is hard, and, as you progress through change, in the middle, it gets a little messy, but, in the end, it actually works out pretty well, and so it's just building confidence and letting that entity know that you've got this, and let me show you how to do it. I can pull out my phone, or I can pull out my table, or I can pull out my computer, and I can walk them through a trip in minutes, and, once they see it, they're like, okay, this isn't so bad, and I can handle this, and so that face-to-face interaction is so vital, and seeing it in different stands - Like, if you do it right from the beginning, it's more of a casual conversation.

When you're at a fishing dock, or a tournament, or one of our stakeholder events, it's those folks that really want to be there, and so that's a really great audience to capture too, and then it's the same audience, but perhaps at a different aspect, when you're finding them in front of a magistrate office, because, at that point, it's hurting their dollars, and it's hitting their pockets, and it's nice to sort of see how the conversations, and that outreach, changes through time.

Ultimately, every single time we're interacting with our for-hire fleet, we are, in essence, advocating for the platform. We're advocating for them to report electronically, and sometimes they say, yeah, I've logged-in once or twice, and we've talked about this with law enforcement. When the administrator is on the backside of VESL, I can you the last time that user logged-in, and I can tell you the last time that they actually reported a trip, and knowing that information is really helpful in some of our outreach efforts, but, really, it's just a very simple interface. For those of you that may not be as familiar with VESL, in South Carolina, as well as in the South Atlantic, it's a very simple interface, and, when we show it to them, and we sort of break it down in our conversations, they kind of go, okay, I can do this.

It's so intuitive that we're trying to think for the fishermen without them having to think. It's a stoplight, and everybody is familiar with a stoplight. Red is stop, something is wrong, and yellow is slow down, and something could potentially be wrong too, and then green is you're good, and so, really, if you look at the dashboard from a reporting compliance -- If you see green, that means either the charter captain has reported his no business for that week or reported a positive trip, or trips, for that week. If it's yellow, it should be that he or she needs to report, and then, if it's red, all stop. You need to figure out what's going on, and you need to get up-to-date with your compliance.

Throughout the trip, it's all drop-down menus. It's easy navigation tools, and so you can do this on a computer, or a tablet, or even a phone, and we try to make it as simple and easy as possible to follow along. If, for some reason, you're in a ticket, and you don't know what's going on, you've got the little information round circles, and, if you literally hover your mouse over it, it tells you what the field is, and I get, all the time, that I don't know what you mean by location, and, okay, take your mouse, and hover over that "I", and it tells you exactly what I need. I'm

looking for the area in which most of the fishing occurred, and, of course, if you click the little map button, the map pops up, and they can literally click exactly where in the offshore they are.

It also recalls a lot of their past entries, and so I don't necessarily need a fisherman to remember and type in what landing he or she went to. If they click the down button for that landing, that departing marina, the ones that they choose the most are going to appear at the top of the list, and so it's, again, taking that time, and energy, out of them having to find it each time, and so it recalls those past entries.

Data validation, and so, if we want to be compliant, but we also want really good, positive data, data validation comes into play, and that's another advantage of electronic reporting, is that you can identify errors, and warnings, before trips are submitted, to ensure that the data that you're getting is complete and timely and accurate, and, again, color-coded. Red is not going to allow you to finish your trip, and yellow might, but it's going to be, hey, did you really fish in a thousand feet of water, or did you really not catch any fish, and you're submitting a trip without catch, and sometimes that happens, but at least these are getting those guys to slow down, and stop for a hot second, and, again, it's easy functions to edit and then to be able to submit that trip pretty quickly.

Also, recall that we have that support option, where we are answering the phone, and responding back to emails, pretty regularly, and it's something that we do every single day, and, a lot of times, what's really neat about the South Carolina tool is that it's web-based, and so, if a user is on his or her computer, and I'm on my computer, or a staff is on their computer, we can actually see exactly, in real-time, what's happening, and we can guide them through, and, oh, I figured out what the problem was, and you had a trip overlay, and sometime was wrong, and so you can't enter a new trip now, and let's go back and fix this together, because they can literally -- I can walk them through to hit the edit button, and then fix this problem, go ahead and save and submit, and, on the phone, I can walk them through it, and then immediately I can see that they did it, and so, again, it's giving them sort of that I-can-do-it attitude all by themselves.

We're very blessed, in South Carolina, to have a single reporting tool that meets multiple agencies, and so we're collecting data in South Carolina, and it's being transferred to the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program, which then NOAA has direct access to for their compliance tracking and outreach efforts, and I will give a shoutout to Michelle, and her SEFHIER staff, and they are doing a great job, and they're wonderful with reaching out to the states.

In South Carolina, it's a unique situation, because we have those boats that are licensed in our state, and we know that they're federally permitted, and so it's a very unique situation in South Carolina, and I'm not sure if that has any positive side to our compliance, just the fact that we've been doing it a little bit longer, for sure, but SEFHIER has been great with respect to, hey, so-and-so is trying to renew their permits, and they're not compliant, and, South Carolina, can you weigh in, and we provide a ton of information back to them, and they are wonderful in returning information to us as well, and so a huge shoutout to Michelle and her staff.

What's in the future for the South Carolina VESL program? We want to continue to improve it. Right now, our application is just web-based, and it's not a mobile application. We might try to be able to get that way in the next couple of years, and we want to have more engagement with our charter fleet. We want to participate in more charter summits, and we want to, of course, get

those last few folks that might be straggling to switch over to electronic reporting, but also to get that electronic reporting to be better and to meet those mandated reporting compliances.

I will say that there are a handful of boats that are out of that mean, and there's a couple of guys that, of course, are hundreds of days delinquent, at times, but, again, the vast majority of the for-hire fleet that we're getting this data from is compliant, and then I think what's really been helpful, for DNR in the past, is sharing in the success of this data collection, and so giving the data back to the fishermen, through white papers, summary papers, and, hey, South Carolina, this is how many trips you ran last year, and this was your target species, and this was the most fish kept, the most fish released, and we can break it down into nearshore, offshore, and estuarine fish, and they get excited when they see their own data in play. Now, it's, you know, truncated down, and it's not confidential, and it's grouped, aggregated, but they still get really excited.

Also, if a charter captain calls us, and wants us to provide them their data, we can, but, really, we refer them back to VESL. VESL itself is a snapshot of what they've been doing, and they can actually download their own data, and their own data query, so they can actually see their confidential data right then and there, and I don't even have to give it to them. I was trying to stay on time, Madam Chairman, but I'll take any questions that you guys might have.

DR. BELCHER: I have Tom, then Tim, then Kerry, and then I'm coming over to Laurilee.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Madam Chair, and so, Amy, I'm going to tell a little bit of an interesting story that I think goes back to your state agency, and your personal outreach, and so the State of North Carolina tried to introduce a logbook, and it was a very messy process, not quite a decade ago. When we were going through that process, I spoke to a lot of South Carolina charter boats, to ask them how they integrated it into their work, and how they felt about it, and everyone that I talked to said, well, you need to talk to Amy Dukes, and I said, well, I've spoken with Amy, and I'm asking you about it, but the positivity, I thought, from the industry, was really unique.

You came across not just as your program was really well accepted, but as a very beloved person in fisheries, and I thought that was really remarkable, because people said things like, oh, well, if I'm wrong, she'll help me fix it, and one guy told me that, well, I got a ticket, but I deserved it, and I just thought that was really interesting, and so a question for you. What does the State of South Carolina do to enforce fishermen in having these SERO permits, in particular?

MS. DUKES: So South Carolina does have the joint law enforcement agreement, as, as it goes with a law enforcement officer, if they stop a vessel that is in federal waters, first, they have to identify is this a recreational, for-hire, or commercial trip, and they have kind of a standard SOP that they follow.

If the boat says I'm a charter vessel, then it's, first and foremost, your South Carolina for-hire permit and your vessel registration, and they're going to ensure that you don't have more than six passengers, and they're going to look at your life jackets and everything like that. The next question they'll ask is can we look in your box, and, as soon as they open that cooler, and they see snapper grouper, dolphin and wahoo, or CMP, that officer is going to immediately turn to that captain and go, you're in possession of federally-permitted fish, and I need to see your SERO HMS, or what have you, permit, right then and there.

MR. ROLLER: Okay. Do you do any outreach, shoreside, from the agency, to make sure that licensed charter boat owners, operators, know that they need to have these permits?

MS. DUKES: Yes, and so, when they come in to purchase their South Carolina licenses, we provide them this summary of laws, and, within this three-page summary of laws, and we try to truncate it down to as little information as possible, and we are letting them know that they are required to have federal permits, while fishing for these species in federal waters, and this is a snapshot of that. Is there a way that I can go to a live website and pull that up? I can send out the link, but it does have a table, just below that, and it shows you the different species that you would be engaged in fishing that would require you to have these permits.

MR. ROLLER: So I think this is wonderful, and, when I read the presentation, and I saw you present it, and I offer it just for on the record, but to go back and look at it, how important this is, and I am personally looking at my state of North Carolina, and I know our director is on the webinar, and I think this is really great outreach, and I would think that North Carolina could benefit from that. My next question is do you do any sort of catch validation, or trip verification validation, anything like that?

MS. DUKES: We have. South Carolina DNR also collects the Marine Recreational Information Program, and the unfortunate part is that the number of intercepts in our for-hire fleet is relatively tiny, and it's really tiny, and so, when we do have time, we will match an MRIP charter intercept to a logbook, and, if we see disconnects, we do outreach. A lot of times, it's on behalf of a charter captain will report really well, and we have great consistency with matching a South Carolina for-hire vessel to an MRIP trip. The trip dates match pretty well too, and where we start to have a disconnect is in the catch.

Oftentimes, it's not the big ones, and so, for instance, you know, they're offshore fishing, and they are really good about providing their vermilion snapper, their triggerfish, and what have you, but they're not really good about the number of sailor's chose that they released, or the number of tomtates that they released, the inshore perspective, and they don't tell me about every ladyfish, and every toadfish, and we try to -- We try to tell our captains that it's not just what we call your flagship species, and it's every species, and it doesn't matter the disposition, and so take the time, make sure you give accurate reports of the number that you caught, the estimated pounds that are there, and the number that you released alive and dead.

They're like, well, I'm not going to keep track of every black sea bass that I released, and perhaps you might not have to have a little clicker, but your estimate is way better than my estimate sitting in the office, and you're going to know your trip, your vessel, your crew better than anybody, and so it might be 186, and, if you put 190, I'm good with that, because it's a whole lot better representation of a true number.

MR. ROLLER: So, you know, I'm happy to see that you're doing cross-referencing with MRIP, and I know that's been a big issue, and it's going to be a big issue going forward, simply for the fact that we know that MRIP is not great at capturing actual for-hire trips, given that we leave from weird areas at odd times, and drop people off, et cetera, and so forth. Has your data collected been able to be used in any sort of stock assessment use or --

MS. DUKES: The for-hire data, in particular, has always been presented, pretty much at every single stock assessment, and it was -- It was used in the last cobia assessment, and my hope is that it will likely be used in this cobia assessment. It does complicate the model. I mean, it's one state, one mode of data being changed, but, if it's more representative, and better data, then it can be used. Most of the time, when we review the MRIP data for South Carolina charter, and we compare that to the logbook data, the numbers might not exactly match up, but the trend rates are very similar, and that gives us a lot of confidence, too.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. That's good to hear, and, since I'm not familiar with VESL, the spatial data included is similar to say eTRIPS? Okay, and I just bring that up, because I think the for-hire, as well as the commercial and recreational industries, is in dire need of better spatial data moving forward, being that we have so many mixed ocean uses, like wind energy, as well as things like deep-sea mining, on the future horizon, and so thank you for your presentation.

MS. DUKES: Tom, I will add one thing too, and South Carolina did a pilot study, several years ago, with ACCSP and MRIP, and we actually increased our charter assignments, in hopes that we would be able to better match our logbook to those MRIP estimates, and we had less than 2 percent overlap. It's not a lot.

DR. BELCHER: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you as well, Amy, and I have a couple of questions. You know, I was happy to see the \$500 penalty for noncompliance getting stepped up a little bit, and I think that's greatly needed. I'm not sure exactly whether you can actually take someone to court for \$500 and come out ahead, but it's good to see us moving in that direction, and, along those lines, I wanted to know, if you end up on the affidavit list, and you get issued a citation, and you end up in court, what is the state fine for the noncompliance? Does it mirror the \$500 for the federal?

MS. DUKES: No, it doesn't, and so, at minimum, the tickets are going to come in at \$155, and it's going to be a maximum of \$475, but that will be for each instance where the boat is delinquent, and so remember, again, even though that particular vessel might be federally permitted, and it has to report weekly, we still are actually adjudicating at the state law, which is trip level monthly, but, oftentimes, if a hard ticket is written, if a citation is written, it's usually at least one heavy ticket, and sometimes it's the individual doesn't jibe well with the law enforcement officer, and I've gone to court before where we've had three \$475 tickets in front of a judge at the same time, because it was multiple months delinquent, and he wasn't very nice to the officer, and so the officer stroked him and said, I'll see you in court, and then my phone rings, and, by the way, you've got to be in court next Tuesday at ten o'clock, and, yes, sir, I'll be there.

MR. GRINER: That's great. That's great, and so, along those lines then -- So, for that guy, that guy you just described, he is reporting, supposedly, through this VESL, and it's a one-stop shop. It's federal and state, and so, by that three months, you now know he's out of compliance with the federal weekly as well for those periods, and so do you -- Is there a tack-on there, where, since you have the JEA, you have the ability to hit him with those federal fines, in addition to your state fines, during the same court process?

MS. DUKES: You're asking me a question that I don't know the answer to. Could we? Perhaps, but, is that something that we're currently doing? Not to my knowledge, no, sir.

MR. GRINER: Thank you.

MS. DUKES: You're welcome.

DR. BELCHER: I've got Kerry next.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thank you. I have two questions. One, and forgive me if you said this, but the VESL interface, if you will, and does that work on both IOS and Android, or Microsoft, platforms?

MS. DUKES: Yes, ma'am, it does.

MR. MARHEFKA: Nice. That would be great, if we could get that for SAFIS. Then the other question is you had mentioned that there were some boats that went as long as like maybe a hundred days without being in compliance with their reporting, and have you gone back to look to see if, once those far outliers become compliant real quick, to get their permit or whatever, is it mostly no-fishing reports they're then putting in, or their actual trips that they hadn't reported?

MS. DUKES: It's actually a mix. It is some did-not-fish reports, but sometimes it is an actual trip report. The longest outstanding was actually 243 days, but that was one vessel who just -- What he did, who knows, but we finally got him up to compliance. We're actually working with an individual right now, who was reporting on paper, and not realizing that he needed to be reporting electronically, and so we've actually downloaded that data, and provided it back to the fishermen, and we've had several instances where the fishermen have actually gone back into VESL and reentered the paper reports into the VESL system, because they were federally permitted, and they needed to renew their federal permits, and so we worked with Michelle, and her staff at SEFHIER, to do that as well, and so there's been a few instances like that, but, again, those are the minority, and they're the majority. The majority, the majority is doing really well.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. I've got Laurilee and then Trish.

MS. THOMPSON: Thank you. That was a great presentation, Amy. I've got three questions, I guess. Number one, are the South Carolina for-hire charter licenses -- Are they limited, or is it open-access?

MS. DUKES: It is currently open access.

MS. THOMPSON: How many are there?

MS. DUKES: Just under 600, and that number is rising, and that is this graph right here. I will bring it back up for you.

MS. THOMPSON: Okay. Thank you. Then, finally, if you have a for-hire boat that's got more than six people on it, is that considered a headboat?

MS. DUKES: Yes, ma'am, and so anything seven and higher is in fact a headboat, and then, if they're federally permitted as a headboat, that data is going to Ken Brennan's shop. In order to not have that South Carolina headboat report to both NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service, and SC DNR, we were actually able to have the compliance, and those trips from those headboats, actually transferred to SC DNR, and so, again, we took that approach where, if a headboat is reporting electronically, I don't want that headboat to be reporting to South Carolina. There is no point in that, and so we worked with National Marine Fisheries Service, years ago, to get that headboat data to come to us as well, and so, again, a single report with multiple utilities.

MS. THOMPSON: Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I was just wondering, since you do federal permits too, do you inform National Marine Fisheries Service if the federal permits are out of compliance?

MS. DUKES: We do keep track internally in our database, whether or not a permit -- If a vessel is currently permitted or not, and it's ultimately being used from the permit database, and we actually use the API from ACCSP, and pull that data down into our database, so that we can track those vessels and their dates over time.

If we are doing an outreach call, and we notice that they're not compliant -- If they're a federal vessel, and they're not compliant at a week, we are providing that information as an outreach tool, reminding them about the reporting requirements, as well as, if we notice a boat has allowed his or her federal permits to expire, their reporting platform reverts back from weekly back to monthly, but not automatically.

Typically, we get a trigger that says their federal permit is expired, and they should be seeing months, but then we go, is it really, or is it an artifact of they're trying to get compliant, and they just allowed them to expire, and are they going to renew them, and so we don't switch a view back from a federal boat back to a state boat unless it's specifically requested of the boat, if a boat says I am done with weekly electronic reporting, and I am done fishing in federal waters, and I do not have the intent to repurchase them, and then we will revert that boat back to seeing compliance at a month, but, once you're federal, you're kind of always federal, until you tell me otherwise.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, and I was just wondering, if you do see that they're not compliant federally, do you let NMFS know that?

MS. DUKES: We do not let NMFS know that, I guess, no, and we do that in our outreach efforts to get them to be compliant.

MS. MURPHEY: Just the outreach to them, to let them know that that person is out of compliance, but not to -- Okay. Thanks.

DR. BELCHER: Other questions for Amy? Spud and then Andy.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, Amy. I'm just curious. If you have a particularly egregious offender, can you deny renewal of their license, and, if so, has it ever happened?

MS. DUKES: So we can't deny them the renewal of their permit, as long as they are in compliance. The only reason that an individual would lose their for-hire privilege is if they have accumulated enough points in their system against themselves for them to be off the water for 365. In essence, if a charter vessel, during a 365-day window, receives four citations that are adjudicated, and they are found guilty, that will lead to enough points for them to lose their for-hire permit for the next 365 days.

MR. WOODWARD: Has that ever happened?

MS. DUKES: Yes, sir, it has happened, and I'm sorry. You asked that previously, and I missed it, but, yes, sir, it has happened.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Amy, for the comments about Michelle and her team, and I'm glad there is such good collaboration. Two questions. One, outreach compliance assistance takes a lot of effort, and I'm curious how many staff work parttime, or fulltime, on your program.

MS. DUKES: Certainly, and so I do a significant amount of outreach, but I do have a recreational data outreach coordinator, and so VESL and our for-hire fleet is her primary responsibility, and that's Elizabeth Gooding. In addition to that, I have my overall compliance coordinator, a data coordinator, and my commercial data coordinator, who will also do outreach, as well as my database manager, and so we're all pretty proficient in VESL, and very proficient in our outreach efforts, but I do have one dedicated staff, and about four, or, including myself, five other who will take a stab, when we get those questions and concerns.

MR. STRELCHECK: Great. Then, with regard to estimates of compliance, right, my interpretation, and this is also the challenge that I think we face with evaluating compliance, is it's essentially a metric of did they report or not a trip, or multiple trips, during the reporting period, or submit a no-fishing report, and what we often are missing is did they report all of their trips during the window of reporting time, right, and so we'll check the box and say you're in compliance if you've reported during that time period, but they might have had five trips, and they only reported one, and so have you done any validation work, or extra effort, kind of looking at the frequency of reporting, and ensuring that most, if not all, trips are being reported?

MS. DUKES: We have not. Validation is a huge gaping hole in all fishery-dependent data. We do have some anecdotal information that we can use, but it is not a certified program, as such, but that, in essence, kind of holds true for all of our fishery-dependent data, whether that be for-hire or commercial.

DR. BELCHER: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Just one other curiosity question, and so, over the history of the reporting for the South Carolina state license, how has the data elements of the report changed, in terms of

the increase, and I assume it's different now than it was when you started, to some degree, and is it like twice as much, or three-times as much?

MS. DUKES: Honestly, the report really hasn't changed very much over the course since 1993, and perhaps just maybe a little bit more finite, but very, very little change. When you do a long-term monitoring data collection program, you don't want to see a lot of change, and the biggest change really came when we adopted the SEFHIER data elements. Some of the SEFHIER data elements were also adopted by the state-only form, and, in particular, it would be the trip end date and time, and we were just doing the trip start date and time, and now we're doing the end time as well, and the end date, and, again, it's automated, and so most of our trips are the same day, and so we don't necessarily want that captain to have to go in and fix it, and so some of it translates over.

We've also incorporated some of the depth changes, and so it's min, max, and primary, but, for instance, the map is different, and so, if you were a state-only individual, you're clicking on a ten-by-ten-square-grid box for your area most fished, versus, if you're federally-permitted, it is down to that one-mile-by-one-mile, more specific, and then, of course, the federal boats see the three economic questions, and the state-only boats do not.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Any other questions for Amy at this point? Okay. Seeing none, thank you, Amy. You can go back to the other side of the table now. Our next presentation is from Ken Brennan, and it's the Compliance with the Southeast Region Headboat Survey Reporting.

MR. BRENNAN: Good afternoon. I'm Ken Brennan, and I'm located at the NOAA Beaufort Laboratory, and I coordinate the Southeast Region Headboat Survey, which is administered by the Fisheries Statistics Division within the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. My presentation will briefly cover logbook reporting compliance within the headboat survey, and how it's evolved over the years, and what it takes to maintain reporting compliance.

I will begin with a look at some historical events that impacted reporting compliance. From the beginning of the survey in 1972, until 1995, logbook reporting was voluntary for headboats participating in the survey. Headboats in the South Atlantic were paid for reporting, \$1.50 for full-day trips, \$1.25 for three-quarter-day trips, and a dollar for half-day trips. Even with this prospect of being paid, compliance was not necessarily high, and, in 1995, reporting became mandatory, with Amendment 7 to the Snapper Grouper FMP. However, it was not strictly enforced, and our reporting compliance continued to decrease.

In 2008, we worked with NOAA General Counsel and OLE, the Office of Law Enforcement, to develop a strategy to improve compliance. Selection letters were sent to headboat owners in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico, notifying them of reporting requirements. Vessel permit renewals were placed on hold with the SERO Permits Office for noncompliance, and OLE was notified if vessels were egregiously delinquent.

I would say this action was the single-most effective change that increased reporting compliance, and another event has helped -- That has helped maintain compliance was electronic reporting. Electronic reporting not only streamlined reporting, but it also allows port agents to monitor compliance and identify issues and resolve them in a timely manner.

Here's a look at reporting compliance since 1980, the blue being the South Atlantic and the red being the Gulf of Mexico. Compliance has generally been better in the Gulf overall, but I should point out that the lower rates in the South Atlantic can mostly be attributed to poor reporting in southeast Florida. This area has always been challenging, and it continues to be difficult. The graph also shows when limited entry occurred in the Gulf, in 2003, and there was a bit of an uptick following that event, and, as I mentioned, the most significant impact to reporting compliance was the selection in 2008 and placing vessel permits on hold. Since this strategy was implemented, we've been able to keep compliance at greater than 90 percent. In addition, electronic reporting has definitely been a tool that has helped us maintain a high compliance rate.

I would like to now go over the compliance process that we follow. The current rule requires that the trip reports are due the Tuesday after the reporting week, the reporting week being Monday to Sunday. With the reporting requirement two days after the reporting week, it also takes us an additional week to determine compliance, which puts it at ten days after the reporting week when we initiate our first action and notify the captain of a delinquency. At this point, an email notification is sent to the owner, and it's sent each week thereafter until the issue is resolved.

At thirty-five days after the reporting week, the vessel permit renewal is placed on hold, through the SERO Permits Office, and, at this point, we don't notify OLE until a vessel is more than a month out of compliance, and this also depends on the willingness of the vessels to work with us to resolve these issues, and I also want to mention that these protocols were developed based on advice from General Counsel and OLE.

I want to point out a compliance requirement in the current rule. It states that, if a federally-permitted charter, or headboat, is delinquent in submitting their fishing records, they are prohibited from continuing to harvest snapper grouper, dolphin wahoo, and coastal migratory pelagic fish until all reports have been submitted. This measure is rarely used, and I've only had one experience with a vessel that was refusing to report, and OLE used this approach. It's a very effective tool that can be used in extreme cases that I thought should be reiterated.

Finally, I would like to go over what it takes to monitor and maintain headboat reporting compliance. The headboat survey has twelve port agents that devote 25 to 30 percent of their time to monitoring and maintaining compliance for approximately 140 vessels. They record observations of vessel activity, and these can be physical observations, when they're sampling or driving by a marina, calling the ticket office to check on schedules, checking websites, social media, and, where it's available, they can even view marina cams, webcams, to watch vessel activity.

They're also responsible for reviewing weekly compliance reports and keeping up with delinquent vessels. This is a constant communication with captains, working with them to correct any issues, trips that are missing, and so it's a constant communication, and, if vessels are missing reports, the port agents are responsible for contacting these captains, or vessel personnel, to resolve the missing trips and any reporting issues, and they continue to follow-up with delinquent vessels until there is some sort of resolution.

The port agents are required to communicate their progress to headboat survey staff, which will determine if further action is required. For the egregious vessels, we then will ask for assistance from OLE with those vessels, and so that's the approach the headboat survey uses for reporting

compliance, and I will finish by saying that compliance is the foundation of any mandatory logbook program, and, if it erodes, so will the success of the program, and, with that, I would be happy to take any questions.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks, Ken. The first person I have on is Judy.

MS. HELMEY: My question really was for -- My question really was for Amy, or maybe you can answer it, and thank you for the presentation. It was very nice. Also, I just wanted to say the VESL reporting, and that's how I report on my federal trips, but my question is, if you have a South Carolina permit, under state waters, and you fish there, and then you go to the federal waters and you fish, how do you report -- Do you report both to the state and to the federal at the same, or how was that done?

MR. BRENNAN: Well, as Amy mentioned earlier, the headboat survey itself supplies South Carolina with those records, and so you would report to the Southeast Region Headboat Survey, and that data, whether you were in state or federal waters, would be supplied to South Carolina DNR.

MS. HELMEY: Okay. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks. If we could just look -- I'm going back to your fourth slide about -- Just to make sure that I understand this correctly, in theory, if a vessel doesn't report after I think you said thirty-five days, then their permit becomes, I guess, for lack of a better word, suspended, and, at point, they can't possess any of those species, versus -- I believe the way it happens in the commercial fishery is that they just wouldn't get their permit renewed, when renewal time came around, and am I correct that that happens those two different ways?

MR. BRENNAN: Actually, when it's placed on hold, it's placed on hold for the permit renewal, and it's not suspended. The slide that prohibits fishing is independent of that permit hold. That's a stand-alone action that can be used, if necessary.

DR. BELCHER: Other questions? Judy has got her hand back up. Judy.

MS. HELMEY: I do not. I hit the wrong button again.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Other folks have more questions for Ken at this point? Okay. Ken, I had a quick question for you. Are you going to be available on Friday, when they go over the Science Center report? Will you be available remotely?

MR. BRENNAN: Yes.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. I had a few questions that I wanted to ask you relative to IRA funds, and so I just wanted to make sure that you were available.

MR. BRENNAN: Yes, I will be available.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. The next item is a presentation from Michelle Masi on the SEFHIER program, and it's an update.

DR. MASI: Good afternoon, everyone. There was a question that someone was asking for a little more information on how our outreach and communication process works, and I provided some information on this at the December council meeting, but I wanted to reiterate that we're now in year-three of the South Atlantic SEFHIER program, and so we're really not getting many calls anymore from folks that say, you know, they haven't heard about SEFHIER, and what is it, and what do I need to do, and so, really, our outreach and communication is also an enforcement process at this point, and I just wanted to walk you through what that process looks like.

First of all, you can see there that that little bubble there on the left-hand side says that, essentially, when folks go to either renew a permit, or they are trying to get new permits, for example, they're going to go on, and they're going to do their electronic permit application, and, at the time, they're going to get what's called a welcome letter, and that's going to have information about what SEFHIER requires, in terms of reporting, and it's also going to point them to our website, and then it's going to provide them our contact information, if they have additional questions.

Then what happens is you become this active permit status, and let's say that you go for one to three months, and you're not submitting any reports, or maybe you're just missing one or two weeks, and we have a group of folks in SEFHIER, right now just two, but we're currently hiring, or training, for two more, and our outreach folks are going to be calling those people that are missing even just one week of reports, about every one to three months, and so it's kind of a cyclical process, as we can get through the number of noncompliant vessels, and it takes about one to three months, considering our current staffing.

Once we get those two new analysts up-to-speed, we'll be at about sixty, roughly, outgoing calls, or emails, a month, to reach out to folks and do some compliance assistance, where we're saying, hey, by the way, you're missing this week of reports, or you're missing these three months of reports, and, if we don't get in contact with them, then we're leaving a message for them to give us a call back, and then, often, we're sending an email, if we don't get through to them via a phone call.

Now, the way that it works, currently, is that, if let's say you go through this process, and we've called you, or we emailed you within that one to three-month cycle, and you're still not submitting reports, or you're still noncompliant, the next time we find you in the list, then we'll give you another call, and so on throughout the rest of the year, and so it's not like a one-time thing.

We also get about one to eight incoming phone calls per day, and I say one to eight because, really, in the slow season, it's on the lower end, but then, when it's like in full season, the summer months, we probably are getting more like eight phone calls into our call queue per day, and we also get emails into our SEFHIER customer service email, roughly three to five emails per day coming into that, and then folks are also just reaching out to me individually, if they have my contact information.

Again, your permit is still in an active status at this point, and so what happens then if you let's say don't submit any reports for more than six months? Well, you get put on the list that gets sent over to the Office of Law Enforcement, and, typically, the Office of Law Enforcement is then

either doing some sort of compliance assistance or they're going to do -- They're going to take some sort of enforcement action.

Then your permit, again, is still in an active permit status at this point, and then so what happens is -- Let's say, you know, you've got through this process so far, and now you're coming up for permit renewal again. Our permits, they're renewing essentially on the person's birthday, that permit holder's birthday, and so you come up for permit renewal, and maybe you're just missing one week, or maybe you're missing a full year's worth of reports at this point, and you're going to get a hold on your permit application, and there's essentially some red text that you're going to see, and it's going to say, hey, here's the weeks you're noncompliant, and please reach out to SEFHIER, so that we can assist.

At that time, we get those calls into our customer call queue, and we expediently work with those folks to get them in compliance, and so that -- Again, your permit is still active, and sort of this process starts all over again, once you get your permit renewed. I also want to mention too that, throughout the year, we have our SEFHIER website, which is active, and so folks can go to that, and you can find, you know, information, like our Fishery Bulletins that have come out in the past, and also information on where to go to get signed up to report, and we also post regular updates on our website as well.

As I mentioned, we have our customer service line, and that's available Monday through Friday, where you can actually call in and speak to a live person, 8:00 to 4:30 Eastern, except for on federal holidays, and then, of course, we're sending out Fishery Bulletins. We try to send those out roughly semi-annually, but then we'll also send them out ad hoc, as needed, if there's some important information that we need to get out. Then, of course, I'm doing these council presentations, at both the Gulf and South Atlantic Council meetings, and then OLE is doing their dock visits as well.

That was essentially what we do for our compliance and enforcement process, and now what I want to do is walk you through the 2023 South Atlantic SEFHIER data, and so there's a couple of important points here. The first is that I did not include the dual Gulf-and-South-Atlantic-permitted vessels, and that's because I did run through all these analyses, including those dual vessels, and, really, the data -- It doesn't change much, and, in fact, it was about a 2 to 10 percent difference. 10 percent was more on the overall 2023 compliance, and it was on the negative side, and so there were more noncompliant vessels when we included the duals, and that probably has a lot to do with the fact that, when the Gulf program got set aside, those dual-permitted vessels were required to start meeting the South Atlantic weekly reporting requirements, including that did-not-fish report, which they weren't used to, and so we're working to get that information out to them, through doing more compliance assistance and phone calls with those folks.

Another really important point that I want to make here is all the data that I'm going to go through, and the compliance metrics, this is based on data that we pulled early in 2024. You know, remember that, when I showed you all the 2023 program compliance slides, that was based on the data that we pulled really late in 2023, and what that means is those vessels had that whole year of 2023 to turn in their 2022 reports, and then they become compliant.

Here, since we pulled that data really early in 2024, they didn't have as much time to get their outstanding reports submitted to us, and so you'll see that things look pretty close to what 2022

showed, but they're a little off, and I will try to point out when those differences occur and why that's happening.

All right, and so, now, on this slide, that middle donut there is showing -- We had 100,000 trip reports that have come in so far for 2023, and that's broken down into about 42,000 logbooks and about 58,000 weekly did-not-fish reports. If you're looking at that figure on the left there, we see that, overall, of the 2,150, roughly, South-Atlantic-only-permitted vessels, about 430 of them have never submitted a did-not-fish report. Now, in and of itself, that's not that big of a deal, but, when you compare that to the number of vessels that never submitted a logbook, that's 551, and so it looks like there's some sort of compliance issue there, and we'll go through that as we get to the next couple of slides.

All right, and I just wanted to throw this in there as a reminder of what you saw from the 2022 data, and so remember there were about 97,000 total reports that were received in 2022, and it was broken down to roughly the same number of logbooks and did-not-fish reports, but, notably, so far for 2023, we've received approximately a thousand fewer logbooks, and, notably, we've received 5,000 more weekly did-not-fish reports than we did in 2022, and so you can see that we're starting to see a lot more weekly did-not-fish reports, even though we're getting a lot more reports turned in than we did in 2022, and another thing that I really wanted to point out is that, if you look at that figure on the right there, you can see that we actually only had 388 vessels in 2022 that had never submitted a logbook, and remember the slide I just showed showed that we have about 551 vessels, so far, that haven't submitted a logbook yet, and so, again, we're seeing the number of did-not-fish reports coming in increasing.

All right, and so, here, we're looking at the percentage of permitted vessels that are reporting versus not, and so that dark-blue bar there on the left-hand side is showing you that, presently, based on the data that we have so far, we have about 17 percent of the vessels that have yet to submit a report for 2023, and just reminding you that, in the 2022 analysis, that was at about 23 percent, but, again, remember that we are seeing more did-not-fish reports now than we were in the 2022 data.

Okay, and, here, we're looking at the percent of compliant versus noncompliant vessels, and so that dark-blue bar, again, is showing the percentage of noncompliant vessels, which is about 63 percent, and, again, this is based on when the data is pulled, and so we expect that, as we move further into 2024, if we pulled this data late in 2024, we would see that proportion of noncompliant vessels come down, probably closer to what it was in 2022, because, once they get their reports turned in, they become compliant with the program.

All right, and so it's a little ambiguous to look at overall program compliance on an annual scale, just because of the fact that, you know, essentially, a vessel is noncompliant, when we run this analysis, if they're just missing one week of reports, and so, here, what we wanted to do is look at the proportion of non-compliant vessels by month, to kind of give it a shorter timescale, and so, you know, overall, out of the 2,150 total South-Atlantic-permitted vessels, you can see that the percentage of noncompliance, month to month, ranges from about 18 to 50 percent.

You might be wondering, well, why is that that proportion of noncompliant vessels is increasing throughout the year, and I want to reiterate that, typically, what we see is that vessels come up for permit renewal, and they're either missing one week, or potentially six months of reports, or a year

of reports, and so we see a lot of vessels that are coming up for permit renewal and they're getting all of their outstanding reports turned in, which, of course, isn't meeting our requirements, but what you're seeing, in this figure, is that, essentially, you have the 2022 vessels, and they got permitted in 2022, and then probably about 50 percent of them came up for permit renewal by the time you reach about August of 2023.

You see that the compliance is a lot lower in those months, and then, you know, they get their permit, and they start to taper off again with their compliance, as the year progresses, and there's probably a little bit of that, combined with the fact that, you know, the vessels are also not fishing in the winter months, and so they probably still have some of their outstanding did-not-fish reports to get in to us.

What we wanted to do here is look at late reporting, and so this is in regard to the submission deadline. Now, remember that, according to the South Atlantic SEFHIER program regulations, the trip reports are required to be submitted the Tuesday following the fishing week, and so the fishing week is Monday to Sunday, and, again, trip reports are required to be turned in on the Tuesday following that, and so they get that sort of two-day buffer in order to get their trip reports turned in.

On that figure on that left there, you're looking at the percentage of on-time versus late did-not-fish reports, and so you can see we had about 63 percent, so far, of the did-not-fish reports that have been turned in to-date were submitted to us past that submission deadline, and then, if you look at the percentage of logbooks, it's about 48 percent of them, and so remember that, if we pulled this data in 2024, if all of those outstanding trip reports from the 63 percent of vessels that are noncompliant, we're probably going to see that these percentages increase to something similar to what we saw in the 2022 analyses.

Here, we're trying to get a handle on can we make use of the data that we have received, and remember there's that thing called recall bias, and that most trip-reporting programs aren't going to make use of any logbooks that are submitted more than thirty days after the trip ending, and so, here, based on, again, the logbooks that we have received so far, there are about 21 percent of them that were submitted to us more than thirty days after the trip ending, and, if you remember from a couple of slides ago, I showed you that we had roughly 42,000 logbooks that have been received so far for 2023, and 21 percent of that -- That's about 9,000 logbooks that would have to get tossed, in terms of, you know, using the data to produce any kind of final estimates of catch and effort.

All right, and so, here, what we wanted to do is kind of give an idea of what compliance looks like by state, and the way that we did this analysis is we used the permit application information to assign essentially the home port in the permit application information to assign a state to these vessels, and so remember there are about 2,150 total permitted vessels in 2023, and, now, about 270 vessels out of that can't be assigned to one of these four states, and so we've excluded them from this analysis.

What we're doing here is just assigning ones that are within these four states, and so that's something to keep in mind, and what you're looking at is the data shown is saying, in each of these labels, the first number is the number of non-compliant vessels for that state, and the second number is the total number of vessels that we assigned to that state using the home port information, and so, when you take those two numbers, and you say, for example, in Florida, 780

noncompliant vessels, divided by 1,226 total permitted vessels in Florida, and you get a ratio, and you times it by a hundred, and 64 percent of the vessels in Florida, for 2023, are noncompliant.

Now, notably, if you compare that to the other states shown here, it's relatively the same. However, of course, noting that South Carolina does show the lowest proportion of vessels that are noncompliant in 2023, and I wanted to give a shoutout to Amy Dukes and her team, and I know she gave one to us, but I really want to emphasize that they do work hand-in-hand with us to help our dual-permitted vessels come into compliance, and I do appreciate all that her program does to assist us.

Notably, Amy's numbers are a little bit different than ours, in terms of compliance for South Carolina for the dual-permitted vessels, and she did mention that, you know, essentially, we have -- The SEFHIER team reaches out to their team, when we find a vessel in our system that shows they're noncompliant, but South Carolina has the data, and this happens because, in the past, our VESL application, that we use for both of our programs, wasn't pulling in permit information, actively pulling it in, and we were manually updating our VESL accounts with that permit information, and so some of them slipped through the cracks, or they got the wrong form, and so we, we as SEFHIER, wouldn't get their data, but South Carolina would.

That's why we sort of have this joint effort, where we're, you know, constantly in communication with one another, and we're saying, hey, we don't have data for this vessel, but do you guys, and then we can override the compliance on our end, and so it seems like probably that slight difference is the vessels that we haven't gotten to yet, where South Carolina has the data, but we don't.

Moving on to the next slide, what you're looking at here is just a summary of essentially what I just explained to you, and so, overall, it seems like the 2023 program compliance is relatively the same as 2022, and I say that because this is all based on the data we pulled the data, and the numbers are relatively the same, but they will change a bit as we, you know, progress through 2024, and so we saw 63 percent, versus the 54 percent in 2022, of the vessels were missing reports, as of the day we pulled the data, which was early in 2024.

Month-to-month, we saw that 18 to 50 percent of the South-Atlantic-permitted vessels are missing reports. Comparing that to 2022, it was like 20 to 40 percent, and, also, we saw about 63 percent of the did-not-fish reports, and about 48 percent of the logbooks, were submitted after the submission deadline, and that was a little higher in 2022, but, again, as we get all those outstanding trip reports turned into us in 2024, we'll see those numbers start to increase again, and then a reminder too that we're still seeing a high number of did-not-fish reports being submitted at permit renewal, and, now, this may be an indication of misreporting, but, because we don't have a validation program in place, there's really no way for us to account for that misreporting. Then, finally, about 21 percent of the logbooks were submitted more than thirty days after the trip ending, and remember that would make them unusable for any official estimates of catch and effort.

I know that Mr. Diaz already went through a brief summary of where the council is at with standing up a Gulf SEFHIER program, and we wanted to just provide a little bit of additional information here, in case you need more specific details, and so, here, you're looking at -- Essentially, the Gulf Council met in October, and, at that time, they were given three presentations. The first was provided by council staff, and the link to all these presentations is provided, if anybody wants to

go and get more information, but council staff, in that first presentation, provided an overview of sampling survey design and the current for-hire data collection programs in the Gulf.

Then I presented, to the council, a summary of the Gulf SEFHIER program data, and, essentially, it was the same analyses that you just saw today, but using Gulf program data for 2022, and, overall, noting that the compliance was reasonably good in the Gulf program in 2022. The third presentation, which was provided by Dr. Stephen, and that was to provide an overview of how the agency uses data and potential next steps for the Gulf program.

Now, at the time, the Gulf Council's committee -- They expressed a need to keep the program simple, but they did state that it was really important to have that validation component, in order to satisfy the program objectives and to be able to use this data in management.

All right, and so, at the October council meeting, the council elected a special SEFHIER AP, essentially it was called, and so that special SEFHIER AP met in January, the beginning of January, and they were given three presentations as well. The first was a history of the program in the Gulf, and I provided them with some requested analyses from the October council meeting, which really were kind of a look at some preliminary relative estimates of catch and effort for some of the species that they're interested in, and, finally, they got an overview of scientific survey design techniques, approaches to data validation, and potential uses of data in fisheries management, based on the program's design and validation approaches.

At that AP meeting, they made several motions. The first was essentially to keep the same purpose statement that was in the original Gulf SEFHIER program amendment, and the second was that they wanted to ensure that there was no twenty-four-hour tracking or that the economic data fields would not be included in the SEFHIER logbooks, moving forward, but they did suggest that the council should explore alternative means for collecting that economic information.

Then the third bullet here is kind of a combination of several motions. To summarize, essentially, they wanted to see that they keep declarations, because those declarations are really important in alerting the Office of Law Enforcement of when a vessel is going out, and where that vessel will return to, in case they need to do a dock visit, but they also serve to let SEFHIER know, for compliance tracking purposes, when to expect a logbook, and so they're quite useful, and they wanted to ensure that those declarations remained, but they wanted to see that they were only required for for-hire fishing trips, where, previously, in the previous amendment, they were required for every movement of the vessel on water.

They also wanted to see that logbooks remained, but they wanted to ensure that they continued to only be required to submit those prior to offloading catch, after they had docked safely, and then they wanted to ensure they kept dockside intercepts, and that's sort of that validation component, and that's really critical, and, notably, they wanted to add did-not-fish reports, as this sort of, without VMS, closes the loop in allowing NOAA to know if that vessel is actually not fishing or if they're just not reporting, and then, of course, keeping the trip validation component.

Then the fourth bullet here is they wanted to emphasize the need for considering one-stop reporting, and this is really important for our dual, for example our commercial SEFHIER vessels, which would otherwise need to submit a separate report for each of these permits. With one-stop reporting, they can submit that one report and satisfy all permit requirements, and then, finally,

they wanted to explore validation efforts, to ensure that the data can be used to reduce scientific and management uncertainty and to be able to use that data in stock assessments.

Then, finally, the Gulf Council met again in January of 2024, and they received that same presentation that was presented to the AP, regarding some of that preliminary look at catch and effort from the 2022 Gulf SEFHIER data, and the council, at the time, made four motions, which I believe Mr. Diaz already mentioned, and I'm not going to go through them again, but they're here for you, and then, at the time, the council requested that they would like to see some more information on how each data field in the logbook is going to be used to inform stock assessment, versus management, and they wanted to get a presentation from economists on how that data is going to be used, and at what frequency that data needs to be collected, in order for those economic analyses to be robust. That concludes all of my slides. A special thanks to these wonderful people for assisting with this presentation, and there you go, and I will open the floor to any questions.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Michelle. I've got Amy.

MS. DUKES: Hi, Michelle. Thank you very much for that presentation. I'm just doing some quick math, looking at your 2023 data, and, if you guys got in roughly 42,000 trips, and about 7,000 of those were SC DNR trips, that's about 17 percent, and then, if you look at the overall permit numbers, roughly 2,100, and 200-ish for South Carolina, and that's about 10 percent.

Knowing that you only have a handful of staff, and I agree that adding more staff to assist you in your outreach efforts is really going to potentially help things drastically, and I appreciated, very much, your thirty-day ending, and that 80 percent, which is a really great validation tool that we use too, and, actually, I failed to say that, and our numbers were higher, in the nineties, but I think my major questions -- I kind of have two. I think the first one is, is there a plan to reduce the six months for nonreporting to LE to a tighter time window?

DR. MASI: Yes, and so, essentially, we were kind of trying to get folks up-to-speed, as the program started, and then we were working to kind of get VMS compliance, and so now we're moving into -- You know, we were doing more like a six-month list to OLE, and we're going to try to be sending that monthly, and I actually just sent them a list last week, and so we're going to be trying to send them an updated list every month, and so, yes, that is in the works.

MS. DUKES: Good, and I think a monthly list will definitely increase things, but, as we could see between the two presentations, there's a significant difference in our numbers for compliance. You're sitting at closer to 51, and ours is closer to 84, and you mentioned pulling data a little bit, and I guess I was curious as to how often you guys are pulling data, both positive reports and did-not-fish reports, down from the SAFIS API, since most of that data is updated, at minimum, daily, and I guess that's that disconnect of why you see one thing and I see a different thing, when South Carolina is providing that data to the SAFIS API daily.

DR. MASI: We pull in the data from the SAFIS API every night, and so it's within twenty-four hours, and so I think, as I mentioned, the differences that we're seeing -- Remember that we're reaching out, to your team, probably three to five times a week, to say, hey, we have this permit holder, and, on our end, they're missing these weeks of reports, and what do you guys see, and then you might have data, and this goes back to, well, if they got the South-Carolina-only form in VESL, they didn't get our required fields, and so that data doesn't pass to ACCSP.

Instead of having those folks, you know, submit new reports, for example like did-not-fish reports, we can then go ahead and issue an override on our end. You know, in terms of logbooks, the same sort of thing happens. If, for example, they didn't get that dual South Carolina and SEFHIER form, logbook form, they're going to not get all of our required fields, which would otherwise not be on a South-Carolina-only logbook, and we've tried to minimize that, by working with VESL, who recently started automating that permit information, and I believe they said they're doing that daily now, and so they're using our permit information now, through more of an updated process, to update their VESL accounts, so that folks are actually seeing the correct forms, and they're getting the dual South Carolina and SEFHIER form, when it's appropriate.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Michelle.

DR. BELCHER: Other questions for Michelle? Michelle, I had a question for you. I had pulled the December presentation, because I was wanting to see the charts relative to 2022 and 2023 next to one another, and I was a little bit confused with your reminder 2022 slide, compared to the 2022 slide that you presented then. I know that you're talking about the South Atlantic permits, plus the dual for-hire, but, if you look at the middle graph specifically, the total report order of magnitude is very different from the December presentation. You had 431,475 total reports on that slide, but this one has 96,942.

DR. MASI: The way that I read the data in that presentation was essentially those weekly reports come in as an individual report, and so, when I counted it then, I was counting each report that we received. Given it was a weekly report, there was obviously, you know, the potential for there to be like fifty-two reports for every vessel that's permitted, and so you can see how that number would be really high, and that's kind of why I put this reminder slide in there, because I decided that it's kind of confusing to do it that way, when we're especially trying to compare to what the Gulf Council, or the Gulf program, is doing, and so, instead, here, I'm just counting weekly reports, essentially, for the vessel, if that makes sense, and so you're not going to get that high number by counting them each week.

DR. BELCHER: I think the difficulty was just that, when you're looking at the percentages, there's a very big disparity there between what was seen in December and what's being seen now, and so I think that was -- I was expecting things to be higher, because we were adding in, and it got lower, and I was really wondering what had happened to the data since December.

DR. MASI: Yes, and so just compare it on those two slides, and that will be more apples-to-apples. If I reran the numbers, or I was counting each week again, you would see a higher number of weekly no-fish reports, and then your total number of reports would go up, but, here, I reran this using that same approach that I did in 2023, and so those two numbers can be compared.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you. Other questions for Michelle? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Michelle, for your presentation. Looking at the discussion from the Gulf Council to remove the economic fields, can that data be gathered through any Science Center information? I know, in my discussion with the economists there, they said that they do gather some of that data independently, and so I'm curious how needed it is.

DR. MASI: I'm not an economist, and I don't know exactly how they're using the data, but I know that they, for example, might use it in something like a disaster report, where they need to know sort of the value of the fishery, so they can estimate how many, or how much, disaster recovery funds go out to each state. If there is somebody else from the Regional Office, or the Science Center, that wants to answer that question, I would potentially open the floor to them, and perhaps Dr. Stephen has more information, or Andy, if you want to jump in.

DR. BELCHER: Andy, to that?

MR. STRELCHECK: Tom, thanks for the question, and so one of the things that Michelle alluded to, in her presentation, is we've asked the economists to come to that April council meeting and give a more detailed presentation about not only the data collected, but how it's used and why it's important to collect this information. The advisory panel was very clear in not wanting to collect it on a trip-level basis. We do collect economic data by subsampling the commercial fleet, and so there's at least, I think, some interest in exploring that.

I've actually asked questions of some of the data developers, and app developers, about could we randomize periodic trip reports that would require the economic information to be collected, but it would be infrequent, right, and it would be like a subsampling of your trips, and so there's lots of information that we're kind of looking at right now, but haven't, obviously, come close to making a final recommendation.

The last thing I will say, and one of the components of the new legislation that was passed for disaster assistance, is that it does incorporate for-hire vessels. Previously, it was just commercial fishing operations, and so, to me, that's certainly another key component to this, as to collecting that data, given the frequency of disasters seems to be increasing in the region.

DR. BELCHER: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you for those comments, Andy. You know, I was surprised, particularly as attending a Gulf Council meeting, listening to some of these comments regarding the economic data fields, and I'm not surprised that people were upset about the costs question, but I was really surprised to see the frustration at the fuel-burn question, because I found that actually kind of helpful for myself, and so I'm wondering, if we move to a more randomized survey, like in the commercial fleet, if it would be more palatable to the fleet, or if some of those more controversial questions are kind of making it more difficult to ask the less-controversial questions, and so thank you again.

DR. BELCHER: Andy, did you still have something else to add? All right. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Well, I seem to congenially get randomly selected for the economic data, and I seem to do it every year, and, again, I got randomly selected again this year, and some of it is -- Especially the fuel, and it's not so much that there's resistance, but it's just that, for my boat in particular, it's very, very difficult to actually get your arms around it, right, and so we have two separate tanks, and we never burn all the fuel in a trip, and, depending on time of day, the tide, and we will either go to the fuel dock on the way in, or we just go unload, and we're not putting fuel back on the boat until the very next trip.

Then you don't know what the fuel burn was from the previous trip until after you've already filled up and gone on another trip, and so it becomes a little bit cumbersome to actually keep up with your actual true fuel burn, because we don't have gauges on our boat that tells how much fuel we're burning. You know, we kind of know how much fuel we burn, and we know when to switch tanks, so that we don't leave a tank dry, and, you know, sometimes, if a trip doesn't go well, we may take two trips without going to the fuel dock, and so that part of it makes it a little bit cumbersome, and so, when I fill it out, sometimes it's pretty darned accurate, because we went straight to the fuel dock, and I know exactly how much fuel we put back in the boat, and, other times, it's, you know, just based off what I think we did that trip, compared to what we did in other trips, but, how accurate that really is, I don't know.

DR. BELCHER: Other comments, or questions, at this time for Michelle? Okay. Seeing none, thank you, Michelle, for your presentation today.

DR. MASI: Thanks, everyone.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. So this comes to the group. The action items is we're being directed to provide guidance on how the council would like to move forward with improving the for-hire logbook compliance. We need to discuss actions that the council, NMFS, or both, could take to improve reporting compliance in the for-hire sector, and would the council want to initiate a plan amendment to improve the SEFHIER program, and so courses of action for discussion. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, I guess, with regard to the last question, I mean, we did make the motion to start an action, right, and I guess do we need to officially take any further action to start an amendment at this point? I thought that was kind of self-implied.

DR. BELCHER: Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Well, it wasn't, and that's why we are requesting that you guys clarify. You did approve a motion for us to begin working on an amendment to consider limited-entry for the three fisheries, and we'll get into that topic next, but it was not clear, to staff, what start an action means, whether, you know, you guys are ready to begin work on amendment, and, if so, then, you know, we would want guidance on what to include in the amendment, and so that's kind of where we are.

DR. BELCHER: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, certainly -- I was the one that made the motion with regard to starting an action, and so my intent was to begin an amendment. My recommendation is that we consider following a similar path to what the Gulf Council has done, for two reasons. One, I think it's been highly beneficial for them to put together a very diverse advisory panel, given the experience they've had with the program the last several years, and gather feedback, and input, from those charter captains that are participating in the program, to make changes to it, and, two, because the Gulf Council has already started making recommendations, to look to them, in terms of some of the improvements, and changes, that they're making, as a result of the court decision, and try to align these programs, as close to one-to-one as possible, to help reduce the administrative burden on the Fisheries Service. Those are my recommendations, but certainly I would love to hear from others.

DR. BELCHER: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: So I'm in agreement with Andy there. I think we're at a pretty unique and opportune time to look at the difficulties in our program, and I think following the actions of the Gulf makes a lot of sense, and, particularly, I like the idea of the convening of an AP, of various members of the industry, to see what this could look like. A big frustration that I have, in the for-hire industry in general, and I will disclose, obviously, that I'm a member of it, is that, oftentimes, when we look at big policy initiatives, voices tend to be separated into two separate categories, people who are very, very invested in the industry and people who are not very invested in the industry, and I look back at our state logbook initiative, and that was seven or eight years ago.

Those who spoke out, and were vocal against it, virtually 100 percent of them were out of the industry in two to three years, and then the impacts of that not being implemented are something that I've lived with to this day, someone who has dedicated most of life, my professional life, to my business, and so that's something I'm very sensitive to. I would be curious, going back to Andy's comments, what would be the best way to form a motion, which I would be prepared to make, to start an amendment to look at limited entry, as well as better compliance with the SEFHIER program.

DR. BELCHER: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Well, I think another, and unprecedented, dynamic in this conversation is the northward migration of fish and the availability of folks in the Mid-Atlantic and New England to have access, you know, and so, while I certainly don't disagree that we need to learn from all the lessons that have been learned, both painful and painless, but this is a very different part of our conversation.

You know, if you look at what we know is happening, and we don't expect that to change, you know, how are we going to make sure that the interests of those groups farther up the coast are considered? You know, if we're going to look at this being done fairly and equitably, I mean, that's -- You know, that's a major driver in this.

DR. BELCHER: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you so much for those comments, Spud. You know, the climate impacts on our fisheries are obviously very relevant, right, and I think you bring up a good point, which goes back to some of my previous comments regarding this being a really unique time. I think it's also a really unique time for us to create a new permit, or a new system, that's really innovative.

You know, I look at my experience here, and all the difficulties fishermen bring with SG 1 and SG 2 permits, and kind of the last legacy of that program, and I also look at our state commercial fishing license moratorium, and the issues with that, and I think that we could use this time to create a program that, when we look at the previous Amendment 47, which was developed, that had these innovative ideas, such as a greenhorn pool, or a way to increase and protect new entries into the fishery, and, at the same time, I think that this is just an issue that we're going to have to address. I don't know how we can do it, but I think we can get some really good ideas at the table.

DR. BELCHER: I've got Robert and then John.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: As I went back and looked at this, and as I sit here at this table and we talk about this, the goal, right, what are we intending to accomplish with the limited-entry program, and I hear it's vastly different, right, and, in some instances, it's protecting the economic positions of people who have made investments, and, in some instances, it's reducing recreational effort, through reduced catch and discards, and so I think that, at least as I had understood --

You know, my understanding of this was trying to get to a place where we would have better catch data, right, and not information that could then go through another set of analysis, but actual information on what's being caught, and what's being discarded, and, by tighter control of the group, ultimately, we would get to that information. I just think that there's a lot of discussion, and we probably need to refine a little bit more exactly what the goal is here, before we start moving forward with an amendment.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Robert. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I want to address Robert's comment there, and I think you bring up a very good point, and so what I look at is I look at the compliance in the Gulf program, which is very high, because you have a permit that is valuable, that you can lose, and that can be taken away. Now, that doesn't mean that our permit has to look exactly like that. We can do something that's very different, and we can do something that's very innovative, that's very forward-thinking, because, again, I think a lot of those programs, and permits, have their issues, but I think that's where you start with the basis of it, because that's one of the major problems that we have here.

I mean, I look at my state, and we have a lot of fishermen who know they need this permit, and they don't have it, because they don't feel like being compliant, and it's just the cost of doing business, if you happen to get ticketed, and I don't see how we can move forward without something that's just a little bit more structured in the terms of value.

DR. BELCHER: All right. I saw a few hands come up. John, are you procedural, or are you to the point?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I just want to say I think there's a lot of good things being discussed here, and, you know, some of the words being tossed out are really important to this. You know, being innovative is good. I think a great way to get started on this is to get input from the fishermen, and the fishery, and that's why I think starting with an AP is a good first step, but I'm not sure that we have a good handle on what to do beyond that first step, because we need to hear from them, because I think we should try -- Here, we're facing climate change, and we're facing equity issues, and we should try to be innovative, and I think that, here on the Atlantic coast, we need to perhaps look a little bit more to our future, and where our stocks and fishermen, and fishermen that are in the Mid-Atlantic jurisdiction, and covered by GARFO, are potentially going to be interacting with our species, and make sure that we cover that.

We've traditionally worked closer with the Gulf than with the Mid-Atlantic, because that's the region, but, having gone through what we have with the scenario planning exercise and everything else, our future may actually be a lot more collaboration with the Mid-Atlantic area, and with GARFO, and so I think we have to make sure that we don't try to model something from the Gulf

to the detriment of, you know, where we may be with our fishermen ten years from now, and having to have a lot more cross-permitting situations and reporting with that region, and so we should make sure we give them a voice in there and come up with some innovative solution that works with our region.

Then I think, in general, the compliance -- If you consider that we don't have, you know, the loss of permit threat out there, and there's not been a whole lot about compliance, I think the compliance, for a program that's fairly new, is not all that bad. You know, if you want better compliance, really, the answer is -- It doesn't matter what it is, speed limits, drunk driving, reporting, outreach and education and enforcement, and those are a lot more important, probably, than what actions the council may take, and so I think, you know, as Robert said, we need to know what the goals are of this program, and we struggle with that, a lot of times.

We struggled with that in the permitting. We started with permitting for recreational private anglers to improve data, and it seems we've come full circle on that, and actually tying the permits to data improvements is a bit of a struggle, and I think, in this, we need to, you know, really heed what you guys are saying, and make sure that we keep track of that as we go down this path.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. I've got Tim, Amy, Andy, and then back to Tom. So Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, Robert hit on really the meat of the matter here, and so did Tom. I mean, you know, if we're not going to use this to drive better data, fishery-dependent data, that can be validated and then used, I'm not sure -- I'm not sure what the purpose really is. You know, to say that we're going to use this just to get compliance -- We've heard that there's a \$500 fine for being not compliant. If you step up that, and really put that -- You know, carry that out judiciously, that will do a lot of good.

It will really -- If you start getting \$500 fine after \$500 fine after \$500 fine, it's going to mean a lot more, but the problem we have now is there is no hammer. There is no hammer, and it doesn't have to -- The hammer doesn't have to be that you can't renew your permit. It can be a fine, but, at the end of the day, what have we really accomplished if we're not going to ever come to grips with fishery-dependent data that has gone through a very rigorous program that is going to the ACCSP, and it's good data, but we're not going to use it, and so, to me, the purpose of this whole thing of this limited entry -- It's not because we're overcapitalized, and I don't believe we're overcapitalized. We have a thousand miles of coast, and we have 2,000 federal charter boats.

You know, Amy sat here and said they have 200 charter boats, and it's been flat for years, and North Carolina is the same way, and so it's not overcapitalization, you know, or at least not above Florida, and, in fact, it may be the opposite. It's very hard to get a charter boat, in parts of North Carolina, during the heat of the summer. If you're not organizing it right now, you're probably not going, but the real key, to me, is to come up with a way that uses a limited-entry system that forces people to be professional and to report, and, if you don't report, you get fined. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you. Just for -- I'm going to ask a question, probably more so than anything, just for clarification, and so, in essence, we're having two conversations overlapping with one another, and am I correct in that? Okay, and so back to Andy's point, for his motion to initiate

action modifying SEFHIER, and so I'm with you on improving compliance, and I'm with you on strengthening reporting requirements, but, to me, those are more like a business plan, in a way, and they should already sort of be in your wheelhouse now.

The explore validations is a whole other conversation, and so I'm wondering if we're perhaps jumping the gun here a little bit, and I made that point in my presentation. We've been collecting for-hire data for five years prior to when it was mandated when you were federally permitted, and now we're another three years, and I'm still fuzzy on how the compliance numbers differ from the data I pulled to the data that Michelle pulled, and there's a lot of nuances in there, and I know that, but, if I'm looking at 84 percent, I'm pretty darned happy with that, and I kind of patted myself on the back a little bit here, but I guess what I'm getting all of this around to is I think that there are ways that you can improve compliance, and strengthen reporting requirements, that aren't necessarily tied to an action.

Explore validation, I'm wondering if we're a little too early for that yet, and I don't know, and I think we need to get compliance and data strengthening first, and then roll back to the exploring validation, and I think you can get to some of that validation if we allow the for-hire limited entry permit to gain more momentum through this process.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. I've got Andy and Tom, but, before I go to Andy, one suggestion that's been made, from staff, is that we get the presentation on the limited entry, and so, if the current conversation continues where we are, and then we'll get the two of you, and then we'll go into the presentation, if that works for folks. Okay, and so Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I was going to make a similar point to what Amy is, which is kind of we're mixing two interrelated issues, right, and what I wanted to focus on was the SEFHIER component, because that's what we were talking about just now with all of the presentations, and so, going back to my motion from December, that was approved I think with no opposition, and it said to direct staff -- Well, I guess it said just to take an action to modify SEFHIER to improve compliance, strengthen reporting requirements, and explore validation tools, and I don't know how we do that without a framework, or an amendment, and so, to me, we're debating something that, to me, is self-explanatory.

With that said, the devil is in the details of then what do we include in that action, or amendment, and I think that's important for us to discuss, and I don't fully agree with Amy's comments that this is all just going to be bolstered based on an action plan by the agency, in part because some of the tools for this program, and how it was originally designed -- We knew there was going to be shortcomings here, and we knew that we weren't going to be able to accomplish what we were hoping to set out to accomplish with this program, and what we're hearing, right, is there's frustration around we're reporting for the sake of reporting, but you're not able to use the data, and so, to me, what I want to get to is the government is spending money to improve this program, to build this program, to work with compliance on the program, and what can we do to enhance it and get it to the point where we're actually using the data, which is our intent for both stock assessments and management, right?

I referenced the Gulf, because I think the Gulf is way far ahead of the South Atlantic, the Mid-Atlantic, and New England with regard to some of their efforts on validation, right, and reporting

compliance, and I think there's tools that we can use, or carry over from the Gulf into the South Atlantic, that will really benefit us.

With regard to the comments about engaging Mid-Atlantic and New England fishermen, those that are permitted north of here, absolutely. Anyone that is permitted, that has to report to our programs, or that might be affected by limited entry, we need to be inclusive of them, and so I fully support that, and I realize that the Gulf isn't necessarily the full solution for the South Atlantic, or north, but I think there are some really good things that the Gulf has proposed, or utilized in the past already, that are easily applicable to the South Atlantic that we should be considering as part of this process.

DR. BELCHER: Tom. Tom is deferring to you, Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: So one thing that I'm really curious about, right, is we've got the 85 percent, and then, on top of the 85 percent that Amy reported, she's got some paper reporting for folks that don't have federal permits, and so I'm assuming it's somewhere between 84 and 100 percent reporting, and why, right, and so I'm curious as to why, in that jurisdiction, have they been able to get people -- A couple of things happened, right, and you had a federal reporting requirement come in that layered in in 2021, and the VESL program looks to be way, way, way more advanced than anything that I've seen for other states at this point.

I mean, to some extent, I think there is actually an example of how one of the states has been able to achieve a much higher compliance, and I think we should be really focused on that, and, if we can collectively get to 84 percent across the South Atlantic, improving from there would be a lot easier lift, and so I'm curious, again, trying to understand how we, you know, mesh that 50 percent, or 51 percent, that we heard from SEFHIER and South Carolina, and, if we truly are at 85 percent, I think we should be doing a case study and figuring out how to implement across, and they've got, I think six-hundred-and-some charter captains.

Florida is, you know, two or three-times the size of that, but still not unreasonable, I don't think, in terms of being able to do the outreach and education and services that you've provided to your charter captains.

DR. BELCHER: Amy, to that?

MS. DUKES: Thank you. To that point, Robert, you're right that that 84 number is specific to the federally-permitted vessels, and so, in South Carolina, that only equates to about 200 of my 600, and so, when Michelle was talking, there's about 2,100 permits, and so that's really only -- South Carolina is only rating up to 10 percent of that population, and how we got there is it takes time, and it takes commitment.

Again, we started electronic reporting in 2016, with a federal mandate that didn't come down until several years later, and I'm five years ahead of the game, and I'm wondering if bolstering, and strengthening, SEFHIER is really where this needs to be, and I guess the question to Andy is does there need to be modifications to SEFHIER, to just simply improve that compliance, and strengthen that reporting requirement, versus just simply putting forth the time and the effort and the staff to do it without an action, and I think taking that validation part of it out of it for right now.

DR. BELCHER: Andy, to that, and then Tom.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, so we had a comparative analysis presented, either in September or December, by Michelle Masi, and I realize that the Gulf program was requiring VMS at the time, but they also have hail-in and hail-out requirements, right, and so it was very much more requirements, in terms of trip-level reporting, and there was pretty stark differences between what happened in the Gulf, in the same period of time, that happened in the South Atlantic.

Michelle just showed a graphic, earlier today, and, I mean, we're putting just as much, if not more, resources into compliance right now, and it seems to be sliding backward, right, and so, you know, we can continue down this path, and see what happens, but, to me, I think there are some regulatory tools that can really help us, in terms of reporting requirements, that can help bolster reporting over time, and the question I asked you earlier I think is a really important one. When we look at compliance, it's not just did you report or not for that week, but are you reporting all the trips that you actually went on, and is there a way for us to validate that, and so it does get at that validation component.

DR. BELCHER: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I'm going to touch briefly on Robert's comments, as well as Andy's comments, and I give South Carolina a lot of credit for having much higher compliance, due to their outreach and their program, but it goes back to Andy's comment of did you or did you not just report, because having compliance, under the current system, does not take care of the fact that people can just submit do-not-fish reports, and it does not take care of the fact that we don't have, really very much at all, trip-level compliance, or verification, and it also doesn't get into the fact that we don't have much catch validation. This goes back to this whole two-sided conversation that we keep having, the two layers of it, is that we need to look at this program as a way in which to have data that we can actually use. Otherwise, there's no real point in having it.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Any other further questions, or comments, at this point? Like I said, what we'll do is we'll move into the discussion on the limited entry, and this will give us some stuff to think about, and we can talk about afterwards, to see how we want to move forward. Myra and John Hadley.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and so Hadley and I have put together some summary slides. These summary slides correspond to a discussion document that we put together looking at the three finfish fisheries that you all requested that you wanted to start considering for a limited-entry program. First off, a little bit of background. The council first established a control date, back in 2016, June 15 of 2016, for the for-hire fishery, and so, at the time, they also initiated an amendment to consider limited entry for snapper grouper, dolphin wahoo, and the CMP species, and they eventually narrowed it down to just the snapper grouper fishery, and that's what became Snapper Grouper Amendment 47.

We developed that amendment through the scoping phase, and we held scoping hearings, I believe it was, in August of 2018, and, at the time, the council was considering a moratorium on for-hire permits, and so I will get to that in a minute, but that was the main purpose of that amendment, and most of the comments we received during that scoping phase were in opposition, and so, at

that point, the council decided to stop work on the amendment indefinitely, and, just a refresher on what a control date is, basically, it just establishes the kind of -- It puts the industry on notice, basically, saying anybody who enters the fishery after this date may not be guaranteed access, or entrance, into the fishery, should the council pursue a limited-entry program. The council doesn't have to use a control date, and it's simply there for them as a tool to be used.

Fast-forward to December, and the council discussed, as you all know, the recommendations from your advisory panels, both the Snapper Grouper and the Mackerel Cobia AP recommended that the council explore limited entry for those fisheries, and we also received a presentation on the SEFHIER program that we've been talking about this afternoon, and so the council went ahead and approved a motion to put in place a new control date of December 8, 2023, and so, again, the council may or may not use this in their deliberations in establishing those eligibility moving forward, and, additionally, permit holders that have not reported catch for those three fisheries through the SEFHIER program, as of December 5, again would not be assured of future access. The agency has published an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking, and that is currently open for public comment, which ends on March 11, and so next week.

As far as the topics that were considered in Amendment 47, as I said, it was for a moratorium on South Atlantic for-hire snapper grouper permits. When the council was developing this, they took into consideration the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and the National Standard Guidelines, and they look at moratoria that had occurred in other federally-managed fisheries, and they looked at a -- They tried to figure out a start date for that moratorium, and what the exceptions were going to be for eligibility, and they looked at historic captains, and folks that had also commercial permits, in addition to their for-hire, and they looked at transferability, and so we did quite a bit of work on this amendment. As Tom mentioned, there was a new entrants permit pool alternative, as well as a greenhorn permit.

Another thing that amendment was considering modifying, revising, or removing is the regulation that prevents federally-permitted snapper grouper for-hire vessels from possessing snapper grouper species in state waters when the harvest of those species closes in federal waters, and so that's been kind of a source of concern from the public for many years, and so that was another thing the council, at the time, was looking into modifying.

I just wanted to remind you of the pros and cons at the time, what the council talked about, and the moratorium could help logbook reporting compliance, data quality for the recreational component, and the council talked about it would help in stabilizing participation in the for-hire fishery, and it would help the situations of potential localized vessel overcapacity, business planning, personalizing the for-hire fleet, and reducing fishing pressure on some fish stocks, and, as far as the concerns that came up, the council talked about conflicts between those who do and do not get permits, and so there would obviously be conflict there, what would happen to permits obtained after the control date, and there would be an increased potential for sector separation, and all the business that comes with that, and then they talked about the costs of obtaining a for-hire permit, and, if the permit becomes limited, what would happen, and so these are all kind of pros and cons that the council discussed at the time.

Here, we just have basically the discretionary provisions that are under MSA, which is basically a set of considerations that the councils need to keep in mind when they're looking at a limited-entry program, and so things like present participation in the fishery, of course, historical fishing

practices and dependence of vessels in the fishery, the economics of the fishery, the capability of fishing vessels to engage in other fisheries, cultural and social framework, and then the fair and equitable distribution of those limited-access privileges, and any other relevant considerations, and so these are all kind of general.

Then there are two National Standards that would come into play when you all move forward with limited entry, and that's National Standard 4, which addresses allocation, and this is the National Standard that promotes fairness and equity, promotes conservation, and avoidance of excessive shares, and so there's other factors, and they're all listed on the screen there for you, and I'm not going to read them all, but things like food production, dependence on the fishery by present participants, what it does to coastal communities, et cetera.

There is also National Standard 5, which is the one that addresses efficiency, and so this one establishes limited access as a management tool that can be used to address issues such as overfishing, overcrowded, or overcapitalization in the fishery, to achieve OY. Here, we are getting more guidance, additional considerations that a council can take, and, mainly, when it comes to criteria for who would qualify and who wouldn't, and also the transferability of those permits.

Also, to just sort of -- Again, this is more background on limited entry in other fisheries. Right now, on the east coast, all the for-hire fisheries are open access, and so HMS, the fisheries managed under the New England and Mid-Atlantic and the South Atlantic Councils, and all of those are open access. We do have, in the Gulf, and in Alaska, some examples of federal for-hire fisheries, and so halibut fishery in the North Pacific is a limited access, and then the reef fish and the coastal migratory pelagics in the Gulf of Mexico, and so there was a moratorium, initially, on new permits that was in place for three years, back in June of 2003, and then the limited-entry program was established in 2006 for reef fish and CMP.

More commonly, limited access is used in commercial fisheries, and an example would be in the Gulf of Mexico, and we have the commercial king mackerel permit for the Gulf and the South Atlantic that is also limited access, and, for that one, the Gulf established a moratorium on new permits, back in 1995, and that was in place for five years, and then it was extended, and then the council eventually put in a permanent limited-entry program that went into place in July of 2005. That's a little bit of background, and so I'm going to turn it over to Hadley, who is going to walk you through a little bit of the data that we were able to pull.

MR. HADLEY: Shep, go ahead.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Before we get into that, I would just make two comments. The first one is we throw around a lot of terms, right, limited entry, limited access, moratorium, whatever. If you look at Section 303(b)(6) in the statute, "limited access" is the terminology that we use in the Magnuson Act, and I would like to stay tied to that.

Just to reiterate, a moratorium -- It doesn't matter if it's temporary, indefinite, whatever, they're all forms of limiting access to the fishery, and all of them must be analyzed, as indicated in the statute, and one final thing, and we talked earlier, and it was sort of a confused discussion between reporting and limiting access, and limiting access, as stated in the statute, is in order to achieve optimum yield, and so, whatever other benefits come from it, in order to limit access, it's got to be aimed at achieving optimum yield. Given the discard issues in the South Atlantic snapper grouper

fishery, that's an easy argument to make, but that needs to be the focus for limiting access. Thank you.

MR. HADLEY: All right. I am going to present some of the available permit data for the three for-hire finfish fisheries, and so the coastal migratory pelagics, snapper grouper, and dolphin wahoo fisheries, and a couple of things to keep in mind. One is the timeline, and so this goes from 2008 through 2020, and so 2020 is the terminal year on all of the graphs that I will show, and the same for the tables that are in the discussion document.

The reason being that 2020 is the terminal year is that additional data are currently unavailable, due to ongoing updates with the SERO permits system, and so it's expected that, hopefully later on this year, probably the latter half of 2024, is when we'll have that more updated information piece, and so the permit information from 2021 through 2023, and one thing to also keep in mind, given that that more recent information isn't available, it appears that likely you're not going to see the effects of the for-hire logbook reporting amendment going into place, as well as COVID-19.

Based on some of the information that you were just presented, it looks like permit numbers have decreased, and so what you're going to look at, in the next set of graphs, is probably sort of a high-end estimate on what would be current participation for for-hire permits and the number of for-hire-permitted vessels.

With that caveat, we'll start with kind of a look at the fishery, the for-hire fishery, as a whole, and so this figure in front of you, again, is pulled from the document, and it shows all three permits, and so the snapper grouper permit, the dolphin wahoo for-hire permit, and the coastal migratory pelagic permit, and then, also, the total permitted vessels, and so, if you look at this, you know, there's a pretty clear uptick in upward trend from 2014 through 2019, and that's seen really across all three permits.

Dolphin wahoo is consistently the highest number of permits, and so, across the dataset, you always see more dolphin wahoo permits than coastal migratory pelagics, or snapper grouper permits, and then, generally speaking, the number of coastal migratory pelagic and snapper grouper permits were similar in number until 2016, when you saw a divergence in the number of coastal migratory pelagic permits. It has exceeded the number of snapper grouper permits since that time.

Looking at the final year of data available, 2020, there were 2,458 permitted vessels, and so that's the number of vessels that had at least one of the South Atlantic permits assigned to that vessel in 2020, and, again, I believe the presentation that you just saw -- It appeared that it was probably down around 2,150 vessel, and so, to give you an idea, a 10 to 12 percent decrease, it appears, since that time.

Looking at the distribution of the three permits, most permits were held by vessels homeported in the South Atlantic region, and the majority were held by vessels homeported on the east coast of Florida, and so these are on the east coast, and that includes the Florida Keys. You can see, in the figure in front of you, the orange line, with the squares at the very top, that is the trend in number of permitted vessels homeported in the east coast of Florida, and then, as we move down, you can

see other states in the South Atlantic region, including North Carolina, and you see there's a notable number of Gulf permits in there, Mid-Atlantic permits, South Carolina, and Georgia.

In 2020, there were approximately -- There were 294 permits from the Greater Atlantic Region, and so that's the Mid-Atlantic region, as well as New England, and 343 permits from the Gulf, from vessels homeported in the Gulf of Mexico, and there was a slightly decreasing in the out-of-region, if you will, permits, and so permits that weren't held by vessels homeported in the South Atlantic region.

With that, we'll look at -- We'll break into kind of a species-by-species, or FMP-by-FMP, breakdown of permits, and so these figures will show the geographic distribution of the snapper grouper permits, dolphin wahoo, and coastal migratory pelagics, and we'll start with dolphin wahoo. The highest number of permits are held by vessels on the Florida east coast. There again, it's that orange line at the very top, with the squares under each data point, and, as you can see, this is also the area of highest growth, since the control date was put in place, implemented for -- The control date being the one for June 15, 2016, and so you've seen sort of an uptick since then. There's the generally-increasing trend across all states in the South Atlantic, and, in 2020, you had approximately 2,100 permitted vessels with snapper grouper permits.

Moving over to dolphin wahoo, there's similar trends to the snapper grouper permits, and you did see an overall increasing trend, from 2014 and 2015 onward, and there were a notably higher number of vessels from the Mid-Atlantic and New England, and this shouldn't come as a surprise, due to the extended range of the FMP jurisdiction, and so the Dolphin Wahoo FMP covers the entire east coast, including the Mid-Atlantic and New England regions, and so you do see several vessels from those regions further north. Overall, there were approximately 2,300 permitted vessels in 2020.

Last, but certainly not least, this figure shows the distribution of coastal-migratory-pelagic-permitted vessels, and so similar to dolphin wahoo, and you do have a notably higher number of Mid-Atlantic vessels, compared to snapper-grouper-permitted vessels, there again due to the extended jurisdictional range of this fishery management plan, and so it extends up through the Mid-Atlantic region, and so you do see several Mid-Atlantic-permitted vessels in there, and, also, as noted earlier, this permit is currently under limited entry for the Gulf of Mexico, and so the Gulf of Mexico permits are not shown in this figure, but it is noted that, in the Gulf of Mexico, the for-hire coastal migratory pelagics permit is limited entry. On the Atlantic side, it is open access, and, in 2020, there were approximately 2,200 vessels with a coastal migratory pelagic -- With a South Atlantic coastal migratory pelagic permit.

Those are all the slides that we have, and that's sort of a primer for the discussion, and I imagine that you may want to take it up in totality tomorrow, but, with that, the idea was to switch back over to the discussion document, and I'm going to scroll down to the bottom here, and there are a few discussion questions for the council, and, really, the idea here is to try to get some input on what are the next steps that you would like to see for this amendment.

As alluded to earlier, when implementing limited entry -- In some cases there was a moratorium, followed by limited entry, and so one of the questions for the committee, or the council, really is, you know, how do you want to go about it in this amendment? Do you want to consider a

moratorium first, and then go to limited entry for the for-hire permits, or would you want to consider a system that goes directly into limited entry for the for-hire permits?

If we're going to start developing a scoping document, what general ideas would you like to see developed in that, to take out to the public eventually, if this were to be approved for scoping, and there's sort of a list of topics, and a lot of that was gone over earlier in the presentation, but we put them in here again, and, of note, there was the idea of how to account for climate change and range expansion northward, and there was a little bit of discussion on that earlier, and then, also, equity and environmental justice considerations, such as whether limiting access to a fishery is going to disproportionately affect some communities, and so those are a couple of new topics to throw out there, in addition to what was gone over earlier.

Then, last, but not least, what additional information would you find helpful to review at this point in the amendment development process, you know, knowing the more recent permit numbers, the distribution of those permits, probably will not be available until later this year, but what other additional information can you think of that you would like for your staff to show at a subsequent meeting? With that, I will turn it over to the council.

DR. BELCHER: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I agree that I think, you know, we need to ponder on this, and not get into it right now, but I do have a quick question about this moratorium issue. If you establish a moratorium, say for instance on CMP permits, and say I'm a fisherman who resides in Delaware, and I realize now that there's enough Spanish mackerel up there for me to prosecute that fishery on now, and I can't get a permit. Depending on when you set the date or whatever, I can't get a permit now to prosecute a for-hire fishery on that species in federal waters off of Delaware. Then the next question, and this is a Shep question, is can you have a geographically-specific moratorium, where you prohibit the issuance of permits to residents in one state, but not in another?

DR. BELCHER: Shep.

MR. GRIMES: So possibly, depending on how you structured it, but you couldn't discriminate against residents of other states, and it would have to cost everybody the same that come in for that permit, but it's -- I would say, at least theoretically, I would say I think it's possible that you could have -- You know, let's say you were limiting access to the for-hire fishery south of Georgia, and I'm just throwing that out, but, I mean, if you're looking at Florida-only sort of thing, conceivably, I think maybe you could structure that, if you could do it in a way that didn't discriminate against residents of the different states, and still let them in, and then possibly, but you're obviously touching on something that's potentially fraught with complications.

To address the person in Delaware, yes, they could purchase a limited-access permit, the same way anybody else purchases a limited-access permit, and they buy it from an existing permit holder, and it's just not open access anymore, and they don't go get it from, you know, the unlimited supply from NMFS for twenty-five dollars, or whatever it is, and it's more of a commodity, but, yes, that's how they've treated it in the Gulf of Mexico, and other limited-access fisheries, for many decades now.

MR. WOODWARD: A follow-up?

DR. BELCHER: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: But what that moratorium does then is makes it now that that individual in Delaware can't go buy an open-access permit anymore, because it's -- They're forbidden from doing that, and that is, obviously, a concern to me.

DR. BELCHER: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I think that's something we're going to have to build in, and we should probably be reviewing this permit over other years, particularly given the amount of climate change we're seeing, to see that if we should be changing it, or adding, and I think that that's a relevant question that we could add into this, but, going back to this document, I think Amendment 47 is a good place to start, and I think it's very clear that we need to update this, and we need to modernize it, and I think it needs to be part of --

You know, we need to see what the Gulf is doing, and I think that it would be relevant to -- You know, if we choose to start an amendment, that we also need to do it alongside the creation of an AP of industry members, to see what they would like to see changed, right, and, I mean, we hear from our AP a lot on this, and we hear from a lot of leaders in the fishing industry on this, that they support this. We hear about it in North Carolina, at our stakeholder meetings, but I think this is a good starting point.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Any other -- Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I just wanted to say that I think this is a good starting point, and, you know, in terms of the question of moratorium, versus some other limited-entry program, I don't think they're mutually exclusive of one another, and we can potentially consider both in the same amendment, right, and potentially even do some sort of kind of staggered timeline, if we wanted to do a moratorium first, followed by some limited-entry requirements later, but, you know, in terms of Spud's question, I think you bring up some interesting points.

It really does get back to what are our goals and objectives, and what are we trying to accomplish here, right, and is there overcapitalization in these fisheries, and do we need to reduce discards, you know, are we hitting the annual catch limits, and on and on and on, and, in looking at that for all three of these fisheries, as a whole, and then determining, geographically, are there differences that are needed, and so I think that can be borne out with the analysis, as we continue to develop this action.

DR. BELCHER: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: A couple of things, and so I guess I'm confused about the order of operations here and when we would form this AP, exactly what they're going to look at, and are they going to help establish the goals? Is the council trying to establish what the goals of this program would be?

The reason I say that is because I thought that the council was focusing on data for private recreational anglers and discards, and so then now we're looking at limited entry for for-hire, and

then, also, at this same meeting, we're looking at the commercial two-for-one, and so the commercial two-for-one, and this limited entry -- It looked like, according to the document, that we wouldn't have updated data until like December of this year, and so the reason I'm asking about the order of operations is, if we form the AP, and they don't have this most recent data, is that really the best time to have the AP meet, or should the AP meet after they can at least see some preliminary data, to know whether these permits are going up, going down, or are a lot of the permits coming outside of our region, and it's just the order of operations seems kind of critical here.

I guess I would also ask, and I guess we can look at this later in the week, when we look at like the workplan setup, but how are we going to work on all these simultaneously, and can the council really tackle private rec reporting, for-hire limited entry, and two-for-one, like all at the same time, and so I'm just wondering, and the reason I bring up the goals is it seems like what we're really flirting with is sector separation, and so I think that's a whole separate discussion here that we would need to have, when embarking on this, and, if you're going to form the AP, I think the AP needs to be informed if ultimately getting to sector separation is a goal that we want that group to look at and think about.

DR. BELCHER: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, at this point, I mean, you raising the issue of sector separation, I think that's so far in the distance, right, and, to me, what we're trying to do is deal with some issues that are plaguing our fisheries, right, in terms of improving data collection and having a limited resource and a fleet that far outstrips, obviously, the capacity of that resource to be harvested right now.

What the limited-entry program ultimately looks like, it's to be determined, and, obviously, designed by us. You know, when I made the suggestion, earlier today, about an advisory panel, you know, one of the questions that I had, for staff, is whether or not there's existing advisory panels that could maybe meet those needs or not, but I was thinking of it more from the data collection side, right, and so it was more from the for-hire logbook reporting improvements and bringing together those captains.

Could those captains also advise us on limited entry? Absolutely, if we want to pull that AP together to do -- You know, to kill two birds with one stone, so to speak, and so I guess think about it from that standpoint, but, to me, if we're going to stand up a new AP, that's going to take time. In June, I am hopeful, right, and I can't say 100 percent that we will have solved our permit database problems on the backend, and be able to provide data going forward, and so we have a target actually of May right now, to get that resolved, and we have a team of people working on a solution for that, and so I'm hopeful that I can come back in June and say we're fixed, we fixed it, and we'll be able to provide permit data going forward, but I think the AP, even if we stood something up, would probably not happen until next fall.

DR. BELCHER: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you so much for your comments, Andy. You know, we talked, multiple times, about this being two separate issues, right, the limited entry and the data, and I think that we're pushing them apart, and they're actually a lot closer together than maybe we're having in

this discussion, meaning I personally view this discussion of, and let's call them limited-access, to make Shep happy, permits as one in which to drive the compliance and better data, something we desperately need with a program that, quite frankly, is failing to get us the needs that we want.

I will say that I'm going to agree with Andy on the whole discussion of sector separation, and we're so far -- That's so far down the line, and I don't even think it's, you know, opportune to have that right now, and I'm not even sure that's an issue that is valid for the South Atlantic. I mean, I think of sector separation, and I think of the Gulf, and our fisheries are so incredibly different, right, and I view our fisheries as much more access-dependent. I will just end my comments there, based on I think these issues, or at least how I view them, as being very, very close, because we're trying to drive compliance, and we're trying to drive better data, through limited access.

DR. BELCHER: Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I get the perspective, but, Tom, I see them as separate, and I think that, when we have, you know, effectively as what people view as fisheries management rules, right, and we're talking about suppressing effort here, right, and I see that different as reporting and compliance, and I want to try to at least, I think, focus on the compliance, and making people want to buy into that, without having the -- I will say the taint of additional, you know, fisheries rules, you know, or restriction to access, being part of that, and I think that's going to be a big problem in trying to get acceptance and buy-in and compliance with fishermen, when they just view the rule as you said it, and it's here in the document, right, and, I mean, we're trying to reduce recreational effort, to decrease discards, and I think there's other mechanisms, and other rules, that we can use to handle fisheries-related matters, from my perspective.

DR. BELCHER: Andy and then Tom.

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, Robert, a question back to you, and what ways can we do that that aren't limited access then? I mean, it sounds like you have ideas.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Well, I think starting with looking at South Carolina to begin with, right, and how they've gotten to 85 percent is one, right, and let's start there, and then, you know, other incentives, motives, motivation, you know, ways of -- I think we need to focus on that side of it, and I certainly don't have the answers, but I've been made aware of an example where at least there's one jurisdiction that's having way greater success than the balance of them, and, if we could get everybody to that level, assuming we can confirm that South Carolina has the right data, and SEFHIER's numbers are -- There's a gap somewhere, but just one example there.

DR. BELCHER: Andy, to that?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I don't want to belabor the conversation, but all credit to Amy Dukes and her team, and that's phenomenal compliance, but it's not reversing the trends, and declines, in our snapper grouper fishery, right, or some of our other fisheries, right, and so we can have the best data we can in the world, but, if we don't solve some of the underlying challenges as to why those stocks are going down, and some are in our control, and some certainly are outside of our control, right, and then we're facing a losing battle.

DR. BELCHER: Robert, to that point, and then still Tom.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Yes, and, in at least in my limited time here, my perception of, you know, some of our inability to better manage is the lack of good data, and so just, again, kind of back to the point of trying to separate the two and tell fishermen that, look, we need this information, because we need this information, and it's not -- You know, this action itself is not restricting your access, or harming you, but, in all of the reports we've seen, you know, compliance, and buy-in, with these reporting programs is an issue, across-the-board, and so I think, in an effort to separate the two, and, you know, to say to fishermen that, look, this is a rule about -- You know, it's purely about making sure that we have the appropriate information to be able to make rules, and that's kind of where -- To the point, Tom, that I think that kind of keeping the two separate would be the benefit for us here.

DR. BELCHER: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I think we've been there for a very long time, and I don't think that we're necessarily really moving the needle there. I look at we talk about the compliance in South Carolina, and, again, all the credit to that program, but, not to belabor that point, and it's part of what Andy mentioned, and we're still not getting the data we need. We're still not finding the -- You know, resolving the fact that people can just throw in do-not-fish reports. We're not solving the fact that we have no catch-level validation, that we don't have trip verification, and we need a program that looks completely different, and I look at the Gulf.

We have very high compliance, because you have a permit that's worth something, and you can lose it, because, even if we try to tell fishermen -- If we do the outreach that, hey, we need this data, and we want you to do hail-in and hail-out, and I'm not saying we would do that, or we need you to do daily reporting, or change the benefits of that program, and you still are faced with fact that you have a twenty-five-dollar permit that you could just get a new one, or you have a permit that it's the same -- The fine is the same for nonreporting as it is for being caught without a permit, and so I'm looking for the cheapest and easiest way in which to drive compliance in a valuable industry, and that's why I look at these issues as being completely one and the same.

DR. BELCHER: Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: So what we're talking about then seems to be the rules of maintaining a permit. Even if it's open access, should you have to do certain things in order to maintain that, and then, if you don't maintain it, do you get kicked out, and, even though you can come back in as open access, there's a six-month waiting period, or an application process, or something that makes it so that people are incentivized to keep things current.

Just by way of example, liquor licenses, you know, work that way, and you have to keep them active, and you have to actually use them, or put them in escrow, and there's a limited period of time where you can put them on the shelf, but there's examples of ways, and, you know, Tom, I think all those points are fantastic, and I'm not saying that we shouldn't try to address them, but I'm not sure this is the right method to get there.

DR. BELCHER: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I would just add that, when we talk about limited access, and I'll go back to the point that the number of permits is pretty flat, right, and we're worried about potentially removing people from the fishery in the future, and I'm not as worried about that, because, again, we don't see a big increase in these permits over a period of time.

DR. BELCHER: Further comments from folks? Okay. I'm going to go ahead and float the suggestion, again, that we all take some time to think about this, and it's not anything we're going to resolve tonight, in a few minutes, and so I'm going to recommend, at this point, that we recess for the evening, to give folks some stuff to chew on over dinner tonight, and talk amongst ourselves, and we'll pick back up at 8:30 tomorrow morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on March 4, 2024.)

MARCH 5, 2024

TUESDAY MORNING SESSION

The Full Council Session I of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at The Villas by the Sea Resort, Jekyll Island, Georgia, on Tuesday, March 5, 2024, and was called to order by Chairman Carolyn Belcher.

DR. BELCHER: Okay, folks. If everybody can come to the table, we're going to go ahead and get started. We are going to provide some guidance for council staff on what we would like to do for our conversations yesterday relative to SEFHIER compliance and the limited entry, or limited access, and I will get Shep's phrasing right, to see how we want to move forward with this, or what the conversations will be in the future, but we have Congressman Buddy Carter from -- Representing the State of Georgia, and he will be here today to talk to us, at 8:45, and so we'll have fifteen minutes to pull together some guidance for staff, and so how would we like to proceed with the two items as we discussed yesterday? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I guess just a question, and we talked about a lot of things, and I've been trying to coalesce it in my mind, and one of the things that came up was this advisory panel idea, and so what would the purpose of the advisory panel be, and how would we populate it, to ensure that we had the diversity of opinions, and perspectives, necessary to ensure that their advice is representative of the totality of that for-hire sector? I mean, that's -- I'm just curious, and, I mean, it's one thing to say you're going to do it, but how are we going to do it to make sure that it produces the result that we want it to, and how does the AP fit into the process of producing a structure to this amendment? Is it before or after kind of thing? You know, I'm trying to figure that part of it out.

DR. BELCHER: I've got Robert and then Andy.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Spud, are you suggesting that on the SEFHIER side or on the limited access?

MR. WOODWARD: Well, I think that's the other thing too, is we've muddled these two things together, and I think that's part of the confusion, is we've got two things muddled together here that we need to, I think, separate out. I don't -- My understanding was the advisory panel was to provide input on limited entry strategies, innovative, but do we need an AP to advise us on how better to do SEFHIER? I don't know if we need that. I mean, I think we've got experiences that tell us how to improve compliance with reporting and that kind of thing, and I don't know that we need -- But I'm just one perspective on this. I think maybe the first thing we do is to figure out how do these two things relate to each other, and maybe that will help us forge some pathway forward.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. I've got Andy, Jessica, and then back to Robert.

MR. STRELCHECK: So, when I made the suggestion yesterday, Spud, it was very specific to the SEFHIER program, and not limited entry, and what I saw successfully work in the Gulf of Mexico, right, is we had the court order that rescinded our SEFHIER program entirely, and so we appointed a very diverse group of fishermen, and not necessarily the usual suspects that always participate in the process, and geographically representative, both those that had supported the program from the beginning as well as those that were more in opposition to the program throughout.

They came together and gave very specific recommendations on ways that the program could be redesigned, or setup, right, and so, to me, we're now three years into the program, and I think we're seeing some improvement in compliance, but not a tremendous amount, and then we acknowledge, to you as a Fisheries Service, to you as a council, the limitations, in terms of what this program may or may not be able to do at the onset, and so I think it's a good opportunity to come back in, review the program, see what's working for the fishermen, what's not, what improvements we could make, have them walk through all of the different aspects of the program, and give us some input, guidance, and advice as we hopefully can improve the program.

DR. BELCHER: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think I'm okay with an AP on SEFHIER, and I agree that it did work in the Gulf, getting that group together, and I also don't think that SEFHIER and for-hire limited entry should be bundled together, and I'm hoping that the SEFHIER updates can move faster, and I guess part of my question is, is that a -- Is it going to be a framework action, or are we just trying to figure out what the challenges, and the barriers, are, and I guess I just have more questions on what is the thing that's going to come out of it, and so, if we form an AP, what does the vehicle look like on that, but I also would not bundle SEFHIER and limited entry together. I think they're going to move at two different speeds, and I think we want them to move at two different speeds.

DR. BELCHER: Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: The takeaways I had, from our discussion yesterday, was that the limited entry was trying to achieve two things amongst the group, and one was to reduce pressure, and two was to increase compliance and reporting, right, and so, if we can do the AP on SEFHIER, and, also, I would ask staff to look into South Carolina, and try to better understand why South Carolina is achieving much higher compliance, and I think that would kind of instruct, you know, moving forward on limited entry, what the real goal of limited entry is, and have we eliminated

the need for compliance, or trying to achieve additional compliance, because we've figured that out through, you know, looking at the SEFHIER program, and that path, and so I think, as far as additional direction for staff, looking at the South Carolina model, and figuring out why the disconnect between the 50 percent we're showing here and the 85 percent they're showing in South Carolina.

DR. BELCHER: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I think that's a good point, how can we drive compliance, but the other part of the question is what kind of data do we want out of this program? While South Carolina may have better compliance, due to their program, I will point out that North Carolina cannot have a for-hire logbook, at least for state fisheries, right, and it would have to be a federal program, and the question is are we happy with data that is submitted every week, or every month, and I think a lot of us are not.

We hear this from the AP, and people want data that's better, and they want data that can be used for stock assessments, and they want data that can be used for disaster relief funds, and I know, personally, as a small-business owner, I mean, I've been extremely impacted by hurricanes, and I will give you a Hurricane Florence example. In 2018, we were given a disaster declaration for our area, and the commercial fishing industry, which reports daily, which is not controversial, and so, when I look at the for-hire, and the option that we could report daily is controversial, and it just doesn't click in my mind.

It took us until 2022 to get relief funds distributed in the fishing industry, and a lot of the people who really needed those funds were out of business by that point in time, and so, every time I sit here at this table, whether it's on my state commission or here at the council, I ask what can we do at this table, and I heard some kind of pie-in-the-sky suggestions, like let's have more enforcement, and we can't really do that, and let's have a more expensive permit, and we can't do that, and let's increase the fine schedule, and we can't do that, but what can we do here, and that's where my comments keep going that I understand that a comprehensive limited-access program will move slower than improving SEFHIER, and it probably should, because we should be trying to improve SEFHIER short-term.

I view this action not as some long-term look at catch shares, or sector separation, is what I meant to say, and I do not look at it towards those things, and I look at it as the way in which we can better enforce a permit, because it has worked in other areas, and so I don't think that we need to separate the two entirely, but I am cognizant of the idea that they maybe should move at different speeds, because a limited-access program needs to look a little different, and it needs to be comprehensive, and it needs to look at the needs of the different states and industries, but we have very, very low compliance, and we are also not gathering any useful data, in my opinion, at this point in time.

DR. BELCHER: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So I guess I would ask you, as the Chair, are you looking for, I don't know, a motion, or direction to staff, to bring back the structure of an AP for SEFHIER to the June meeting, and is that the type of direction that we're trying to circle up today, and get that specific?

DR. BELCHER: John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think that would help. It would be nice if we could create this AP in June, and so it might be nice to have some idea of structure here, so we know who to go for. I think -- You know, I think direction to assemble the AP is good. I think we should make sure that we have representatives from our existing affected APs, so that they don't feel like they're being, you know, overridden, and then I think we should also, at June, potentially get some more background information.

You know, Andy has mentioned that the agency has gone on record about the potential what the program can and cannot do, and that was a long time ago, and there's not a lot of people around this table that were here when we were in the throes of preparing that amendment, and, you know, a few that maybe when it was approved, and so I think we would like to ask NMFS to come back and give us specific details on that, so then you have an idea of, you know, what it is you're trying to fix.

I think we should get better details on that lawsuit, so we know what were the pitfalls and what was rejected, so we don't go down that path. I think most people here are aware, and you're aware that there is no SEFHIER in the Gulf, as a result of that lawsuit, but I don't think we really know the details, and so I think that should be another topic, and I think we should discuss then, at that meeting, similar to what Tom said, you know, what data do we want, and then validation came up, and so I think there should be some information provided on, you know, what's realistic for validation, and what are some methods of getting validation for programs of this type, and then I think we would be -- You know, we would have a pretty thorough, and foundation, from which to start having discussions, and maybe be able to give this AP some input as well in June, and then they could potentially meet, and report to you guys, by September.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. I've got Clay, Robert, and then Jessica.

DR. PORCH: Thank you, Chair. I wanted to follow-up on Tom's point. You will remember, several years ago, we advised the council that the SEFHIER program for the South Atlantic would only be useful as something like as a minimum estimate of effort, and we couldn't really use the catch information, without some provision for reporting before offloading, so that the catch information can be validated.

Gregg Waugh, at the time, sold it as a baby step, and I think it's time for us to get past the baby-step phase and adopt a real data collection program, and so the biggest single provision I would add on it is some way to report before offloading, you know the hail-in and hail-out provisions, like are in the Gulf. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I'm okay. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So I guess my question is, first, for Andy, and I can't remember the specifics of what the structure was of the Gulf AP, and so maybe you could remind me of that, and then are

we trying to set up that structure, solicit people to be on it, and then populate it in June, or are we looking more at the structure in June, and I'm just trying to understand what all we're trying to do today, versus what we would do at the next meeting.

MS. BROUWER: I guess it depends. Ideally, if we could get a structure from you all at this meeting, we could potentially bring you applications for you guys to consider in June. Otherwise, we could talk about -- We could kind of brainstorm a structure, perhaps, with whatever information you give us here, and bring that back to you in June, and then we would populate it, and you would select candidates in December.

DR. BELCHER: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Certainly we don't necessarily need to design it like the Gulf, but I can ask Carrie Simmons to provide that information. My recollection is, right, we need to verify that they were a federally-permitted fisherman, had either the coastal migratory pelagic or the reef fish permit in the Gulf of Mexico, and then we had geographic representation, and so we wanted to put the AP together so that there was kind of equal representation for each of the five Gulf of Mexico states, and then, in terms of deliberations, the council thought long and hard in terms of representation of people that are on their existing APs, versus maybe new representation, some voices that they don't necessarily typically hear from, and tried to strike a balance between that.

While I have the mic, two things. I'm happy to come back and kind of remind the council with regard to why the program in the Gulf of Mexico was struck down by the courts, and one provision is currently in existence in the South Atlantic, and that is the economic questions that you are still collecting, and one provision was never implemented in the South Atlantic, and that was the vessel monitoring system requirement.

Then, in terms of the Science Center's rationale and reasoning for kind of what Clay just said, I'm happy to revisit that as well, and we did put that in our December presentation to this council, and so I know there's at least one new council member since then, but we can go over that again in June. My recommendation is we should move forward more quickly, and I would love to see an AP at least selected in June, so that we could have them providing input to us later in the year.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. So we can talk more about that later, in Full Council stuff.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I think, if you can settle the structure in Full Council, and I think we've got some good guidance of where it might go, and, if you guys could, you know, sign-off on that, and, essentially, it can be put in the report, and you can look at it and say, yes, we think that's the group of people to go after, and then we could be prepared to set this up and have you appoint folks in June.

DR. BELCHER: All right. Any further discussion at this point on the SEFHIER and the stand-up AP? Okay. Seeing none, what I'm going to represent is we break for Congressman Carter to come up and address the group, and then we'll talk more about the limited access after his address.

REPRESENTATIVE CARTER: Thank you for being here. Welcome to the 1st Congressional District of Georgia. The 1st Congressional District of Georgia, of course, encompasses the entire coast of Georgia, and we're very proud. It happens to be my home, and it's where I've lived all

my life, and where I intend to live the rest of my life, and it's, obviously, an honor to serve in Congress, but you can imagine it's a special honor when you represent the area in which you grew up in, but I do want to thank you all for being here, and I want to tell you a little bit about the 1st District.

Obviously, the entire coast of Georgia is over a hundred miles of pristine coastline, and we're proud of that, and we're very protective of it, as you can imagine, and we also have two major seaports, the Port of Savannah and the Port of Brunswick. The Port of Savannah is the number-three container port in the country, and the fastest growing container port in the country. Here we go, and this is a great picture. I want you all to see this. The Port of Brunswick is the number two roll-on and roll-off port in the country, and we're very proud of that as well. We have a strong ag presence in our district, a strong military presence, and it's just a great district. I tell people all the time that there are 435 districts in the United States, and I get to represent the very best one, and I truly believe that.

I want to tell you about the picture, okay, and this was actually a club record red snapper that I caught. Unfortunately, I am not a member of that club, and so the captain of the boat is a member, and he got the credit for it in the record book, but I did get an asterisk, and so I am very proud of that, but it is a very important part of our culture here, if you will.

I know some of my fondest memories, growing up, are going fishing my dad, and now I grew up in the Savannah area, and I grew up actually right across the river from South Carolina, and, to be quite honest with you, when we went fishing, we went to Hilton Head. We went to Lemon Island, and Chechessee, and we fished all in that area, and so that was where I grew up fishing, but I can understand why we have limits now, because, back when I was going fishing back then, I'm telling you that, if we didn't catch in triple figures, we didn't have a good day, but it has changed a lot.

I want to thank you for the work that you're doing, and I know that this is not easy. These are difficult decisions, and I know that you want to make the right decisions, and I appreciate that. This is important, and it's important for a number of different reasons, not the least of which is that we've got to manage our environment, and we've got to manage our fisheries, and make sure that they're there for the future generations. I want my children, and my grandchildren, to have the same experiences that I had, and have the same memories that I had, that I have now, and so that's very important.

On another note, I'm headed to Washington right now, on my way to the airport, and we're in tonight. We've got our first vote series tonight, and we'll be going through Friday, as you know, and we've got to have six appropriation bills done by Friday night at midnight, or else those parts of the government will shut down, and I've very confident that we're going to be able to get that done this week, as I understand the negotiations have gone well, and we've been able to agree with the Senate on those six bills, and so I think we'll get that done.

The next deadline that comes up is March 22, and then we've got to get those other six bills done, and that's going to be a heavy lift. Those six bills account for about 70 percent of the spending in the appropriations, and they're the more difficult ones, as you would imagine, but I do think we have made progress here, and progress in getting these six bills done this week, and I'm very confident that we'll get them done, as I say, and I hope that we will get the others done on March 22.

We've got State of the Union on Thursday night, and the President will be at the Capitol, and we'll hear from him, hear what his plans are. There are lots of challenges in our country right now, as you all know, and I know that you keep up with what's going on, and there are lots of challenges in the world, and we certainly understand that, and we certainly are taking them very seriously in trying to get our work done.

Again, I want to thank you for being here, and I welcome your input, and I want to ask you, and I want to solicit your input. It's important for us to know, in Congress, what your needs are and how we can help you. I know that you're working under rules, and guidelines, that you have to follow, and some that need to be updated, and that's one thing that I don't think that we do a good enough job of in Congress, is updating some of our statutory laws, and that's very important, but, again, thank you for being here, and thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak, and thank you for putting the picture up there. I've very proud of that, and I'm just happy to know that you all are going to lift the limits on red snapper this week, and so thank you.

Any questions, or any comments? Seriously, and I welcome your comments, and tell me what we can do in Congress to help you. Listen, and I get it, and I know. I've served at different levels, and I was a mayor at one time, in another life, and I've been in the state legislature, and now I have this honor and privilege, and so I welcome everyone's comments, again, and I look forward to hearing from you. Yes, sir.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I'm John Carmichael, the Executive Director, and I think you were here this morning for some of our discussion, and one thing we can always use is, you know, in this whole system of Magnuson, is support for the data we need to manage these fisheries. This is a science-based system, that is intended to be built on, you know, scientific analyses, and good data, and we often struggle, in this region in particular, and I think, as you've heard this morning, with the resources that are there for the agency to collect the data that's necessary.

REPRESENTATIVE CARTER: Right.

MR. CARTER: So that's something we always bring up when the opportunity arises, and so thank you.

REPRESENTATIVE CARTER: I know you find it hard to believe, but, everyone we talk to, it's the same story, that we need more money. I do get it though, and I do understand, and I appreciate it being a science-based technology.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Congressman, for your time.

REPRESENTATIVE CARTER: Thank you, all. I appreciate it, and thank you, all, for being here. By the way, I hope to get off of this soon. I had ankle surgery, and the good news is my doctor tells me, after this is over with, that I'll be six-foot, and so I'm excited about that. The bad news is I start physical therapy next week, and my wife is a physical therapist, and she is really mean, and so I'm not looking forward to this at all, but thank you, all, very much.

DR. BELCHER: All right, and so, continuing on, now for some guidance for staff relative to the for-hire limited access amendment and how we would like to see that potentially proceed, and who would like to start? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Just a brief comment here, and one of the things that's been mentioned, and discussed, is maybe, as we look into limited access, would it be an idea to start with a moratorium, before we develop like a more comprehensive limited-access program?

DR. BELCHER: I'm going to ask for, in the sake of time, that we not get too much into detail right now, as much as what do we want staff to do, so that we can get on track with discussions more so, and so folks weighing-in, and, obviously, we have Amendment 47 as a strawman, or if we want to call it that, or at least a starting point. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Can someone remind me -- The three APs that are related to this, I believe they all came back, from their last meetings, saying that they wanted us to look at some form --

DR. BELCHER: Was it Dolphin Wahoo, Coastal Migratory, and Snapper Grouper?

MR. HADLEY: So Snapper Grouper and Coastal Migratory, or, well, Mackerel Cobia both discussed it, but Dolphin Wahoo just hasn't discussed it yet, and so that's something that we could bring before them.

DR. BELCHER: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, to that point, I know that, you know, there's not necessarily agreement amongst us on whether or not, you know, we really are going to move forward with this, but I do think that we need to move forward enough to acknowledge to those APs that we've heard their request, and so whether that's a scooping, or going into a little more detail at another meeting, but, you know, I have a hard time having the APs tell us they want something and then to sort of not go into in-depth discussion and killing it right now.

DR. BELCHER: Tom and then Spud.

MR. ROLLER: I'm going to go back to your comment, Carolyn, regarding Amendment 47, and I'm going to say I think that's a good place to start. I personally believe -- We put a ton of work into that in the past, and I think that's a great place to start. It will need to be updated, and I think that that's something that we could look at, is like what sort of elements from that could be used, as well as what perhaps the APs think could be changed.

DR. BELCHER: Spud and then Jessica.

MR. WOODWARD: I was going to suggest that the first thing we do is take the purpose and need of Amendment 47 and see if it's still relevant or not, and does it need to be modified, and, you know, what are we trying to fix by doing this, and, to me, we always depend on the purpose and need to guide us for everything that comes out of it, and so, to me, that's the first step, is pull that back out and look at it, and is it relevant, or is it appropriate, or does it need to be changed.

DR. BELCHER: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud was somewhat going where I was going, because I really want to see this data, and I heard, yesterday from Andy, that maybe that data would be ready as early as June, and so I wouldn't want to scope this document until we have that data in there, and we can see more of the time series, and are the permits going up, are they going down, or are some of them going up and some of them going down, and I don't think that we should scope until we have that information in more fleshed-out materials, whether we figure those things out today or at the next meeting, but I want that permit information in there before we scope.

DR. BELCHER: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Not to get too much into details, because I don't recall everything in Amendment 47, but, obviously, I'm interested, in the scoping process, qualification criteria, transferability provisions, and then we've talked a lot about kind of new entrants, or, you know, a greenhorn program, and so how do we handle that, because that's often a challenge when you limit entry, or limit access, into programs. The cost of permits goes up, and so how do we accommodate some of those considerations?

DR. BELCHER: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I wonder if, at the next two -- I know Snapper Grouper and CMP is meeting, at the end of this month, I guess, or the beginning of April, and I'm wondering if there isn't -- Whether they take a stab -- Not take a stab, and I don't want them wordsmithing it, but somehow address the need of this, because they've asked for it, but I don't believe they had a super long, in-depth discussion, and this is not to get them to craft what we would do, but more like expound on why you think that this is necessary, and a tool for doing that -- I wonder if it wouldn't be some sort of take-off on a fishery performance report, and so, instead of saying, you know, tell us what's happening in dolphin wahoo, could we say like -- To spend some time talking about what's happening in the for-hire industry, because even the commercial guys, and the private rec guys, know what's going on, and so that just may be a way for us to get a little more information about what the real need behind this might be. That's just a thought.

DR. BELCHER: Other thoughts? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I brought this up yesterday, but I would like to know -- To learn a little bit more about options for a moratorium too, and, I mean, we talked about geographically-specific, and there's temporary, and there is -- You know, I think maybe something that could educate us more about our options for moratoria, because, you know, it concerns me to just do it across-the-board, and then you may have some areas that are extremely disadvantaged, when they shouldn't be, you know, and so, I think the more we know about those tools in the toolbox, the more we'll be able to craft decision that are innovative.

DR. BELCHER: Other comments? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I really like Spud's comments there, and I think they're really on-point, because at least how I see this potential action is I think we have, and I've said this multiple times, is we have an opportunity here to do something very different, right, because I look at the problems with many of the other permits, things that we're dealing with here, things that I deal with in my state,

and I would like to get past that, so we have something that's more innovative, more useful, and better for the industry long-term.

DR. BELCHER: Further comments? John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: It sounds like it's a yes on a decision document for June, and we've got a fair number of topics to look at. I think one other thing, going to what Andy said, and I think that Spud had brought up too, is, you know, I think maybe having a list of the various details that you're going to have to work out, and it would help you see the scope of work that lies ahead. You know, what's the qualification criteria, what's the transferability provisions, how are you going to deal with new entrants and bringing people have in, and we have to consider EEJ, because that's mandated from the agency, and I think you're also going to have to consider climate and governance shift, because you're going to increasingly see stocks coming into the Mid-Atlantic, and there may be others, and I think the IPT should dive into this pretty good, and make sure we have a good idea of all the many questions that are going to have be addressed when you throw out something like limited entry.

DR. BELCHER: Additional thoughts? Amy.

MS. DUKES: More of a question, and I know, during the December council meeting, there was a vote to do the control date, and is that still set in stone, or does that have the ability to be altered through time?

DR. BELCHER: Myra or Andy?

MS. BROUWER: We requested that NMFS go ahead and, I guess, implement -- I'm not sure what the word is, and not implement, but issue this control date, and so that is in the process right now, and the comments are through March 11, I believe, and so the council can always change a control date, but this one is still in progress.

DR. BELCHER: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: To that point, I think we'll benefit from the comments that we're receiving on that, right, and we can bring those back to the council, once the comment period wraps up, and there's actually now going to be two control dates for the fishery, one for 2016 and then this more recent one, and those may be used by the council, and you're not obligated to use them, right, but we're essentially giving notice to fishermen that limited access may occur after those control dates.

DR. BELCHER: Further discussion or guidance for staff on this topic? Okay. Myra and John H., do you all feel like you have enough to move forward? Okay. All right. The next item is moving into the Mackerel Cobia Committee. I'm going to go ahead and say that we take five minutes to transition, and we will come in with Chairman Roller.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on March 5, 2024.)

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Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
April 22, 2024

Mon., March 4, 2024 SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Council Session I

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Mon., March 4,
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Clay Porch

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Kristin Foss

Tue., March 5, 2024 SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Full Council Session 1

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Tue., March 5,
2024 SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Full Council Session 1 **COUNCIL STAFF**

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Clay Porch
Scott Pearce
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Attendee Report: SAFMC March 2024 Council Meeting (3/4/24)

Report Generated:

03/04/2024 05:39 PM EST

Webinar ID

785-631-531

Actual Start Date/Time

03/04/2024 12:57 PM EST

Duration

4 hours 27 minutes

Registered

118

Attended

86

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Attendee Report: SAFMC March 2024 Council Meeting (3/5/24)

Report Generated:

03/05/2024 05:56 PM EST

Webinar ID	Actual Start Date/Time	Duration	# Registered	# Attended
785-631-531	03/05/2024 08:00 AM EST	9 hours 40 minutes	156	116

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Attendee Report: SAFMC March 2024 Council Meeting (3/6/24)

Report Generated:

03/06/2024 05:37 PM EST

Webinar ID

785-631-531

Actual Start Date/Time

03/06/2024 07:59 AM EST

Duration

9 hours 24 minutes

Registered

175

Attended

123

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Attendee Report: SAFMC March 2024 Council Meeting (3/7/24)

Report Generated:

03/07/2024 07:25 PM EST

Webinar ID	Actual Start Date/Time	Duration	# Registered	# Attended
785-631-531	03/07/2024 07:56 AM EST	9 hours 9 minutes	199	124

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Attendee Report: SAFMC March 2024 Council Meeting (3/4/24 - 3/8/24)

Report Generated:

03/11/2024 08:02 AM EDT

Webinar ID

785-631-531

Actual Start Date/Time

03/08/2024 07:57 AM EST

Duration

2 hours 28 minutes

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200

Attended

79

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Not applicable for staff

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