

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

COUNCIL SESSION I

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

March 3-4, 2025

Council Members

Trish Murphey, Chair
Jessica McCawley, Vice Chair
Dr. Carolyn Belcher
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Gary Borland
Tim Griner
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Dr. Julie Neer
Ashley Oliver
Emily Ott
Dr. Mike Schmidtke
Rachael Silvas
Nicholas Smillie
Suzanna Thomas
Christina Wiegand
Meg Withers

Attendees and Invited Participants

Monica Smit-Brunello
Dr. Marcel Reichert
Sonny Gwin
Dr. John Walter
Kristen Foss
Scott Pearce
Dominique Lazarre
Dr. Michelle Masi
Joe Spraggins

Rick DeVictor
Kathy Knowlton
Nikhil Mehta
Shepherd Grimes
Lara Klibansky
Bob Zales II
Julia Beaty
Beth Dieveney

Observers and Participants

Other observers and participants attached.

The Council Session I of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Villas by the Sea, Jekyll Island, Georgia, on Monday, March 3, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Trish Murphey.

MS. MURPHEY: All right, everybody. I will go ahead and call the Full Council Session I to order. First of all, I would like to do a couple of introductions. We've got Sonny Gwin here from our Mid-Atlantic Council. Then we have General Joe Spraggins from the Gulf Council, and so welcome, and so everybody say hi to our liaisons.

We'll go ahead and do an Adoption of the Agenda. Has anybody got any changes to the agenda they would like to make? Any objections to what we have? I think the only thing that we do have is that our Recreational Reform Initiative, and Julia -- Because she had flight problems, she will be doing it online, and so I think that's the only change, at least for this afternoon, and so okay.

Then I would like to go ahead and approve the minutes. Do we have any substantial changes to our minutes? If you've got any like editorial stuff, misspellings, just get to staff, but do we have any substantial changes to our minutes? Do I have any objection to our minutes? All right, and so the minutes are approved. Those are our December 2024 minutes.

Something I thought we could try new with motions, and so this is the grand experiment. We are -- I thought if folks could, when they make a motion, and that motion gets seconded, if that motion maker could kind of speak to it a little bit, and that would help clarify the record, and it also may help focus our discussion, and so if anybody -- If you folks don't mind doing that, that would really be great, I think especially for the record, and so that's it. At this point, we're going to move to our litigation brief with Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Yes, and I can give you a brief brief. How's that? A short brief. There are primarily three cases, and so I'll give you some updates. The ongoing red snapper case involving Slash Creek Water Works, and recall that's one in which the plaintiffs allege that the Fisheries Service violated several different laws, because they failed to establish an annual catch limit for red snapper that accounts for landings and discards, and overfishing continues to occur, because of excessive discard mortality in the recreational sector, and this creates an illegal de facto reallocation from the commercial sector to the recreational sector.

So, right after last December's meeting, the court scheduled oral argument for the case, which was subsequently held on January 8 in D.C. I was going to go, and then didn't, because the weather turned into a very big mess, but what the court did was, a few days later, on January 31, issued an order that granted the Fisheries Service's motion for summary judgment on the merits, and I believe Kelly sent that case, the court's opinion, around to you all.

The court held that an annual catch limit did not have to include dead discards, that the challenged rules did not create a de facto reallocation because of the amount of discarded fish by the recreational sector, and the court also concluded that, to the extent the regulations did allocate fishing privileges, or harvest restriction, they did so in a manner that was fair and equitable and reasonably calculated to promote conservation. On February 20, the plaintiffs filed a notice of appeal, and so that case will now continue on and go up to the Appellate Court in D.C.

Recall there was a snowy grouper case involving -- The first named plaintiff is North Carolina Fisheries Association, and they challenged Amendment 51 and all the rules you put in for snowy grouper, and, because there were similar arguments made by the plaintiffs in that case and the ones in the red snapper case, the parties in the snowy grouper case agreed to just stay the litigation, in terms of don't brief the arguments until the court ruled in the red snapper case that I just told you about. Once the court ruled on January 31 in the red snapper case, the snowy grouper plaintiffs chose to dismiss their case, and so that case is now gone.

The other case I'll just briefly mention that -- Recall we have a settlement agreement in what I call the Tilman Gray case, doing business as Avon Seafood. That's where we entered a settlement agreement on August 22, 2024, and that has resulted in the Amendment 59, the secretarial amendment to end overfishing of red snapper, and so that continues on, in the sense that the service now has to submit a final rule for publication to the Federal Register by June 6 to stop the overfishing of red snapper. I know you know about the public hearing that goes on on Wednesday of this week for that amendment.

The attorney fees were just paid, in the amount of \$18,000, and so that case is sort of closed, but sort of open, right, because we have the settlement agreement, and the Fisheries Service has to submit the rule to the Federal Register by June 6, and so those are the three cases that the council has been most involved in.

There are still the ongoing cases in which the plaintiffs have raised claims, kind of nationwide, against various councils and the Fisheries Service. They have raised claims that the fishery management council structure, under the Magnuson Act, is constitutionally suspect, because, in their view, the council members must be appointed according to certain procedures under the U.S. Constitution. Some courts have ruled one way, and some courts have ruled the other way, and, at the present time, there's no changes in council operations or procedures that are required, and those cases are ongoing, and, you know, maybe we'll get a definitive result in 2025, and so that's the end of my litigation report.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Monica. Does anybody have any questions for Monica? Tim.

MR. GRINER: Monica, could you reread, or restate, the language in the first case, the red snapper case, the language about the discards again? The whole thing is kind of confusing to me, the way that it's -- The way that the summary judgment came down.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: So maybe it's confusing because of this, and so in -- The defendants argued that the plaintiffs didn't have standing to bring the case, that the case was moot, because the regulations -- Remember, they were temporary rules, both the 2023 temporary rule and then the 2024 interim rule to reduce overfishing. Those are temporary, in the sense that they only lasted for a certain point in time, and so the judge said, no, defendants, you're wrong, and the plaintiffs have standing to bring the case, and those rules, for various legal reasons, are not what we call moot.

They're a controversy that that the judge decided he could decide, and so what -- He found for the defendants though, on the merits of the arguments, and so he held that an annual catch limit did not have to include dead discards and that the challenged rules, the 2023 rule and then the 2024

interim rule, did not create a de facto reallocation because of the amount of discarded fish by the recreational sector, and so he found for the defendants in in those arguments.

Then he also said, even if they did, even if those regulations did allocate, in some fashion, fishing privileges, or harvest restrictions, they did so in a manner consistent with National Standard 4, in that they were fair and equitable, and they're reasonably calculated to promote conservation, and so, in essence, the defendants won that case on all the merits that we were arguing about, but then they've appealed it now to the District of Columbia Appellate Court.

MR. GRINER: I guess the confusion for me, Monica, is the part where he broke out the merits that dead discards do not have to be a part of the ACL. Does that -- I guess I don't understand. They don't have to be a part of the ACL, but they have to be a part of the development of the ACL. Is that correct?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Well, yes, in effect. I mean, he relied on another case that was -- It's called the AP Bell case, out of the Gulf, that said -- Where the judge in that case said, okay, in the stock assessment process, you did account for discarded fish. It's just that those discards don't have to be part of the annual catch limit, in terms of the numbers in the annual catch limit, and so, because they were accounted for in the stock assessment process, in that they were accounted for in setting, for example, the overfishing limit, and that sort of thing, and then you reduce to the ABC, and then you reduce to the ACL, and he said that those discarded fish -- You didn't have to have a specific ACL directed at discards only.

MR. GRINER: Okay, but it's been appealed, correct?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Yes.

MR. GRINER: Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Monica. We'll go ahead and move to our Law Enforcement Advisory Panel report from Captain Pearce.

CAPTAIN PEARCE: Thank you for allowing me to be here today to provide this report, and so we'll start off with -- During your closed session discussion on background checks for the advisory panel members, we got -- We discussed in-depth. and I read the report in-depth, from the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel meeting on law enforcement agencies abilities to provide fisheries background checks.

The things we talked about were the current practices for the Gulf of Mexico, the current capabilities that the state agencies have to provide fisheries background checks, as well as, you know, NOAA's reference to NOAA's process they use. We also discussed the recommendation that was provided by the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel, and, if you would like, I can read through that more in-depth. I think we had that discussion pretty much in full, and so just I'll leave that up to you all.

MS. MURPHEY: I think you can move on to the next topic.

CAPTAIN PEARCE: Okay. The next topic of discussion was the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. Since 2010, the council has offered the award fourteen times to officers or teams who stood out in their effort to enforce fisheries laws in the South Atlantic region. Members of the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel, representing six agencies submit -- I'm sorry, and NOAA OLE and the U.S. Coast Guard as well, and they submit nominees and conduct voting, via email, to coordinating staff. Up to three nominees are thus selected for the council to consider annually at its June meeting.

The award was presented at the September council meeting in Charleston in December 2024. The council discussed the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year selection process and provided the following suggestions for the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel to consider, considering changing the name of the award to the Law Enforcement Award of Excellence, and do not require that it be awarded annually, and explore creating a rubric to select among nominees.

The following comments are from the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel meeting, and they'll go as follows, and so there have been challenges in generating nominees over the years. However, the award, the annual award, should remain as it is, was the recommendation. I recommend that agencies put more effort into obtaining the nominees, so that you all have more to choose from.

State agencies have internal processes to recognize officers and some of the agencies -- That statement basically references that, in some cases, the agencies maybe have not put forward a nominee, because they've been recognizing internally within the agency, but we all agreed that this was a great way to acknowledge good performance and that we would like to see it stay in as an annual award.

Staff should send an email notification to the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel to solicit nominations earlier in the year. The Law Enforcement Advisory Panel suggested that solicitations be sent out in January and due back to staff to coordinate the voting process by the end of March. This would allow agencies more time to identify nominees. Agencies could explore incorporating selection of nominees for the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award into their personal mid-year reviews, which would be -- It would essentially try to be -- I guess that would be the agencies, if they are looking at potential award nominations, they could do that ahead of time, before the actual request comes out, and that's -- That will conclude that report. Any questions?

MS. MURPHEY: Anybody have any questions for Captain Pearce? All right. Thank you, Captain. All right. I think now we will be hearing from our council liaisons. General, would you like to share your Gulf of Mexico report?

GENERAL SPRAGGINS: Well, thank you very much, and, on behalf of our Executive Director, Carrie Simmons, and our Chairman, J.D. Dugas, I thank you for letting me have the opportunity to come to your meeting. I'm not sure if we're the Gulf of Mexico Management Council, the Gulf of America Management Council, or the Gulf Council. I don't know, and we'll figure it out one day soon, but, on behalf of that, that's where we're at.

The Gulf Council met in New Orleans, Louisiana, on January 27 through the 30, and the following is a little bit about our background of what we talked about. Our coastal migratory pelagics, you know, we had some look at that, and, basically, our Spanish mackerel, we looked at it and figured

out that it's not overfished. We're going to look at it and just keep an eye on it, the catch limits and everything, and see what we can do. I don't think we have any issues with it at this time.

Our king mackerel, we are having some issues with it, and so we're looking at it and trying to find out what we want to do, and is it something to do with climate, and what is causing it, and we don't know what's causing it, but they're not in the same spot they used to be all the time, and so we don't know where they're at. I think we're all finding them, but it's just a matter of how much -- Are they losing the number of them or not, and so we're looking into that too.

Our deepwater grouper, our stock assessment determined that the yellowedge grouper is not overfished, and so the others are not overfished either, and so we're looking at it, and we're just basically going over, and we asked them to basically look at each one of them with the SSC, to give us any recommendations that they have.

Our shallow-water grouper, the council reviewed a framework action that revised catch limits and recreational season for shallow-water grouper in the near-term, starting in 2026, and the council will continue to work on this document during that time, and so we're looking at it as to figure out the actual fishery on it.

Our lane snapper, lane snapper harvest have exceeded the annual limits the last three years, and so we're looking at what we need to do with it, and how do we how do we manage that, and we've asked the NOAA Southeast Fisheries Science Center to conduct an interim analysis of lane snapper and give us some ideas of what we need to do with the catch limits. That's basically for that. Any questions on that part, and then I'll go to the next?

MS. MURPHEY: Any questions for the General?

GENERAL SPRAGGINS: All right. Our commercial individual fishing quota, IFQ, we did address it, and, basically we're just trying to -- The council selected a preferred alternative that will require a commercial reef fish permit to be obtained and maintain an IFQ shareholder account and allow one year for shareholders to dives before shares are reclaimed, if they do not meet requirements for participation, and the council plans to take final action on that in June, and so it's something we've been looking at, as to our quotas and what we can do with it. Any questions? If not, I'll keep moving forward.

Red snapper accountability, I think you do this a little different than what we do in the Gulf Council. In the Gulf Council, we have -- Each individual state has a limit, and we cannot exceed that limit. If we do, we have to pay it back, and now we're looking at being able to take the Gulf-wide limit and decide that, if we don't exceed the ACL, then we could vote between the council to not have to have a payback as long as we didn't exceed the ACL, and I think it's something that you all have already worked out, and maybe with some other fisheries and all, and we're trying to do something very similar to that.

Our gag recreational landings, somehow or another, we overfished it. You know, we're trying to look at it. We overfished by about 100,000 pounds last year, and so it's going to reduce the amount this year that's allowable, and I know that Jessica is very involved in that, and so we're working on that very hard, to be able to find out what we can do to make it work.

Our Shrimp, the council continued to meet with the framework. You know, we were talking about our logbooks and how the 3G is no longer in effect, and so how can we do something about it, and the council selected a preferred alternative that would implement cellular electronic logbooks, and so hopefully we will be able to get that into operation very soon.

Aquaculture, the NOAA Fisheries staff presented the council with preferred alternatives for draft aquaculture opportunities in Texas and Louisiana, about 6,500 acres there, and so we'll be looking at it.

One thing we're trying to change is anonymous voicemail-based public comment, and that's -- Anyway, basically, the council decided to do a pilot program to where you can just basically call in and leave something on a voicemail. Some people just don't want to stand up in public and talk, and some people don't like to talk on the phone. I guess they get nervous with it, or whatever, and it's something we're going to try. I don't know how it's going to work, and, you know, it might be a fiasco, and it might work all right and so we'll see what happens.

We've got also the vessel identification requirements, the below twenty-five feet and up to sixty-five feet. We're working on it with the Coast Guard, of what to do, and, you know, obviously, the numbers -- The size of the letters go from, I think, six inches to ten inches, once you get over twenty-five feet, and so the idea is we're going to probably look at some kind of hybrid there, to have it to where it may go six to eight to ten, you know, to that point, and move it on up to sixty-five feet, because it is, in some -- A twenty-six-foot boat with ten-inch letters is, you know, sometimes a little bit more than what it needs, and so that's what we're working on.

Headboat agents, we have no funding now to be able to do that, and so we've asked the Science Center to be able to give us what it costs and, you know, what we're going to lose because of that, and so they are working on it on that with us.

Advisory panel appointments, we've pretty much only had a couple of them. We had a Data Collection, and we had a Spiny Lobster, and we had a Coral Advisory Panel, and, out of that, the only one that we decided to bring out, and put any additional -- Or look for any additional, is under the Spiny Lobster, but it works very similar to what you all do, and so our panels are very much the same. I'm here for questions, if you have questions of anything, and, if there's something that I can help you with, I would try to do it to the best of my ability. If not, I will call someone that can help me, but that's pretty quick, but I hope it gets back on time a second or two, but thank you very much.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, General. Anybody have any questions? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thank you, General. I'm very fascinated by this anonymous call-in. If social media, and people being able to be keyboard warriors, with no one knowing their name, is any indication, it won't go well, but I'm curious if -- Is it like a line that is available all the time, or will it be open when comment is being accepted other places for specific actions, or is it a general complaint line?

GENERAL SPRAGGINS: I think what it's going to be is you can send it in ahead of time, so it can be edited, all right, and it would be something that would be edited, in case somebody put some language in there that shouldn't be put out, and, you know, so what it will be is, as you say,

that it's very easy to type, but, you know, without your name on it, and I think it's just something that we would -- If you wanted to -- Say we have a meeting in April, and that, if you wanted to send it in X amount of time before that meeting, that we could be able to look at it, and then, you know, decide whether this is something that is applicable or not and something that should be publicized.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you. Any other questions? Okay. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: You know, I was the liaison at the last meeting, and it was a really interesting conversation, regarding the call-in line, and I think a lot of people have taken that conversation further. I definitely have had that conversation with people in my state agency, about looking at this as a possibility, and so it's really creative way of thinking of getting different voices in the room on some of these tough issues.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tom. I'll go ahead and move on to Sonny. Would you like to give your report?

MR. GWIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council met last year, December 10 through 12, and, at that meeting, we finalized an amendment to modify the species separation requirements for Atlantic surf clam and ocean quahogs and submitted that to the Secretary of Commerce for review.

We reviewed previously adopted recreational measures for summer flounder and scup, with no changes for 2025, and that was also with the Atlantic States Marines Fisheries Commission's Management Board, and we also adopted status quo recreational measures for black sea bass for 2025, and that was also with the Management Board of the Atlantic States Marines Fisheries Commission. We approved a scoping document for a recreational sector separation and data collection amendment. That's the first step, and that's also with the Atlantic States Marines Fisheries Commission's Policy Board.

Let's see, and we set the spiny dogfish acceptable biological catch for 2025 equal to the overfishing limit, the maximum legally possible. We adopted a more flexible -- We also adopted a more flexible minimum mesh requirement for directed butter fishing, and we reviewed the final 2024 EAFM risk assessment with updates and improvements.

We also approved a comprehensive five-year 2025 to 2029 research priorities document. We approved the 2025 implementation plan, reviewed the results of a council-funded project that has developed a hub for river herring and shad run data.

We endorsed recommendations for the Highly Migratory Species Committee regarding the NOAA Fisheries Atlantic HMS proposed rule for electronic reporting. We presented the Rick E. Savage Award for Dewey Hemilright, and so Dewey got an award for being such a good council member, and then we still have more.

We had a meeting in February, and so DOGE would be proud of us. At our February meeting in Annapolis, Maryland, we met virtually. It was a virtual two-day meeting, and, at that meeting, we requested NOAA to establish control dates for federally-permitted recreational for-hire participants in the summer flounder, black sea bass, scup, and bluefish fisheries, and a motion was

made, and it was to move to request National Marine Fisheries Service to establish control dates for rec for-hire fisheries for summer flounder, black sea bass, scup, and bluefish as early as February 11, 2025, and that motion was made by Anna Beckwith and Skip Feller.

There was a little bit of I -- don't know if you want to call it controversy, but I don't think -- According to Mike Pentony in the National Marine Fisheries Service, you can't put a control date until it's in the Federal Register, and I was wondering if you all had a comment on that.

MR. GRIMES: Well, that is the way they do it in the Northeast. We just did a control date for this council, based on it, and it's you can't be retrospective with it, right, and it can't be a date back in time that you set, but, if you set it at a council meeting, saying, today, from henceforth, we're saying, you know, you're on notice for whatever purposes of the control date, and we have done that in the Southeast, repeatedly, and that has been done throughout the country, in other regions, and just not in the Northeast.

The Northeast has always taken the position that the earliest date the control date could be was the date it's published in the Federal Register, which would, obviously, be sometime after the council discussed it at a meeting, but we're having a meeting to talk to them in the Northeast and work out our views on it.

MR. GWIN: Thank you, and that's probably why it's "as early as" in the motion, and, to continue, and let's see. The council reviewed and provided feedback on a range of alternatives for the spiny dogfish account accountability measures framework. The council reviewed and provided feedback on several alternatives to be further explored. They FMP currently requires pound-for-pound paybacks of any ACL overages, as an accountability measure. This framework adjustment will consider if there are some circumstances where modified relaxed payback account accountability may be sufficient, and so we're working on that.

What else? The council had an overview of a new database that compiles literature on the impacts of fishing gear on marine habitats in the U.S. and territories. The fishing gear effects on marine habitat database provides an easy, accessible tool to assist the council, stakeholders, and researchers in evaluating adverse effects on fishing gear.

Then we -- Council staff summarize recent performance on the standardized bycatch reporting methodology, and the Northeast Science Center update, and the update included 2024 survey performance planning for 2025 as well as a contingent contingency plan, and we had a presentation on the LOC-NESS project. Does anybody know what the LOC-NESS is? Have you talked about any of that?

The council had a presentation from Dr. Adam Subhas on the locking ocean carbon in the Northeast shelf and slope. This project aims to advance research into marine carbon dioxide removal approaches, such as ocean alkalinity enhancement, a potential type of mCDR that deacidifies seawater while storing carbon away from the atmosphere.

This project may help mitigate the effect of climate change, and part of this project is they use sodium hydroxide, and they mix it up, and they dump it in the ocean, and I looked up sodium hydroxide and this is sometimes called caustic soda, or lye, is a common ingredient in cleaners and soap, and is harmful to humans, and so this is an experiment to -- What I gathered on this

presentation was it has a lot to do with climate change and --What do you call it when they get climate related, and what's the word I'm looking for? Credits. Climate credits is what this is all about, and it's just an interesting project, and I think it should be looked into a little further.

The SSC membership they congratulations to Dr. Holly Kindsvater and Dr. Yong Chen. They are starting on the new members of the SSC, and we reappointed thirteen existing members, and we have another meeting April 8 in Galloway, New Jersey, and, with that, Madam Chairman, any questions?

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Sonny. Questions? I saw Tim, and then Amy.

MR. GRINER: Yes, and thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for that, Sonny. Sonny, I did have one question, and I think -- If I remember right, it was on the spiny dogfish, and so did that spiny dogfish quota allowed the processor to stay to meet his needs?

MR. GWIN: Yes and no. As of now, he's -- The last I talked to him, he said that he's on the fence, that this is going to be -- This year is going to be a hit and miss. At the end of the year, he'll know, but it's like barely enough to keep that business going, barely.

MR. GRINER: So there were no extra measures taken to try to --

MR. GWIN: Not yet.

MR. GRINER: Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy, do you have a question?

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Sonny. I appreciate that detailed report. Going back to the endorsement of the HMS electronic reporting, did you guys have any recommendations for changes to their preferred alternatives, or was it actually that you endorse everything that they had selected as their preferreds?

MR. GWIN: There was some changes. They were concerned with the open-access permit, the harpoon permit, and the -- There's one other one in there. The open-access swordfish permit. The committee sent a letter to them with that respect.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you. Any other questions for Sonny? All right. Thank you very much, Sonny. Now we're going to turn to the state agency reports, and I figured we'll start to the south and move to the north this time. I think the north started last time, and so we'll let the south start this time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you for that, Madam Chair. I have a couple slides I wanted to present. These slides were presented at our commission meeting that was last week, and so you guys had asked for continuous updates on the FWC EFP project, and so this slide just shows that we have three unique projects. You can see the duration, and these are the same goals that we showed you last time for the EFP projects.

The projects happen in quarters, and so you can see there where we are in Quarter 3 right now. You can see the number of applications that are received in each quarter, and the projects dictate that we select 410 applicants, and so remember that two of these are a lottery, where people apply through the Go Outdoors Florida licensing system, and then one of them is the study fleet. We're selecting five private vessels and five for-hire vessels, and that's a different type of application process. They fill out an application on our website. I think that's about all I want to say on that slide.

This is indicating the types of data that's collected as part of this project, and so much data, species and discard information, and we're also testing that fifteen-fish snapper grouper aggregate bag limit, and so information on that. We get information about people's location and effort, and we're getting biological data, and so think things like DNA, otoliths, fishing behavior, and angler satisfaction, and then we are listing out there the validation methods, which we're using a reporting app, phone app, dockside intercepts, camera systems, and some of the trips have at-sea observers onboard.

This is very preliminary information, and we just wanted to give us some statistics about the second quarter, which was November through January, and you can see how many fleet trips occurred, and then the number of dockside intercepts, the number of red snapper that were harvested, and how many of those were sampled, and so some of the study fleet has -- We have to meet all of those boats, and sample all of those catches.

The other two EFPs, the lotteries, we just select some, and so we're not meeting all of those, and we're not sampling 100 percent of all of those catches, and so you can see, in that photo there, if you're in the study fleet, you get that flag that you fly on your vessel to indicate to law enforcement, and others, that you're on a study fleet trip.

Most of the people are very excited when they come back, and they want to take a picture with everybody that was onboard, with the all of their snapper and their flag, and, if you can't tell, there's also -- Our FTC sampler is in that photo as well.

We're still analyzing all the information that is coming in, especially things like angler satisfaction, and so just -- This was something we showed to the commission last week. We're getting a lot of positive feedback, a lot, and there's tons of interest in the project. In fact, lots more people applying than we have seats for, and anglers have been saying for years, every time that we do public workshops, that the council does public workshops, that they want to provide their data directly to, in this case, FWC, but the state agency, and so that's why we developed this phone app for them to do that.

We're testing out this app, and, if it goes well, and so we're kind of working the bugs out with this smaller universe of folks, but we also have a budget project moving through the state legislature that, if funded, we would try to expand this phone app to all State Reef Fish Survey anglers on both coasts, and so not just the Atlantic, but on the Gulf as well, but that budget, the legislative budget, session just started this week, and so it has a long way to go, and so more to come.

This graphic is showing that -- This is for the study fleet in particular, where they are testing out the fifteen-fish aggregate, and, if they limit out first on red snapper, they have to stop fishing,

whether they reach the fifteen-fish aggregate or the snapper grouper bag limit, and they have to stop bottom fishing, whichever one they get to first.

This is indicating that they are reaching the red snapper aggregate -- They are reaching the red snapper limit before they're getting to the fifteen-fish aggregate limit, and so you can see how many fish other than red snapper are being kept, and no one is really getting to that fifteen-fish aggregate, because there's so many red snapper out there that they're bringing the red snapper onboard first. Even though they are trying to catch other species, they're not making it to that fifteen-fish aggregate.

Basically, part of our angler satisfaction surveys are asking people about the current management system, and also about the proposed closures and the secretarial amendment, and those surveys indicate that anglers prefer the measures that are in the exempted fishing permit over any type of closure.

I think that's my last slide, and just one more thing from our December 2024 FWC commission meeting, and our commission took a federal consistency action on recreational black and gag grouper. This was to go consistent with the action that the council took when we were modifying that bag and vessel limit, and so that was approved in December.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jessica. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: A quick question about the EFPs. How many for-hire vessels did you say are permitted in that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: So we allow five per quarter for the study fleet, but, also, if you're drawn in the lottery as an angler, you can choose to go out on a for-hire vessel, or a headboat, you know, and so you don't have to have your own vessel. You can go out on somebody else's vessel, if you are drawn for that, and so they all get multiple of these fleet trips, and so they would just have to find someone that's willing to take them out, or pay for a spot on a headboat, to use their selection.

MR. ROLLER: So, on the for-hire boats, as part of the fleet that were selected, have you taken any like economic data from them? Are they charging more for those trips?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that we are getting some of that, because we're also doing some like semi-structured interviews on some of those study fleet trips as well. We can also see, online, if people are charging something special for those trips. It does appear that they are charging additional amounts, but it kind of varies. There's no like standard, and there's nothing required in the EFP that like you can't charge above this amount, or you can't charge at all, and there's nothing special like that in the EFP.

MR. ROLLER: Okay, and thank you for that clarification, just because I was hearing that participating for-hire boats were charging more for those trips, which I found was very interesting. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you. We've got Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Jessica, what is the limit on red snapper, or red snapper grouper, before they have to stop?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so it's a vessel limit, I believe. I'm looking at Kristin. It's thirty-six red snapper, and that's just for the study fleet, and so, if the vessel reaches that, then everybody onboard has to stop bottom fishing. They can fish for other things. If you are just drawn in the lottery as an individual angler, it's three red snapper in those lottery trips, and then, depending on which particular fleet you're in, it dictates how many trips you can go out within the quarter, and so you could get that limit, you know, like the thirty-six vessel limit, like three times.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you. Any more questions? Okay. We'll move on to Georgia.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Some highlights, and I'm going to save the big one for last, but, starting out with the winter temperature drop that we had in January, we did not have any documented cold kills, or stuns, relative to speckled seatrout, red drum, or shrimp, but we did hear of a few snook that had problems in some of our lagoonal systems, but, relative to shrimp, we were paying attention to that, just to see if there was a potential for us to close state waters.

We about made the day threshold for the number of days below nine degrees C, and it was just a matter of whether you were looking at inshore temperatures or offshore temps. The offshore temps stayed a little bit higher, and were kind of gimbling right around that threshold, but we rebounded relatively quickly, and then we had a -- Our boat actually spent the majority of its time sampling after the cold event. Normally, we're about halfway through by the mid-month, but they actually had a number of stations that were being done toward the end of the month, and our CPUE was down, but it wasn't down significantly enough to make that threshold.

We had two offshore deployments, and so some more artificial reef materials went out, one sailboat and a barge tug, I believe, was the other one that went out, and then the bigger piece of news, for us, and I'll start with the caveat that this was not a department-driven legislative bill that is being drafted. This was actually done with CCA backing, and their approach to the legislation with Georgia this year, but we have a House bill, and that's House Bill 443, that was put through to the committee last week, which is actually establishing a landing permit for coastal migratory and snapper grouper species that are currently in Georgia code, and so it's not all the species of snapper grouper.

Its's ones that have been highlighted from years back, and so I think it's red pogy, red snapper, gag, both of the mackerels are on there, and cobia is kind one of those ones that we're looking at as well, even though that's not necessarily a council species right now off of Georgia, but it establishes an endorsement of ten-dollars to have a permit to land those species back in the state, and out-of-state is twenty-dollars.

It passed through committee, which means it goes to the floor in the House of Representatives. If it passes there, it will go on to the Senate, and they'll vote from there, but, again, this was something that was put through to the legislators by CCA. The department did not draft this bill going forward, and so we're in support. We're giving as much, you know, information to the legislation as they need to make the decision, but it was not started by us, and that's pretty much all I have.

We'll be doing the low country dinner for you all again this year, at the office, and so that will be tomorrow night, and I guess we'll talk more particulars later, but thirty-five dollars with Kelly, and so that's pretty much all I've got for Georgia.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Carolyn. Any questions for Carolyn? All right. Amy for South Carolina.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair. Since she ended with the big one, I'm going to start with the big one. We had Senator Goldfinch introduce a bill, and it's S-219. In essence, it will exempt the state of South Carolina from federal acts, and the bill will establish that the lawful catch limits and minimum size limits for all species under the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan, and as published in our current 2024-2025 rules and regulations guide, or the federal limits, whatever is larger, higher, and so, basically it allows that you can harvest those species, with those minimum size limits, from state waters year-round. There will be no closed seasons for species.

This bill was introduced to the Senate Fish Game and Forestry Committee, and it passed favorably, and it is now waiting for being placed on the Senate calendar, and so this will be progressing, and so, again, it's basically anything in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan that has a minimum size limit is fair game in state waters, and there's no season closures, and that will stay in perpetuity until either, one, the federal limit is raised, or it'll just stay at whatever the current bag limit is.

Moving on, we are finishing up the South Carolina state-based stock assessment for red drum. It is completed, and the final report will be available late spring or early summer. Our horseshoe crab season begins this month, and so we'll be monitoring that from both the harvesters and the processors.

We're doing quite a bit of living shoreline restoration. We actually are doing a neat one down at Parris Island, in conjunction with the Office of Veterans Affairs. We did monitor that cold-water event, when we had all of our lovely snow in the south. We also were a little lucky. We didn't have any large-scale events. We did have five official fish kills that were provided to us. However, they were isolated, and primarily in shallow waters and impoundments, and it was mostly spotted seatrout, with a few red drum.

We were monitoring our shrimp survival as well. We had a very slow decline in water temperatures, which really aided in shrimp being able to acclimate, and, again, we didn't hit those thresholds that we needed to hit in order to do any sort of closures.

Cruise season is right around the corner for SERFS data. The Lady Lillian will be starting her coastal trawl survey for her spring cruise on April 21 and her fall cruise on August 4. The Palmetto will start her trap and video index work on the 28th of April. Staff will also be going out on the Savannah, which those cruises start, I believe, in June.

What's really kind of neat about the Lady Lillian is she's going to pull some double duty this year. She's actually going to start going out in the summer. Her first cruise will be on 7/7, and she will be also deploying trap surveys. This will actually help us to accomplish our SERFS set target, and so we're really excited about being able to increase those trap efforts. With that, I will complete my report.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Amy. Anybody have any questions for Amy? Okay. I guess it's my turn for North Carolina. I really don't have a whole lot, but so the division has finalized a five-year timeline for artificial reefs. This will all be funded by the coastal recreational fishing license revenues, and artificial reefs sites have been selected in five sites that go all the way up the coast from Brunswick on up to Hatteras.

We did close coastal waters, and joint waters, to both commercial and recreational spotted seatrout harvest, because of cold stun. This was done Friday, January 24. We had pretty widespread cold stun events. There were significant cold stuns for the fish, as well as we were meeting and exceeding those temperature triggers, and this was in like seven water bodies, in the Alligator River all the way down to Morehead City, and so the northern part of the state down to central state. Again, the intent of this closure is to allow for surviving fish a chance to spawn before the harvest reopens, and the re-harvest should -- It may open around June 15th or so.

Then the last thing is we had to postpone our commission meeting in Kitty Hawk, because of the winter storm, and it's been rescheduled for the 12th and 13th of March, and so we've kind of got an abbreviated meeting, and we'll be making -- The commission will be making final adoption of the false albacore management rule. They'll be selecting the preferred management options for our Oyster FMP, Amendment 5, as well as the Clam FMP, Amendment A, and also making a final adoption of the Speckled Seatrout FMP Amendment 1, and we will also be working on Amendment 5 for southern flounder, and we'll be having scoping meetings scheduled.

I think they start -- If they don't start this week, they start next week, and so this newest amendment for southern flounder is revolving around recreational access, and how can we increase that access, while still sustaining the population, and so that's pretty much it for North Carolina. Any questions for me? All right. I guess next we've got the staff reports. Is that Chip, or John? John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Thank you, Trish. It's always good to highlight things that have been going on that we're not talking about specifically at the meeting here. We start the year, quite often, with a number of outreach events. Best fishing practices has attended the Saltwater Sportsman Seminar Series, which has been really great opportunities to interact with fishermen, a very active and engaged group of fishermen, and to fill them in on our programs, BFP as well as citizen science, and it's been a great place to meet fishermen, and it's been a very good partnership, working with George Poveromo and all those things, that's for sure.

We had planned to attend things like the Georgia Coast Fest, and the South Carolina DNR Days. We are not planning now to travel to Brunswick for the Coast Fest, because of the budget uncertainties that we're facing. We'll talk about some more of that in Full Council, but, as you know, there's a potential end to the continuing resolution next Friday, and then we're still waiting to see what our budget will be like for the year, and so we are just trying to be precautionary, in terms of the expenses that we incur, until we know exactly what the financial outlook will look like for the year, and so one of those things we have to just do the best we can with what we have, but we are, you know, trying to make sure that we don't overextend ourselves here early in the year.

On some other exciting things, the What It Means to Me, a new video episode is posted, and, if you haven't looked at those, do. It really does show you how important these fisheries are to a

number of our constituents. It's just been a great effort on behalf of our staff, and I'm always blown away by the professional job that they do in putting these things together, and so I really appreciate the efforts on those things, and definitely look at them, if you haven't.

You see there's a lot that's been going on with website and digital communications. We continue to use that to reach out to fishermen. There's the -- We've talked before about the archive of council meetings, but it really is a treasure trove, when you're trying to understand what's gone on and how we got to where we are in many places, and we've been continuing to develop the website, to put more information on science and SEDAR, deal with our climate activities, and the seminar series archive, showing you a lot of interesting research that's going on in the region that's directly relevant to what we're doing.

Something we have coming up, you recall, at the last meeting, we talked about the stakeholder meetings, and what we're going to call them. There'll be Lines of Communication: Conversations with the Council, and you see a really awesome logo there to capture this. The staff is working on getting the inaugural ones kicked off, late this year and early next year, and there will certainly be more coming about those, but truly looking forward to interacting with our constituents in sort of a different forum, in a way to really hear from them what's important, and what matters, and what they would like to see the council do, and not just talking about the regulation du jour.

MREP, remember the training program, recently held their workshop for the year. It's been a bit of a difficulty getting that scheduled, canceled because of hurricanes and other things, but we were able to do that a few weeks ago, and, as usual, we had a really successful program, and that tends -- It continues to garner great interest. There's always a long waiting list. There's a lot of people interested in our region of learning more about fisheries management, and it's really great that we are able to help with that. The agency certainly supports that, and we're hoping that this important program is able to continue into the future, because we still have a lot of need out there.

Citizen Science is continuing to promote Release, collect data on Release, working on the annual report of summarizing what's been -- What was collected over the last year. As I said, they're also attending the seminar series with Poveromo, and working on FISHstory, continuing that program of, you know, the historic catches, the historic pictures, and it's really great. They're continuing to scan lots and lots of pictures. They've just really got a lot of information that's coming into that program, and Julia is just tireless in going out there and tracking down pictures.

The other project that's going on is with the SMILE, which is working with divers, which is another group of our constituents that are out there, and they see a lot, and have information, and it's really great to be able to find a way to get those guys tapped into providing information in the council system, and, as always, these are great educational opportunities for folks to learn about the council.

Then there was a -- We participate with ACCSP, a number of different committees that really established standards and guidelines for what's being collected and priorities over the year, and so staff is taking part in that stuff as well, and so quite a bit going on for the first start of the year, and then just, you know, point out ahead what's coming up is lots of AP meetings, as we'll see the meetings at the end of this week, but that's sort of what staff is knuckling down for now, is preparing for the many AP meetings that are on the horizon, and any questions from folks on what we've been up to? I just hit the highlights there for you.

MS. MURPHEY: Any questions for John? All right. Thank you, John. So now we're going to hear from, I think, Andy on the National Marine Fisheries Service Regional Office.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Trish. I'm going to let Jennifer Lee go first, because she has a hard stop at 4:15, and so she'll give some protected resources updates, and then I'll come back to a few other updates.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thanks. Jennifer, are you there?

DR. COLLIER: Jenny, if you want to unmute yourself.

MS. LEE: All right. Can you hear me now?

DR. COLLIER: Yes.

MS. LEE: Great. Okay. I don't have a lot of updates for you, and so I'm just going to, similar to what others did, hit a couple of highlights. Really, the only new action for the council under the Endangered Species Act-related actions is the pillar coral ESA reclassification from threatened to endangered. The rule was published on January 17 of this year, and the effective date is slightly delayed, but it's effective still in just a couple of weeks, March 21, 2025.

A species is endangered when it's currently in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range, and so that is its new status. I will note that we don't believe the impact of the effects of any of your federal fisheries that we do Section 7 consultations on are anywhere near substantially enough to now have a greater impact, and so, in other words, we're not seeing this as an independent trigger for any consultation, and so that might be of interest. Let's see. Basically, with the listing, a lot of the take prohibitions are now effective, and so, if you have any questions after you review that, feel free to reach out.

Aside from that, since you met last, the last draft giant -- The draft giant manta ray recovery plan comment period closed, and so, if you're interested, you can review the comments online. I have a link there in the briefing document, and then, really, there aren't any significant ESA updates in the report. Note that, after that, you'll see it's mainly just no updates.

We are making progress on the South Atlantic snapper grouper amended consultation to address oceanic whitetip sharks and giant manta ray. We are still communicating with our science center on work underway to update bycatch estimates and population viability analyses for assessing giant manta rays and smalltooth sawfish for our shrimp reinitiation. That's -- We've been working to get a complete initiation package on, but, again, generally just kind of moving along, and nothing particular of note.

The brief does include updates for really all of the actions that we typically comment, or provide information on, with respect to the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The brief does include -- Let's see. Probably the most significant one that you've probably all been watching, and were waiting to see what happened with, was the amendment to the North Atlantic right whale vessel strikes reduction rule. On January 16, 2025, we did withdraw that proposed rule. Other than that, again, we have some updated North Atlantic right whale unusual mortality event numbers for you.

The Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team information is updated there. Let's see. The same with the bottlenose dolphin take reduction plan, working on updating some team membership related to the Mid-Atlantic, and that's really about it, and so, like I said, there are some informational updates, but nothing significant action that I need to point out for you, and that's really all I've got.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Jennifer. Does anybody have any questions for Jennifer? All right. Thank you very much.

MS. LEE: You're welcome.

MS. MURPHEY: We'll go ahead and go to Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Trish. Before I get started, I just wanted to say thank you to those that have reached out to me or my team in the last few weeks, just asking about, you know, what's going on, how we're doing, and it's greatly appreciated. I thought I would start with the staffing update.

My workforce, we have a staffing plan that was approved for this year of 124 people. We have lost, just in the last week, seven of those employees, and so two took the deferred resignation, one retired, and four were on probation, and were terminated last week, and so that's been a pretty hard pill to swallow, but, on top of that, and I was really surprised, as we were kind of working through this in the last week or so, we are actually down a total of twenty-five employees since sometime the middle of last year. We were working to hire a number of those employees, but, because of the hiring freeze, have been held up.

Direct impacts to the council at this point that are known, we have four staff in Sustainable Fisheries that have been unable to be backfilled or hired. We are still awaiting the appointment of our division chief. That was Jack McGovern's former position. We've asked for reconsideration of that to be appointed, but that was caught up in the hiring freeze, and then probably the biggest impacts to the councils, and not just South Atlantic Council, will be our social science and economics branch, and so we have David Record, who is now leading that branch. We were hoping to hire his backfill.

As you are well aware, Mike Travis has retired, and Denise Johnson will be soon retiring, and so we are going to be down a significant number of our economists, and we only have one social scientist, and so I just want to make you aware of that, going forward. We don't know, at this point, future staff reductions. The only additional thing I'll mention is that the Department of Commerce is required, by March 13, to submit a reduction in force plan. What that impact is on NOAA is to be determined at this stage, and so, with that, two other updates.

The permit system, and I understand this might have come up this morning, continues to be a challenge. I will say we have made progress. We've been able to import data into our system, and run queries on it. Unfortunately, we continue to discover small errors here and there. We were successful in pulling data for the Gulf Council for a shrimp action, and so we are getting closer to the finish line, but we continue to discover these small errors, as I mentioned, and so we are continuing to work through that.

Jessica Stephen, who is not here this week, is -- This is one of her top priorities, and so our goal is, obviously, to get that data to the council as quickly as we can, because we know it's holding up some of your amendments and actions.

Then the last thing I'll mention is there is a whole suite of executive orders that have been issued by the President in recent weeks. What I will say is we are starting to have guidance emerge, but there is a lot of information without guidance at this point, and so a few things that I'll mention, that are certainly going to be front and center and focus for the Southeast Regional Office, and one is the Executive Order on Unleashing American Energy, prioritizing projects and work related to supporting that executive order.

The one that's going to be probably the most complex to navigate with the council is Unleashing Prosperity through Deregulation, and so, under the first Trump administration, there was a requirement for, every regulatory action that was implemented, you had to remove two regulations, or have two deregulatory actions, and that is now ten for one, and so we are putting in a process right now, or proposing a process, working with the political team, and others, on how to actually implement that.

I will say that future guidance will be forthcoming, but, at this point, I don't have specific guidance to share with you. The, you know, emphasis that's been placed on me, and that I've been conveying to my team, is getting into a more deregulatory mindset. We will have to focus on prioritizing regulatory actions that are mandated, and required by law, and so more to come on that, and we can talk further as guidance develops.

Then the last one relates back to my staffing. Once again, I'm not sure exactly how it will pertain to the number of positions we've already lost, but there's a workforce optimization initiative related to the Department of Government Efficiency, and it essentially says I can rehire one position for every four positions that are lost, right, and so I don't know what the baseline is, where that starts, what focus we will then need to have on, obviously, filling gaps in staffing.

Then, right before this meeting, it was -- Mission essential travel restrictions were placed on the agency, and so we worked through those. I'm grateful that we were able to get as many people to these meetings as possible. We did have to pull back on some of our travel, but more to come with regard to some of the travel restrictions, and so, just like Chip and John were talking about pulling back on travel, they're asking us to essentially only do mission essential travel, and have clearance for that, and so a lot going on, obviously, within the government, but I just wanted to share those updates, and I'll be happy to answer any questions I can.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. Does anybody have any questions for Andy, and, Andy, we're all -- I'll speak on behalf of the council, and we're all thinking of everybody, and, you know, anything we can do to support you guys, let us know. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Yes, and I would echo Tricia's comments, and I think it was maybe the meeting before last, and we were kind of talking about you all's workload, and what resources you would really need, and, obviously, they've gone in the wrong direction since the last discussion, but I think it would be helpful, to some extent, at least for me, to understand what the gap really is.

You know, if we're asking for stock assessments, amendments, all these things, it would be good to know, you know, well, here's the schedule that has us doing this over the next couple years, but, if we had these resources, we can get them to you quickly, because I do think there is, you know, some communication that should go back from us, to let folks know in D.C. that -- You know, while you're trying to minimize costs, and we understand that, but this one comes at a significant expense, in terms of fisheries management, and so I would like to help any way I can there.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I appreciate that comment, Robert, and, you know, one of the things that we're actively working on, given the seven positions we lost, in addition to, obviously, the positions we haven't been able to backfill, is an impact statement, right, and so that's just based on impacts relative to what I would say is status quo, what our previous staffing plan was that was approved. John Walter will likely speak here shortly. They even have more substantial impacts than what I talked about, because of being a large organization in losses in staffing, and so, yes, we'll have that information.

I don't know how much we're going to be able to publicly share it, but we are, obviously, pushing that up to our leadership in Headquarters, for them to understand, and then, to the extent that we can redirect effort, drop priorities, reprioritize things, we're going to focus on doing that.

I mentioned -- The economist is a great example, though. That's not something where I can just plug in a fishery biologist to become an economist. That's not going to work for me, right, and so that is going to be a huge gap, and something that's going to be a bottleneck now going forward, that we'll have to focus on hopefully being able to rehire positions, based on losses in those key areas.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Andy. I guess, next, we'll have John Walter, go to the Science Center.

DR. WALTER: All right. Thanks. Good afternoon, everyone. I also want to echo Andy's thanks for people reaching out and expressing their concerns for our scientists and our center. I will start out by saying the Southeast Fisheries Science Center is no longer the same science center it was last week. We lost thirty-three, staff out of 236. 14 percent of our workforce was lost in two days. Seventeen of them were to deferred retirements, sixteen to termination of probationary employees, and we have ten recruitments in the pipeline that were put on hold to the hiring freeze.

Many of you know Larry Massey, who managed our council and SEDAR requests, and took the deferred retirement, and you interact with him quite often on all the council and SEDAR requests. We'll be working on transferring his duties, but likely have a lengthier response time and less personal attention. We wish Larry the best in his retirement and thank him for a forty-nine-year federal career.

We also had numerous other staff who took the deferred resignation, and we also wish them the best in their future endeavors. For our recently terminated staff, we lost some of our best, brightest, and youngest staff. They were some of the most talented people, who filled key niches and needs for our science center. We lost a recreational fisheries economist. We lost experts in acoustics and visual technology. We lost an age and growth expert at the Beaufort Lab, who would directly impact our ability to ageing of South Atlantic species.

We lost, in the hiring freeze, the backfill of a stock assessment position in the Atlantic Fisheries Branch, leaving us 20 percent down in our assessment capacity, and then we lost survey staff and vessel captains, that will limit our ability to conduct our surveys, and, lastly, and I'll touch on this in our CEFI presentation, we lost nearly all of our federal staff working on our climate ecosystem and fisheries initiative, which will severely impact all of the projects that we were going to present upon at this meeting, and we don't know what future budget scenarios may hold.

It is likely that there will be budget cuts. We were also told that there will be likely further reductions in staff, and that we're directed to put together a process for outlining what that might look like by March 14. We'll keep the council informed of what we may be able to continue to provide, as we assess our capabilities and transition our workforce to meet the administration priorities.

Already one leg of a planned plankton survey in the South Atlantic Bight is going to have to be curtailed, due to lack of staffing. This was something to address the low recruitments that we've been seeing in the South Atlantic, that may be linked to events happening during the planktonic life stage, and we haven't done surveys in South Atlantic Bight for many years, and we were hoping to start being able to start them again.

We anticipate that the recent terminations and deferred retirements will further challenge our ability to meet staffing needs. One of the solutions we're looking at, across the agency, is trying to find out whether we can borrow staff from around the country to man our surveys. That's probably going to be something that's going to be needed to gain efficiencies, to be able to keep our vessels operating, and to keep the key scientific information flowing into the process.

On some positive news, there are congressional funds for the hurricane supplemental that are passing its way through Congress. We've requested funds to rebuild the facility in Beaufort. That facility housed a lot of our age and growth capacity, as well as our SEFIS/SERFS trap video survey, and so that directly affects a lot of the key South Atlantic science, and so we hope that the council sees the rebuild of the Beaufort Lab as something that would be important to its mission, and we hope that the council sees that supporting that rebuild would be in their interest.

We hope that those funds get appropriated, and that we can begin the process of getting back into a facility in Beaufort. We're also looking at short-term arrangements for temporary office space in Beaufort, but that temporary office space really won't fill the niche of a permanent scientific laboratory. With that, I'm happy to take questions. I hope I'll be here for the remainder of the week. That is now in question, and so thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John. Any questions for John? So, John, just thinking about how all this -- For the Science Center, for SERO, for rebuilding the Beaufort Lab, is there anything that the council can do? I don't know if writing a letter to somebody, or to multiple people, and is there anything that we can do to help support or explain the importance of the staff and the building? Is there something that we as a council can do?

DR. WALTER: Thanks, Chair. I think that would be helpful, to write to Nancy Hann, Admiral Hann, who is right now the NOAA Administrator, documenting the value that the council, if they do see that, of the work that's done there. It's one of the oldest laboratories in the country, and I

think the work there is really integral to a lot of the science that informs management in South Atlantic. If you feel comfortable doing that, I think it would be well received.

MS. MURPHEY: Just a question for folks here in the council. Do people feel -- Are they interested in sending a letter for supporting and explaining the importance of the work they do? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: First of all, thank you, John, for all your comments. They are well heard. I also want to echo the Chair's comments. I would be very supportive of making sure that we are -- That we do what we can to preface the importance of the Pivers Island Lab. That is, obviously, very critical to our work here at the council on all Southeast fisheries. Also, as a resident of Beaufort, in coastal North Carolina, that lab is extremely important to our county and the economy of southeastern North Carolina.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tom. Does anybody else have any other comments? Do I see support around the table to send a letter? All right. Thank you, guys. Anything else? Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Just in addition to the lab support, but the support for the entire Southeast Fisheries Science Center. You know, we rely on them to guide us in all of our management, and so, I mean, it's vital that they survive and continue to flourish and provide us what we need.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jimmy. I think we can add that to our letter. Well, thank you, guys. Where are we at next? Do you all want to take a short break? So we'll take a short break, and maybe we can get back to 4:30. Can we do 4:30?

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MURPHEY: All right, everybody. We'll go ahead and get into the Recreational Reform Initiative that Mid-Atlantic Council is working on. I believe Julia Beaty is going to be doing the presentation. She was going to be here in-person, but flights are just never dependable anymore, and so she is going to have to do this from online, and so, Julia, if you're there, you can carry it on.

MS. BEATY: Yes. I'm assuming you all can hear me.

DR. COLLIER: Yes.

MS. BEATY: Great. Sorry I couldn't be there in-person. I tried, and then an airport power outage had other ideas, but thank you for allowing me this flexibility to present remotely, and so some of you may have heard almost this exact same presentation at the recent Gulf Council recreational initiative workgroup, and so, for those folks, hopefully this isn't too boring the second time around, and it's basically the same presentation.

This is the Recreational Reform Initiative that the Mid-Atlantic Council is carrying out with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and it addresses summer flounder, scup, our stock of black sea bass, the stock north of Cape Hatteras, and bluefish.

I just wanted to quickly note that the Recreational Reform Initiative is being carried out by both the Mid-Atlantic Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, because all four

species are jointly managed by both the Mid-Atlantic Council and the commission, and so we're working together on everything in the recreational reform initiative, and both groups agree together on almost all aspects of the fishery management plans.

This slide is just to note that these are four very popular recreational species in our region. Again, for black sea bass, all the information is for the stock north of Hatteras, and so this is MRIP information from 2023, and you can see that there were millions of trips for which the species was designated as the primary or secondary target, and tens of millions of fish were caught.

I also just wanted to briefly touch on stock status, as kind of background context. For these species, it's kind of a mixed bag. This is all from the most recent stock assessment for all four species, and so you can see that, based on the most recent information, none of them are overfished. Overfishing was occurring in the most recent stock assessment for summer flounder, but only by a small amount. Bluefish is still under a rebuilding plan, because it was overfished a few assessment updates ago, but it's no longer overfished, but it has not been rebuilt to the target yet, and so it's still under a rebuilding plan.

Scup and the stock of black sea bass north of Cape Hatteras are very abundant. They're more than double the target level, and overfishing is not occurring, according to the most recent stock assessment, and so, again, kind of a mixed bag, but none of them are overfished, and some of them are in very good shape.

The Mid-Atlantic Council, and the commission, and the member states in the commission, have faced a number of challenges when setting the recreational bag, size, and season limits for these species, and these are some of the challenges that led to the Recreational Reform Initiative. I think some of these challenges will probably sound familiar to you, because I don't think they are unique to our region, but the three key challenges that were identified as, you know, challenges that the Recreational Reform Initiative aimed to address include widespread angler dissatisfaction with some of the recreational bag size and season limits, stakeholder perceptions that measures are not reflective of stock status, and concerns with how data from the Marine Recreational Information Program, or MRIP, are used when setting measures.

Through the Recreational Reform Initiative, some changes were made, which were first effective in 2023, but this slide summarizes how we did things prior to 2023, and so, for all four species, the recreational bag, size, and season limits were generally set with the goal of allowing harvest to achieve, but not exceed, the stock-wide annual recreational harvest limit, or RHL. The bag, size, and season limits would be set for one year at a time. They could remain unchanged. Even though they were set for one year at a time, we could keep them the same across multiple years, but, for some species, they did need to change pretty frequently, and, when they changed, the direction of change was often perceived as contrary to stock status.

When we needed to change the measures, we pretty much only used MRIP data, historical, like a recent time series, and sometimes only a single most recent year of MRIP data, combined with expert judgment from our technical teams.

This slide is to help illustrate some of the challenges that I summarized, and hopefully it's not too distracting that it's a black sea bass example, because I know the two stocks of black sea bass that our different councils manage are in pretty different conditions right now, but this is for the black

sea bass recreational minimum fish size from Maine through Cape Hatteras in each state. Each state can have a different minimum fish size, and then it's also showing the federal waters minimum fish size, and you can see how it has changed over time.

Hopefully you can see the general trend in this figure here, where the minimum size in the recreational fishery has increased over time. There are some years where it's been the same across multiple years, but it's never gone down, and, in some states, it has gone up considerably over the time series, and so, obviously if the minimum size increases, that means it's more restrictive, and anglers have to throw back more of the fish that they catch.

As the measures have been getting -- That's just an example. This is a pretty clear example of a measure that has changed, in a pretty clear way, but it's just kind of like a proxy for general changes and measures, but, as the measures have gotten more restrictive, biomass for the black sea bass stock in our region has actually been increasing, which is what this slide shows.

The black sea bass stock north of Cape Hatteras has been more than double the target level for several years now, and so anglers are experiencing this on the water, where they're catching a lot of black sea bass, and they're catching more black sea bass than they used to, but, meanwhile, the measures are getting more and more restrictive, and so it doesn't feel like there's a clear conservation need for the more restrictive measures, and it feels counterintuitive to people participating in the recreational fisheries, and so that's just an example of some of the frustrations that have been experienced with the recreational fisheries in our region and an example of how the measures are seen as contrary to stock status.

The Recreational Reform Initiative has been going on for a few years now, and the council, and the commission, adopted these goals as kind of the overall goals for the Recreational Reform Initiative, but there's multiple components to the recreational reform initiative, and each component has its own individualized goals, but these are the overarching goals for the whole thing. They are to provide stability in the recreational bag size and season limits, develop strategies to increase management flexibility, achieve accessibility aligned with availability and stock status.

I mentioned that the Recreational Reform Initiative has multiple components. The first one, and the only one that has been fully developed and implemented, is called the Harvest Control Rule Framework and Addenda. That implemented changes which were first effective for the 2023 measures, and when the council, the Mid-Atlantic Council, and the commission took final action on this framework and addenda, they knew they wanted to make a change, and they didn't want to delay making a change, but they also wanted more time to more fully evaluate other potential ways of doing things.

This framework and addenda has a sunset for the end of this year, and if you click "next", it should pop up the next block. There we go, and so the Recreational Measure Setting Process Framework and Addenda is a follow-on action to consider what should happen after this sunset period, and so that's an action that's currently in progress, and the Mid-Atlantic Council and the commission's Policy Board are scheduled to take final action on that next month, and so that's towards the end of that action.

Then if you click "next", there's also an amendment underway to consider different approaches for recreational sector separation and data collection. That amendment took a backseat for a little

while, to prioritize the other two actions, but now that we're further along with those other two, the council and commission are picking up the amendment again, and this is currently in the scoping stages, and so this is in the pretty early stages of development and to be determined the specific direction that it goes in.

Earlier on, there was plans to develop a technical guidance document, as part of the Recreational Reform Initiative, and the technical guidance document would have addressed a number of topics, such as how to deal with outlier MRIP estimates, guidelines for using preliminary current year MRIP data, guidelines for when you leave measures unchanged, but this guidance document was ultimately dropped, because, in the meanwhile, the Science Center in our region developed a new model that we now use for setting the recreational measures for three of the four species, and that model addressed a lot of the concerns that we were planning to address through the technical guidance document, and so that is no longer a priority.

I mentioned that changes were made, and they were effective starting with the 2023 measures, and they will be used through 2025, and the changes that were implemented are called -- The approach is now called the percent change approach, and I wanted to walk through this in detail, because, again, this is the only thing that's really been implemented so far as a change through the Recreational Reform Initiative.

So, if you click "next", and this is going to go through in a bunch of little components, but the first step under the percent change approach is we think about, if we leave this year's bag, size, and season limits unchanged, what do we think harvest will be next year, and how does that compare to next year's recreational harvest limit? That is the same consideration that we always started with under the previous way of doing things, but, if you click "next", a key difference is that the percent change approach requires consideration of a range of harvest estimates, and so, again, this is about predicting future harvest under the current measures.

Obviously, we always have some uncertainty in how we -- You know, what we predict for the future, but now we're required to consider that uncertainty in terms of a confidence interval around that estimate, and does the RHL fall within that confidence interval, or is it above that, and if you click "next", it will show the bottom box, which is below, and so there's three categories of how your RHL compares to that confidence interval, whereas, the previous way of doing things, we used to really try and match up point estimate to point estimate, but now we're required to consider that range of uncertainty in our estimate of harvest in the upcoming year.

If you click "next", we're also layering on additional consideration of biomass compared to the target level, and this information is coming from the most recent stock assessment, and it's grouped into the three categories shown on the screen here, where very high is above 150 percent of the target level, high is between 100 and 150 percent of the target, and low is below the target level, and, if you click "next", it will show that those same three categories are repeated across the other RHL categories.

This is a change from the previous way of doing things, because we're, again, layering on this additional consideration that the most recent biomass level was always part of the calculations for the RHL, and so the RHL would change with changes in biomass, but here we're not only accounting for it in the RHL, but also this additional step here, and if you click "next", the

combination of those two factors tells you that you should change your measures to achieve this specified percent increase or decrease in harvest.

There's only one row in the middle there where there's no liberalization, or reduction, and that's when your RHL is within your range of harvest estimates, meaning that, if you leave measures unchanged, you would expect harvest to be close to the RHL, and then, if biomass is between the target and 150 percent of the target, then you can have no liberalization, or reduction, but, as you move in either direction further away from the middle, you're getting progressively bigger liberalizations, or reductions, depending on what direction you're going in.

The reductions, or liberalizations, are capped at 10, 20, or 40 percent, and the size of that cap varies based on the consideration of stock status and how far away from the RHL you would expect to be if you leave measures unchanged, and so this is different from the previous way of doing things, in that it kind of bins the outcome, and it puts these caps on it, whereas, under the previous process, we could theoretically have any degree of change, and there was concern that we could have very wide swings, and measures that might not always feel totally necessary based on stock status, and might have been more responsive just to big changes in the MRIP data, whereas, with this, we're trying to take more incremental changes and have the degree of change be more clearly tied to stock status.

Another key difference under the percent change approach is that the bag, size and season limits are set for two years at a time, with the intent that they would remain unchanged across those two years, unless we get information in the interim year that suggests that there's something majorly wrong with our measures, but that hasn't happened yet, in the brief amount of time that we have been doing this process, and the intent is to keep them unchanged, you know, to the extent that that seems to make sense, and the timing of that is aligned with the stock assessment updates.

We're pretty lucky that, for all four of these species, we get updated management track stock assessments, which are more like simple assessments, and not like the big -- We call them research track assessments in our region now, but we get pretty -- We get every-other-year updates of our management track assessments, and so that helps us be able to leave the measures unchanged across two years, because we know that it's not going to be very long until we get a new stock assessment.

If that stock assessment shows something that's a lot different than what we previously thought, then we can course correct when we get that new information, and so this is a relatively -- I can't remember when it first started, but within the past maybe five years that we've started getting this frequency of assessment updates, and, in the past, we could go longer between assessment updates for some species, but this has been very helpful, that it allows us these frequent updates, and, again, we can course correct as needed, and it gives the comfort of leaving measures alone across two years, because we know we don't have to wait too long for the next assessment update.

I also wanted to summarize, in a little bit more detail, this model that the Northeast Fisheries Science Center has created. This is the reason why we dropped the technical guidance document that I mentioned earlier, and so this is called the Recreation Demand Model, and it's not something that was done as part of the Recreational Reform Initiative, and it's not required under any of the Recreational Reform Initiative topics, but the timing just lined up nicely, that it was first available

at the same time that we made the first changes through the Recreational Reform Initiative, and it is available for three of the four species that are covered by this initiative.

It's been a huge improvement in how we set the bag, size, and season limits, because it allows us to do things that we weren't previously able to do, and quantify things that we know impact the fisheries, in ways that we really struggled to quantify before, and so it's a simulation model.

Just to, at a really high level, summarize the inputs and outputs, it pulls in a recent multiple-year time series of MRIP data on catch per trip, and it also pulls in availability of different sizes of fish from the projections from our stock assessments, and so it's what the stock assessment is projecting will be available in the future year, and it also pulls in angler preference data that comes from a survey that was administered to thousands of recreational fishery license holders in 2022.

That survey offered choices of given, you know, this range of fishing trips, which trip would you choose, or would you choose not to go fishing, and then that lets us predict how angler behavior will change under different measures, and so you need to -- To use the model, you need to manually put in what the bag, size, and season limits will be for summer flounder, scup, and black sea bass in each state, and the measures can vary by mode and by wave.

Once that's all input, then -- It's a simulation model, and you can run it multiple times, and it will give you estimates of harvest of each species under those measures, discards, angler welfare, number of trips, and, because you're running it multiple times, you can get a distribution of these outputs, to help you look at uncertainty in your estimates, and so this model has been super helpful, and, you know, even though it's not tied specifically, or required by the Recreational Reform Initiative changes, I do think it's been a huge improvement in how we set measures for these species.

I also wanted to note that none of the Recreational Reform Initiative actions change any of the rebuilding requirements, and rebuilding plans are still required for overfished stocks, and we just chose -- The council and commission just chose to kind of leave that alone, and bluefish is still under a rebuilding plan, and so bluefish measures have not been set using the percent change approach yet. While it's in a rebuilding plan, it will not use that approach. Measures will continue to be set based on the requirements of the rebuilding plan.

I also think an important part of the story is some of the challenges that we faced when developing these management actions, and it did kind of feel like we were breaking new ground, and, you know, trying to think through what's legal and what flexibilities do we have, and I think some of the criticisms that we got -- There was a lawsuit, and I think this helps to illustrate some of those things.

The commercial fishery representatives, and stakeholders, have raised a lot of concerns about the Recreational Reform Initiative generally, and about the percent change approach specifically, and so it might not have been very obvious from the percent change approach table that I showed, but the outcomes for something like 10, 20, 40 percent change in harvest -- It could be something like, and we have been in this situation for scup and black sea bass, where that table says you need a 10 percent reduction in harvest, and that's regardless of how high of an overage of your recreational harvest limit you would expect.

We were in a situation where we had a 10 percent reduction, but that still wasn't enough to bring harvest all the way down to the RHL, but this percent change approach says that's okay. You're just taking a 10 percent reduction because biomass is so high that it wasn't really viewed as too big of a threat to stock status to have measures set at that level.

The commercial fishery raised concerns that, in doing things like that, it allows the recreational fishery to exceed their RHL, which allows them to exceed their allocation, and so these stocks all have defined percentages that are allocated commercial and recreational. The commercial fishery essentially thought this was unfair, that the recreational fishery is allowed to exceed their limits in ways that the commercial fishery is not allowed to do, because they're still held very strictly to their quota.

Our SSC also reviewed a few aspects of this, and the SSC had some comments about, if the recreational fishery is allowed to exceed their limits, or if this increases the frequency with which the overall ABC is exceeded, then they will take that into account when making their recommendations about the scientific uncertainty buffer, and, if they do have a bigger buffer for that reason, for scientific uncertainty, that would in turn also reduce the commercial quota.

Some folks in the commercial industry really picked up on that, and were really concerned that this could be a way that could indirectly reduce the commercial quota, and then, of course, if the overages continue to too great of an extent, that they could result in overfishing, and that would, obviously, be a negative impact.

There was also a lawsuit brought forward by the Natural Resources Defense Council. This lawsuit concluded last September, I believe, but the main argument was that the percent change approach violates the annual catch limit provisions of the Magnuson Act, for a lot of the reasons that the commercial fishery brought forward, is that it is allowing recreational overages in some circumstances. In other circumstances, it's requiring the recreational fishery to stay below what they would otherwise be allowed to harvest, but the lawsuit keyed in on the circumstances in which it allows overages.

The court rejected those claims and ruled in favor of NOAA Fisheries, and the court ruled that the percent change approach does comply with the Magnuson Act, because it strikes a balance between preventing overfishing and achieving optimum yield. The court also concluded that the recreational measures do not need to be exclusively tied to the recreational harvest limit, or the recreational annual catch limit, but the RHL is still part of the decision-making, and so it's still influencing the measures. It's just not the only thing anymore.

They also noted that the percent change approach makes incremental adjustments to bring harvest close to the RHL over time, and that, you know, that's appropriate, because it's still bringing harvest to the RHL, just doing it over time and not in one big go, like we used to try to do. The court also concluded that it's not a reallocation, because the recreational annual catch limit overages can still trigger accountability measures, and the accountability measures for these species are separate for the commercial and recreational sectors.

I just also wanted to, you know, briefly reiterate that the percent change approach has a sunset at the end of this year, and so the Mid-Atlantic Council, and the commission, are considering what's

the appropriate process for setting the recreational measures for 2026 and beyond through this separate ongoing framework and addenda.

The alternatives under consideration include maintaining the current percent change approach without a sunset,, and there's two options that would improve upon the -- You know, hopefully improve upon the current percent change approach, would make some changes with some lessons learned over the past few years, to hopefully keep it similar to how it is now, but with a few improvements.

We could -- The no action alternative would be to return to the previous process of setting measures to achieve the recreational harvest limit, and then there's another alternative that's more different than the percent change approach, and it focuses more on biomass and fishing mortality and less on expected harvest when setting measures.

Then also to reiterate that the council, Mid-Atlantic Council, and commission are in the scoping stages of an amendment to consider recreational sector separation and data collection, and so recreational sector separation includes a number of different ways of considering managing the for-hire recreational fisheries differently from the other recreational fishing modes. This has kind of come out of some concerns about the MRIP data, and uncertainty in the MRIP data, for the private sector and the for-hire sector submitting -- Being required to submit VTRs, and feeling like that data could have a little bit more certainty to it.

There are a few cases in our region where some individual states have had different measures for the for-hire sector compared to the other recreational fishing modes. Bluefish, for a few years, has had separate for-hire measures, but there hasn't been kind of like a consistent consideration of this, and so this is to think through should it be done more consistently, and there's a number of different ways that it could be done, and so we'll see where that goes. Again, it's in the scoping stages.

Then the data collection side of things also kind of stems with frustration with the MRIP data, and so it's consideration of a number of different things, and this is pretty open-ended. Some of the topics I think your region probably has more experience with than the Mid-Atlantic, but things like private angler reporting, different vessel trip report requirements, harvest tags, tournament reporting, citizen science, a whole bunch of things that haven't really been used in our region, but kind of come up over and over again, in terms of can we get more or better data to supplement the MRIP data that we have right now, and so, again, this whole amendment is in the early stages, and so to be determined the direction that it goes in.

That was all I had. Thanks for bearing with me. I know it was a lot of information, that I tried to pack into a hopefully not too long presentation, but I'm happy to take any questions. My contact information is on the screen here, as well as a website for the Recreational Reform Initiative, where you can learn more about it. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Julia. Do we have any questions for Julia? Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you for that presentation, and maybe you said this, and I missed it, but how were these four different species chosen?

MS. BEATY: These are our four biggest, most popular recreational fisheries in this region, or managed by the Mid-Atlantic Council. There are some other species that the Mid-Atlantic Council manages that do have a recreational component, but much smaller than these, and so I guess these are four species that are very popular recreational species, and are also jointly managed with the commission, and so I guess -- Now this is kind of like making me really search my memory banks of like conversations in 2019.

I think there was some discussion of start with these four species, and see where it goes, and then maybe think about pulling in other species, but I think the primary reason was just that these are the four that are jointly managed with the commission for our council, and they're just -- They're just really big recreational species for our council.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you. Anybody else? Shep, and then John, and then Andy.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Sorry, and this is maybe a little bit in the weeds, but, if you look on your extra slides, Slide 26, I was curious, and at least this construct provides for a potential buffer between ABC, ACL, then ACT in the various sectors, and so I'm guessing -- I guess I just wanted to clarify that this this construct -- It's not a -- You guys don't use a set amount, a set amount of say a 5 percent reduction from ABC, or ACL, and that any actual reductions that do exist between these vary across these species.

MS. BEATY: Yes. The only thing that's set, and does not vary, is the step from ABC to ACL. Those are all defined in the fishery management plans. It's different for each species, but it's defined in amendments, and it's not something that can vary year to year, and so it's -- You know, X percent goes to the commercial fishery each year, and X percent goes to the recreational fishery each year, just for defining the ACL, but all the other buffers can vary year to year. The state quota allocations are also defined, but, to get from the ACL to the ACT, that's a consideration that's made each year, and, honestly, there's been virtually no instances where the ACT has been set less than the ACL for these species.

There was one instance that I can think of, but it was for a desire to keep measures unchanged across two years, you know, several years ago, but there are monitoring -- You know, everybody acknowledges that we have a lot of management uncertainty, but, when we really struggle with fisheries that are already exceeding their limits, making the limit even lower doesn't really feel like it helps address the management uncertainty issue, and then, the amount to get from the ACT to the RHL, that's our expectation of dead discards in the future year.

That amount can vary year to year, and so, yes, everything except the allocations of the ABC to the ACLs and the state. Well, I guess commercial isn't really part of this initiative, but all the other steps of the flow chart can vary for each specification cycle.

MS. MURPHEY: John.

DR. WALTER: Julia, this is John Walter at the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and thanks for the presentation. I'm curious, and was this approach simulation tested and evaluated by the SSC?

MS. BEATY: Sort of. So, the first go-around, the harvest control rule framework and addenda - Final action on that took place in 2022, and it was implemented for 2023. Just a few months before final action, the council decided to have the SSC review the alternatives that were under consideration and provide input, and that was pretty new for our council.

We don't typically have our SSC review management actions like this, and they weren't given a lot of time, and they were directed to focus on how any of the alternatives might impact the setting of the ABC, and so they provided a review of that, but they weren't able to do a ton of analysis.

Then, for the second go-around, for the current framework and addenda, we did ask the SSC to review it again, and there was a management strategy evaluation model that was developed for summer flounder, that had been previously developed, and there was an attempt to use that to look at some of these new alternatives, and it was a bit of a struggle, because, even though we gave the SSC more time the second time around, it was still kind of like we were still in the process of developing the alternatives.

We had a general idea of some of them, but the details changed during their review, and so they provided some general feedback, but, overall, they felt like they didn't have information available to simulation test or really analyze the final alternatives, and so we have done some analysis, but I would say that it hasn't been a very thorough testing of the final alternatives, because it kind of felt like we were, you know, building the plan as we go along, and trying to take in some of the SSC feedback as we went along, but that posed some challenges for them to feel like they could really do a good job of reviewing it in detail.

MS. MURPHEY: Did Andy have a question? Okay. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I have two questions. So, Julia, thanks for the presentation. Great job. If I'm correct, I believe summer flounder was determined to be overfishing kind of after the council put the harvest control rule in place, and, under Magnuson, we're, of course, required to end overfishing immediately, and so I'm curious how the harvest control rule handles overfishing, or if it addresses that particular provision of Magnuson.

MS. BEATY: Thanks. If you want to, you could go back to the percent change approach slide, which I think is Slide -- It might be 17, or 16, the big table, and it's not entirely necessary, but that -- So the percent change approach. Yes, that one. It doesn't have anything built in about if overfishing is occurring.

Some changes that we are considering for the, you know, this potential replacement is, in that middle column, adding in some additional biomass categories, and treating overfished stocks separately, but we did kind of struggle with how to treat overfishing separately, especially for something like black sea bass. There was concern that the biomass is more than double the target level, and, at one point, we thought we were pretty close to the overfishing limit. We got into consideration about what if you're overfishing just by a very small amount, but biomass is still super high compared to, you know, if biomass is lower and overfishing is occurring.

There is one alternative in the new framework and addenda that does more explicitly consider overfishing, but the other ones still don't, but the way it worked out for summer flounder is you're right that, when this first went through, it was not experiencing overfishing. Then we got an

updated stock assessment that showed that F exceeded FMSY by I think, 3 perc, but, also, biomass was below 100 percent and so the way it worked out in this table was that we needed to take a reduction that was equal to the RHL anyway.

In that case, it did not allow harvest to exceed the RHL, because biomass was below the target level, and so I guess it would kind of depend on the circumstances, but we argue that the RHL comes from the stock assessment, and it's designed to prevent overfishing in the future, and so, in that specific case, we would, you know, argue that, because it was constraining harvest to the RHL, that it is preventing, or aiming to prevent, overfishing, but you're right that there's no consideration built in explicitly for the overfishing status.

It's focused more on biomass compared to the target, and so, if it's overfished, that would kick in some different considerations, and a rebuilding plan, obviously, but, yes, no explicit considerations for overfishing under this approach.

MR. STRELCHECK: All right. Thank you for the clarification, and that makes sense, in terms of the adjustment to the RHL based on the stock assessment. That helped, obviously, constrain harvest, and address overfishing as well.

The second question is so, when you put the amendment in place, management measures were imposed with the RHLs. You said this went into effect in 2023. You have two stocks with low biomass, two stocks with very high biomass, and so I'm presuming that 2025, this year, you are going to be making some changes, and I'm just curious kind of, if that's the true, what changes you're potentially looking at based on this percent change approach.

MS. BEATY: So, for the 2025 measures, based on the timing of our stock assessments, we didn't make any changes. Well, some nuances about black sea bass, but, that aside, the measures remained unchanged compared to 2024, because of the timing of our stock assessments, and we're getting stock assessment updates for all of these species this year, and so we'll use those assessments to update the measures for 2026 and 2027.

The Mid-Atlantic Council and the commission are taking final action on the new framework and agenda next month, with the goal of, if there's any changes desired to the process, getting them implemented in time that we would use that for setting the 2026 and 2027 recreational bag, size, and season limits, and so we set the recreational bag size and season limits in the fall, and so to be determined what the outcome will be, because it depends on if the percent change approach changes to something different in April, and if we can, you know, race through the rulemaking process to get it in place by the end of the year.

It, obviously, depends on if stock status changes, but, for something like black sea bass, it's been in that very high category for a while now, and so we could be in a situation where we could require, you know, theoretically, repeated 10 percent reductions, if harvest continues to be above the RHL and biomass continues to be very high.

That's kind of like that incremental approach to bringing harvest close to the RHL, where, under the current percent change approach, you know, if you stay in that category across multiple specification cycles, you would keep taking 10 percent reductions, but, again, it depends -- For

future years, it depends on if a change is desired after the sunset period, and it depends on what the stock assessments show.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Julia. Does anybody have any more questions? Jessica, it looked like you were pondering.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, I don't know if I have any questions for Julia. I appreciate this presentation. It's the second time I've seen something about this initiative. I guess I was just wondering -- It's hard for me to think about exactly how this would translate into fisheries that we're working on.

I'm just wondering what that would look like, and if it's possible for our staff to think if we have any candidate species where we could use this, because there are some things in there that it seems like this initiative would accomplish that we brought up during the visioning process that recreational anglers were wanting, including, you know, stability of the regulations, and so part of what they were doing looked like it would, you know, not change the regulations but every two years, and that's how frequently they're getting these assessments.

To me, we've got a number of things that we would have to look at. How frequently could we get, I don't know, interim data on some of these species, and what species would fit into something like this, and is it even possible that we could do it, based on the frequency of our information, but, yes, I would love to look into this further.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other thoughts to that? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks for that comment, Jessica. This came up at the Recreational Initiative Workgroup, a few weeks ago, and they were supportive of it. Obviously, with how Julia has presented this, we don't have a demand model, right, and we don't have some of the components of how they built their harvest control rule, but I think there is a nice framework here where we could, obviously, look at how could we then adapt this in a way that actually works for our region, and what does that look like.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. John.

DR. WALTER: One thing I think that is really valuable is if this kind of an approach does get through the SSC review here. I think that's something that we've wanted to see, these kind of approaches have solid scientific support from the SSC, such that they can say, yes, indeed it meets their recommendations for ABC advice, and avoids overfishing, et cetera, the biological must-pays that are within their purview.

I know that would help Science Center in being able to certify an action that would be based on this, and I would offer up that one of the better approaches to being able to do that would be something like a management strategy evaluation that would simulation test this before it went into place, to see does it indeed meet the requirements that were required to meet, and does it also achieve the social and economic objectives that we would also like to achieve, and I think the framework is there to do that, and it could be -- It wouldn't necessarily need a lengthy MSE process, because we've got that framework for a number of the other MSEs, but it would probably

be helpful in being able to say does it indeed meet what needs to be met, improve upon our current management, and I think it's a framework for evaluating this that would be useful. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other comments? Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I mean, I don't want to make a motion, but, I mean, is it something like direction to staff, and then we talk about it later in the week, to figure out if it's something that could come back in through the workplan process to look at this further? I feel like the SSC agenda is probably packed, and there's no way that it could look at, I mean, and we might be months out from looking at this, but I don't know how to kind of get it started and have us think about this a little bit more.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and I'm not sure either. I'm going to turn it -- Maybe John can speak to this a little bit.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I'm not sure what we can come back with later this week. I think it's good that the council is aware of that, and sees it as an approach. You know, bear in mind it's a very different situation in the Mid-Atlantic, where they're setting their -- They're moving away from, but, you know, set regulations on a regular basis, getting assessments annually, and that sort of thing is kind of the foundation of this, and trying to avoid the big changes.

You know, to me, it's very different than what we are. We are years between changing regulations, in many instances, and then the thing that I've always found intriguing is the taking a more model-based analytical approach to estimating what the catch will actually be in the next couple of years for setting regulations, and it would be really nice to see if we could do something that's more sophisticated than just what was the average of the last three years, and trying to use that to estimate the future.

I think that's part of something that I would really like to see brought into it, and maybe that's something we can factor into our research and monitoring request, is to try and develop a model like that for our fisheries, because, with our recreationally-driven fisheries, I think we all struggle with just trying to use yesterday to predict recreational catch tomorrow.

MS. MURPHEY: I've got Jessica to that, and then Tom.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess another thing that I liked about it is it wasn't just based on MRIP. It was bringing in some other data streams, some other factors, and so MRIP wasn't weighted as heavily as kind of what we're putting on it right now, which it wasn't really designed to do what we're using it to do, and so I like that it's bringing in these other data streams, which is kind of something that we've been talking about for a while, but the Mid-Atlantic actually did that.

MS. MURPHEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: You know, I've followed this for the last few years, and it's an extraordinarily complicated process, right, but I really like what Jessica said, is there's elements to this I think we can learn from, but, to go back to what John said, is, when you look at this, first of all, they have a lot more assessments, and a lot more science coming in on a more routine basis, but it's also really important to point out these fisheries are unequivocally so much different than anything we

manage here in the Southeast, right, and these have huge biomass, and are found across a very large range of states.

We don't have a lot of fisheries like that, and, if we were to say look at Spanish mackerel, we also have a fishery with -- When it comes to recreational, there's pretty high bag limits, and most people don't even want a bag limit that high, right, or we're not even catching the ACL, and so the question is, is like what fisheries would this really even apply to, but there are some cool -- Maybe "cool" is not the right word, but there are some interesting things in which we could learn, looking forward.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, I agree with that. It's always good to see how other folks are functioning, so that we can learn from them, and so do we have anything else to discuss today? Well, thank you very much, Julia, for your presentation, and, unless anyone else has anything, we'll adjourn until 8:30 tomorrow morning. Thanks, everyone.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on March 3, 2025.)

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MARCH 4, 2025

TUESDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Council Session I of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Villas by the Sea, Jekyll Island, Georgia, on Monday, March 3, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Trish Murphey.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Good morning, everyone. We'll go ahead and bring the council back in session. I think we're going to start out with discussing the For-Hire Electronic Reporting Improvement Amendment, and Bob Zales is going to give us an update on their AP meeting, and so go ahead, Bob.

MR. ZALES: Okay. Thank you. This is Bob Zales II, Southeastern Fisheries. This is all new to me, doing this, and so I appreciate the confidence of the panel members to put me as chairman. The for-hire reporting, we met on January 29, and everybody but one member was participating, and Tom Roller and Amy Dukes participated, and then we also had Jessica Stephen and Michelle Masi on the webinar.

It was an interesting conversation. It was a lot of questions were asked, and a lot of input was put in there, and it was kind of like going back in time for me, because I went through this back in the late 1990s and early 2000s, as chairman of the for-hire AP in the Gulf, and there's a lot of questions as to how limit entry works, what it really does for you, and so on and so forth, and so, without going through the whole several pages of this thing, to save you all time, I would be willing to answer any questions you have on any of the issues that we discussed, but I can tell you, and what I related to the panel, is, in the Gulf of Mexico, when all this started, Bill Hogarth was the Regional Administrator at the time, and he's the one that came up with this.

The purpose of doing limited entry in the for-hire permitting process was to cap effort, and I want to stress that it was to cap it. It wasn't to reduce it. It was just to cap it where it was, because where we were headed at that time, after the reauthorization in 1996, is the red snapper fishery in the Gulf was being shut down earlier and earlier, until this happened, and he was pretty clear that if we capped the effort for the for-hire side, then we would eventually see longer seasons, and more days fishing, which has turned out to be the case.

When you have unlimited access, anybody can jump in at any time, and, the more people you put in, when you have a restricted fishery, it's -- I don't know that you can really manage a restricted fishery with unlimited access. I don't see how that's really possible, and so it has worked out really well. The number in the Gulf, I think the ballpark is 1,300, give or take a little bit, of the boats that are there. It's been that from day-one.

You get into the thing, which you all have heard a lot of talk about control dates, and my experience, in dealing with the Fisheries Service and control dates over the years, I can't name a fishery, that had a control date in the Gulf put on it, that that control date was hard set and used at the end of the time that it was there. It's always been adjusted.

The same happened in our for-hire thing there. It actually -- On the Gulf Council meeting where the limited entry thing was eventually passed, the control date went through that meeting, and the Lieutenant Governor of Louisiana showed up at that meeting and complained that her fishermen in Louisiana had no idea that they were even talking about limited entry, even though we had been talking about it for several years.

She convinced the council, and Mike McLemore was the attorney at the time, and they said, okay, and we'll put the control date as of tomorrow, and so, at that time, then the control date was fixed, and people went out and bought, and they increased the number a little bit, but that's how that goes. When people are concerned about a control date being set a year ago, or whenever the control date has been set on this particular issue, and I'm not sure that that date will remain the same.

Clearly, with the permits that are there, and I'm assuming -- I don't know if the Fisheries Service has gotten their permit thing straightened out, to where they know how many permits are out there now, because I know they've been having issues with that, but, the permits that are there now, that whenever the time comes, if it comes for you all to adopt a limited-entry program in the for-hire side, that control date can be modified and shifted to account for the people that are in there.

There's another issue, sector separation, and, from talking to some of the people over here, for some reason, other people think sector separation and limited entry are connected at the hip, and they're not. They're completely separate.

MS. MURPHEY: I was just going to suggest, just to help us along, just if we could hear what your AP had to say about all the different thoughts on the -- You know, what are the concerns that they had about everything. I appreciate giving that input from your past experience. That's very, very good, but if we could just go ahead and hear what the AP said, and that would really be helpful to us. Thank you.

MR. ZALES: Okay. All right. On the second page, you see the general comments. They had issues about the reporting apps needed to be streamlined and made more user-friendly, particularly eTRIPS, because most everybody who ever has used the VESL app thought it was pretty easy. There was a lot of concern with current reporting requirements of federally-permitted vessels having to report their inshore trips.

Data will never be as accurate, because fishermen are afraid reporting correct information will lead to more restrictions down the line, and the lack of trust in management, and more regulations will not lead to better compliance. Most captains have multiple permits focused on determining why compliance is low. Compliance at the state level is high in South Carolina. Their program has been in existence for a long time. Reporting requirements need to be different for headboats and charter vessels.

Reporting requirements are burdensome and are causing some fishermen to forego buying a permit and fishing illegally. AP members acknowledge that open-access permits make reporting requirements harder to enforce. There was a general sentiment that existing regulations are not being enforced, and so why have more restrictive requirements. A little bit of enforcement might go a long way towards compliance.

Lack of accountability for the private recreational component was cited numerous times during the AP's discussion. Is there too much effort, or is the universe too difficult to properly enforce, and what is the level of compliance that is needed to be able to use the data and management, and the education and outreach are critical to a successful reporting program. A short video tutorial would be far-reaching and inexpensive.

The frequency of reporting that they commented on, and reporting requirements may get in the way of customer satisfaction and lead to fewer returning clients. AP members had concerns about reporting prior to offloading, as there's no cell service in many places. Captains that didn't have a mate have to focus on navigating the vessel, and so they can't report while underway.

Weekly reporting is working. AP members agreed that reporting within an hour, or thirty minutes, of arriving at the dock is not feasible. For headboats, a common practice is to keep a personal paper logbook onboard, like a journal, and write down the trip's catch info prior to offloading. With weekly reporting, headboats always have a high compliance rate. Daily reporting, or every forty-eight hours, would be feasible for some for-hire captains, but not others. Captains that are used to weekly reporting, and are compliant, would find it harder to comply if reporting were to be required at intervals shorter than a week.

Trip declarations was an issue. Some captains may not need to move their vessel multiple times, and so the requirement for trip declaration has to allow for vessel movements that don't signal a trip. Requiring a declaration every time a vessel leaves the dock is not realistic. There was general agreement that a trip declaration requirement would help with data validation.

How a trip declaration is accomplished will be important. It needs to be as easy as possible. Captains have to declare a trip that is not associated directly with their business. It will create more distrust amongst fishermen. Some AP members prefer the trip declaration over increased frequency or reporting.

Landing locations, AP members expressed concern regarding private docks needing to be approved landing locations. Some captains pick up and drop off clients at private docks. How would these locations be accounted for? Consider that waterfront access is diminishing. Vessel owners have to be flexible on landing locations. Consider that smaller vessels have more flexibility than larger ones in where they can land. There are town and city ordinances in place that restrict where charter vessels can operate.

Economic data, there was agreement among some AP members that economic data should not be collected, and fishermen are reluctant to provide it. Some AP members felt, it necessary, the agency would obtain economic data through the IRS and the requirement provided on the for-hire trips could be eliminated.

Some AP members acknowledged the importance of economic data for disaster relief. Some AP members acknowledged that economic data are required to properly analyze the effect of regulations. Some members suggested the reporting of economic data be voluntary, and not mandatory, and some captains may be providing false economic data, because filling in those fields is mandatory. This is more harmful than useful. There was general agreement that, if reporting were limited to fishing activity, compliance would improve. Some AP members spoke about the importance of attaining information to know the true value of the for-hire industry.

Did-not-fish reports, some captains use them to get out of reporting. This is a concern with abusing the flexibility of did-not-fish reports are intended to provide. Some captains appreciate the flexibility, in that DNF reports can be submitted thirty days in advance. There was agreement that DNF reports are useful for-hire captains and the current frequency of up to thirty days in advance is adequate, and AP members suggested increasing the thirty-day timeline to sixty or ninety days.

The validation survey, AP members acknowledged the need for data validation that would require additional burden on them. Some AP members do not believe that there are enough resources to properly validate the data. Some AP members view the validation survey as simply more bureaucracy. Dockside intercepts are a good tool for validating catch, but still don't provide validation for fish that were released during the trip.

One of the best ways to validate for these discards would be to increase onboard observers on trips. If dockside surveys were to occur, they should be conducted between the agent and the captain, and not the customers, as the captain is more knowledgeable, and the customers may be less experienced in identifying fish, and then there was the election of the chair and vice chair, and so that completes the report.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you very much, Bob. Does anybody have questions for Bob and the AP comments? Tom, did you have a question?

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Chair. First of all, Bob, thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this. You bring an excellent amount of historical and institutional knowledge about the history of how we've approached these issues throughout the Southeast, and I think that's what makes you such a valuable chair, as well as just an involved AP member.

I think, the historical context you provided here this morning, I think that may be something we need to talk about at this AP, so people further understand how that happened. A lot of times,

when we don't look at the history of what we do, a lot gets lost in translation, right, and I want to provide -- You know, a couple of these are questions, and so, if you want to comment on them, feel free, but I had -- As someone who listened to the AP, and asked questions of the advisors, there was some big takeaways, I found, that were really relevant, in my experience with SEFHIER as well as in my conversations with other for-hire fishermen.

One of the biggest attractions, that was well represented by the AP, was how much people dislike the eTRIPS app, and I know that may be difficult for some people to hear, but it is an antiquated app. It is not really good for people who catch a lot of species, and my personal opinion is something like VESL, or something that is a little bit more modern, or user-friendly, would probably go a bigger way into having a little bit better buy-in in this project. Do you think that's accurate, from some of the statements from AP members?

MR. ZALES: Yes, and there's no question, and clearly there was concern about the eTRIPS part of it, and I can tell you, from personal use of the VESL app, it was very simple, and very easy to use. When it was first implemented in the Gulf for us to do, we had some issues about some of the species. I mean, they had a list of species, a thousand of them, right, but there's a way to get around that, and they showed us -- The Fisheries Service worked with us pretty well to straighten that out, and so it turned out to be a very workable situation. The VESL app is -- If that's something you're looking at, that's what I would recommend that you get into, is the VESL.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you for that, Bob, and, you know, one of the other things that I took away from this AP was -- It was honestly one of the better AP discussions I've listened to in a long time, for a lot of different points that I could make here, one of them being is that we had a wide variety of opinions on it that I think well characterized the different aspects of our very large open-access fishery, right, and the way that people utilize these federal fisheries in a very different way.

I'll get into that a little bit more, I think, further in the conversation, but the other thing I took away was how the opinions of many of the members sort of changed as we had the conversation. There were certain people who came out, first of all, and said that I don't like hail-out, and I think this is ridiculous, and then we started explaining, as to -- Having a conversation as to why it works, why it makes it better to enforce. We had several AP members come back and go, oh, and that's not that big of a deal, and I understand it now, and so I think that that was a really big takeaway. Would you agree with that?

MR. ZALES: Yes, because, initially, like you said -- I mean, clearly, there were some totally opposed to doing anything, right, which is always the case, but, once everything was explained out and whatnot, they came around and accepted that, and so, yes, I would agree with that. Now, I haven't been involved in an AP on this side of the state of Florida before, but the same thing kind of exists on APs I've been involved with on the Gulf side, but the conversation was really good. I thought it was good back-and-forth, and a lot of information was shared.

MR. ROLLER: Absolutely. The other takeaway I had was there was pretty much unanimous opinion, among all the for-hire captains, that a vast majority of fishermen are lying on their logbooks currently, because you can, because it's easier, and they said people put in did-not-fish reports, instead of saying they were fishing, or had a lot of ways around reporting, and I think there wasn't a single person who said otherwise on the AP, and so that was one of my big takeaways,

and so why -- If we're going to make this program work for all of us, we need to do something a little bit better.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Judy, and then I have Tim.

MS. HELMEY: Thank you, Bob. I appreciate that, and I guess I just need -- I would like you to please explain to me, on this limited entry, for instance, if you're fixing to retire, and like I might be fixing to sell my boat, and I have a federal permit, and how is that going to work with the limited entry?

MR. ZALES: Well, I know that, over here, there's concern, because in the Gulf -- I mean, clearly, an unintended consequence of the limited entry program was it put value on the permits, and values increased over time on those permits, and there's a lot of concern, on this side, about trying to find a way to eliminate that commodity market, and so -- I guess this is up to Andy and the Fisheries Service, is to try to figure that out, but I've discussed it with Andy a little bit, and I think that they're willing to look at this, as to --

Like, in your case, if you're going to -- If you had a limited-entry permit, and you're going to retire, that you would turn your permit back over to the Fisheries Service, or there may be a way for you to turn that permit into a family member, a child, grandchild, or whoever, but, if you turned it back into the Fisheries Service, there would be a way for them to figure out how to then have the ability to -- For somebody to get that permit, at a regular Fisheries Service rate, rather than at an increased commodity between you and me, and that kind of thing, and so I think there's a way to work on that, to eliminate that, because clearly, with all permits --

If you look at the IFQ in the Gulf, and you can look at the two-for-one here, and those permits eventually increased in value, and it created a stock market thing for fishery permits. Permits were never intended, that I understand for that purpose, but that's the way they've turned out, and there should be a way to address that.

MS. MURPHEY: I have Tim, Andy, and then Shep.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Bob. I just wanted, just for my own knowledge, in the Gulf, and I think -- I know we would go down this road, but, as far as the particular app, or software, that you're using, that's a choice, right? They're not prescribing one or the other, and so I think we would have eTRIPS, and we would have VESL. If there's a third one, we may have a third one, and I don't know, but I think you have to give them a choice, and then let -- You know, let the market, whoever has the best program, would be the one that's being used much, but I would think that we would want to stay away from, you know, prescribing one over the other. Thank you.

MR. ZALES: Yes, and I would agree with that. I mean, clearly, you don't want to just throw one out there and say you must use this, and there may be another app, and some more developers that would come up with something that is easier to use, and provides better data to the Fisheries Service, than the VESL app. Right now, I don't know of one, but that's something that the Fisheries Service, and the way they play with data would come up, and whoever developed something that may be easier and faster to use would clearly be an option.

MS. MURPHEY: I've got Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and a couple of things, and, so, going back to Bob's comments, we've had conversations, but certainly any decisions about limited-entry permits, and the disposition of those, would have to be based on conversations around this table, not just the Fisheries Service. In terms of the apps themselves, you know, we've gone to essentially doing technical specifications, and so, if vendors can meet those technical specifications, right, then we're allowing for multiple vendors to put their apps on the market for use by the industry.

eTRIPS, because it's run through ACCSP, has a lot more partners and people that we have to work with to make changes to it up and down the east coast, and so I think that's probably part of the frustration, or challenges, that charter captains have seen, is just the evolution of that app, and changes to it don't necessarily mirror, you know, all of the needs of the Southeast.

With that said, Bob, I appreciate you, you know, being chair of this AP. One of the things that I guess I was challenged by, in kind of reading through the report is it's -- I'll say it's -- Maybe this is the wrong terminology, but stream of consciousness, right? It just seems to be capturing, obviously, the conversations that were happening, and Tom has alluded to that kind of there was some evolution of those conversations throughout, but there's some pretty strong statements about don't wanting to do things, or not liking things in here, and it's not clear to me, obviously, kind of where the AP members landed on a lot of these particular issues.

Is it just fair to say this is early in the process, this is kind of an initial cut at some input, and information, for the council, and that, as the council proceeds forward, you're going to drill into more of these details and start reacting, I guess, to any sort of recommendations that the council is putting forward?

MR. ZALES: Yes, and I think so. I mean, clearly this is an effort in evolution, right? I mean, a lot of it has to do with education. Education, to me, is big in this whole process, that people don't really understand them, and there's a lot of -- You know, there's distrust, right, and this is across-the-board. There's distrust in Fisheries Service management, and, to my knowledge, there always has been.

The way these things work, and when they become really acceptable, because, in the Gulf, when we did this, me included, there were a lot of us that were really questioning whether or not limited entry was a good thing to do, but the proof is in the pudding, so to speak, because the benefit of doing that eventually shows up, and, as that benefit increases, and shows up, then they better understand what participating in the program would be.

So, when it comes to the whole data collection process, and the whole thing -- I mean, there were questions initially in this meeting that we had, and one of them was, well, why do we need to hail-in or hail-out, and my question was, well, how does anybody know if you go fishing if you don't hail-out, and so, you know, you have those things in there that need to be brought out and explained to people, and they have to -- They have to be encouraged to have a little bit of trust and encouragement in what's there and you have to get -- The benefit has to come to go along with that trust, because, if there's no benefit, they will never trust it.

MS. MURPHEY: I had Shep, and then Tom.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Andy covered most of what I was going to say. I just wanted to respond to Judy's question, in that it's really up to the council. When you're developing whatever limited access system, if you want to put restrictions on transfers of permits, or what happens to the permit after someone retires, that's entirely up to you. I would say, for the most part, thinking, you know, in limited access commercial fisheries throughout the Southeast, and throughout the United States, Bob is exactly right.

The permit becomes a commodity, and I think it's always kind of been that way. It's one of the incentives for people who are in it. They know they've invested in it, and they get that permit. They get to sell the permit when they get out of the fishery, and that's some, you know, compensation for what they've put in all this time, but you could put limitations on it. Think -- I mean, your two-for-one in snapper grouper puts limitations on, you know, what you can do when getting a new permit, when you're transferring it, and somebody else needs two of them. The 225 permit has additional limitations on transfer.

When the Gulf developed their limited entry program, they had a historical captain provision, so that historical captains who had participated as charter operators could continue to fish, but, when they were done, that permit ceased to exist. It was non-transferable, and so there are all kinds of things that you can develop to address those concerns. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: So, first of all, I appreciate the comments here on limited entry. I think it is important to note that, as we have been advised by legal counsel, you know, we can't use limited entry as a justification for making this program work better, but I think it is important to note that there is a lot of discussion about this, regarding an industry, and that this council can have a lot of discussions as to what that looks like.

I do want to kind of address Andy's comment regarding the stream of consciousness themes of the notes. I think it is important to say that this is really early in the process, and I believe the notes took away a lot of different opinions, and I don't think necessarily the bullet points were in any way representing consensus of the ideas, and this was a point I was going to make earlier, and I will try to keep my comments short here, but one of the most interesting aspects of this advisory panel is that there is a lot of different for-hire fishermen on it, from different regions and the ways in which they utilize federal fisheries, and I made that comment earlier, and I'm going to go into a little deeper about that.

I had an experience with discussing for-hire logbooks in the state of North Carolina, and, now, this was approximately a decade ago, or maybe a little bit longer, when the Division of Marine Fisheries approached working groups of for-hire fishermen and said, you know, we need better data from for-hire fishermen. Your industry is important, and you're not capturing it in MRIP as well as we could, and we want to do better.

There was pretty good consensus that, okay, we can do this, and we see the trip ticket program for commercial fishermen. It's been beneficial to them, and it's not a big deal, and, when we started to move forward with that, it met a lot of resistance, and the resistance was very interesting to me, as someone who has been a full-time for-hire business owner for my entire adult life, is that there

was a lot of people that were like, okay, I'll do this, and there was a lot of people like maybe we change it a little bit, or don't really understand it, but we had a really vocal component of people who got really involved in trying to end the program, and were successful at ending it in the state of North Carolina, or ending it before it started.

The point I want to make about that is the people who ended that program were people who were not seriously invested in the fishery. I would say there was ten or twelve people who were very vocal against it, and, you know, raised some political capital to get the statute ended, or statute changed, I should say.

Virtually every single one of them, I think every single one of them, was out of the for-hire business within three years, right, and so it's really important to note that sometimes, when you have a lot of voices, they're not necessarily comprehensive of the industry at large, right, and so the point I'm making here is a couple of opinions here were important to note.

There were some fishermen, or one or two anyway, who mostly inshore fish, but have a federal permit, and it's clear that they don't fish in federal waters very much, right, and so they don't understand why, when you have this permit, that they have to report all these inshore trips, when they may fish offshore two or three or four times a year, or ten times, or one time, or no times.

I think that that's something that we're going to have to discuss, and not saying that they shouldn't be reporting, but I think that we should address that fact, that, if you have an open-access fishery, that means some fishermen, whether you like it or not, may have to have this permit, and may have to do some things that they don't like, right, but I want to emphasize that we had a variety of opinions, and that is why I think the bullet points look like that.

The other point I wanted to go back to was there was a couple of things that I thought was really interesting. Some of the conversations regarding hail-out, which really seemed to change some of the panel members' opinions, were when we had a -- When we explained it, they said, well, you say you want more enforcement, and it may not be reasonable, particularly in this day and age, to dedicate tens of millions of dollars to more on-the-water enforcement, but, if you have a hail-out that makes it more enforceable by a smaller law enforcement force, and that's better for everyone. Once we started to have that conversation, a lot of people started to understand it better and come around to it.

One of the points I think that was made by our vice chair, Haley, who's wonderful in this as well, was she made the point is, when you renew your permit, why don't we have a mandatory three-minute education video that explains some of these major points regarding why we're collecting data this way, right, and I believe that that was a really good point, and that was something that I highlighted in my notes.

MR. ZALES: If I could, and some of your points are really good. The whole thing about the vested in the industry part of it, right, and, I mean, you've got part-time people, and you've got people that are full-time. That's their livelihood, and, typically, those that this is their livelihood, they tend to understand the need of providing proper data, and everything that's there, because their future clearly is vested in the fishery.

The part-timers, who they have other sources of income and whatnot, they're doing this as to make a little extra money, and some of them are using it to pay for vessels and stuff like this, and they don't really understand a lot of that, and, frankly, a lot of them don't care, and so, you know, that's what you need to really, you know, concentrate on, I would think, are the vested people, but that's something for you all to do, is to, when you're talking to the people, and essentially to try to figure out how many are what I would consider part-time, versus full-time, and the whole thing.

The key message that came out of this, and I think you'll agree with this, is that there wasn't a single person on that call that supported MRIP-FES. Everybody hated that, right, and they're all looking for something better, and so that's what this really, in my mind, provides. This provides a different course that you can go to, that may provide much better data, because currently, the program that's there now, nobody trusts it, and nobody likes it, and they all have issues with it.

MR. ROLLER: To that point, Bob, thank you, and I had that point in my notes to bring up later, during more discussion, but that was really the synthesis of a lot of this conversation, is people were like I don't know -- You know, I would say, for some advisors, they would say I don't know how I feel about this program, but I sure really don't like MRIP-FES, and I want something better, and so I -- You know, that's why I was surprised at the conversation at the last council meeting, was because I'm not hearing from any fishermen that I love MRIP, and, you know, I've definitely been raked over the coals in my roles for saying, well, this is the best we have, and people are like that's terrible, and how could you say that.

Well, in this opportunity, this sector has an opportunity to provide better data, and that's something that I believe that we should be focused on, and, to your point regarding, you know, part-time fishermen and whatnot, I agree with you. I would say like my personal experience, and I know a lot of different people in this industry. I know part-time for-hire operators who it's a very important chunk of their income. I know some that just do it for fun, and so, I mean, so it's a wide variety of people.

That's not to say any of them are not as important, but it's important that we remember that there are different levels of investment and that's -- You know, we can't make everybody happy with this end product. We were never going to do that.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, guys. I'll let Tim go, and then we'll wrap this up, so we can hear from our Law Enforcement AP. Go ahead, Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, and that's a good point, but I really want to caution -- I think we need to use a lot of caution with that. I mean, if you really want to see this thing get out of sorts, start telling these people that you're going to substitute this for MRIP. That's not going to happen. You know, I think you've got to be very, very clear that, yes, you're going to collect data, but MRIP is not going anywhere.

This is not going to be a substitute for MRIP, as far as I know. Now, Andy and John maybe can elaborate on that, but, for years and years and years and years and years, I've heard that, you know, this self-reported unvalidated data, even with the hail-in and the hail-out, is not going to 100 percent be -- It's not going to be a substitute for MRIP, and so I don't think it's a good idea to get these guys going down the path thinking in their mind that, you know, we're doing away with MRIP. Nobody likes MRIP. Not commercially, and not recreationally, and it's just -- You know,

that's a given, but I don't -- I think it's misleading to think that, hey, you sign on this program and we're going to do away with MRIP for you. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Thank you, Tim. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks for bringing that back up, Tim. You're right with the idea of this idea of supplement versus supplant, and we got into this conversation in December, and we were told that the discussions about supplant and supplement is that, at the end of the day, when you went back and looked at the original amendment, it did say supplant, replace MRIP, with this data, and it said over time. It didn't say immediately, and it said over time, and so that is, in essence, but could this council change it, I guess is my question.

Can we go back to revisiting this and figuring out if it could be used as a supplemental tool for MRIP in the more short-term? We're going to get a little bit more information and data about that later, and we look forward to seeing that presentation, but, while I have the mic, if you don't mind, I did feel that your conversations were great.

Were they a little all over the place? Yes, but it was a vent session, in a way. It was let's just, you know, give what's right on top of my head, which that raw emotion is really important to make sure that we're understanding where this group is coming from, and so I appreciated that, but I also saw some reoccurring themes, which I was excited to hear about as well, things like education and outreach is super important.

Even though they made comments about fishermen being afraid to report the correct information, they circled back and said, but a lot of us do make really good data, and a lot of my colleagues at the marinas make really good data, and so it was a little contradictory there, but I listened to that positive side. I think that reaction of the data sucks, but then they kind of came back to it and were like, no, I do a pretty damn good job.

That weekly reporting was again, consistent, and I felt like that compromise came into play with trip declaration. Once they kind of realized that a validation study could help, that a trip declaration could help, they said, you know what, we might be willing to do that. However, we don't want to change our reporting frequency, and so finding that compromise in all of these different actions is really what I took away from that, and so sorry. I know you're running out of time.

MS. MURPHEY: No, and thank you, Amy. I appreciate that summary. Andy, did you have something?

MS. STRELCHECK: Yes, and Amy covered largely what I was going to say, but I guess, in response to Amy's comments, yes, I think it's under the purview of the council, if we wanted to change it from supplant to supplement, right? I think the challenge with supplement is we need to make sure that whatever design, survey design, is integrated, obviously, with the supplementation of the existing data programs and how that ultimately gets utilized.

I agree with Tim, right, and, under the current design of the program, the compliance levels, the requirements that we've imposed, unless we can vastly improve those, this program, as it exists today, would not supplant, or likely even supplement, what we're collecting, and that is why I think we're at the table discussing improvements to it, and modifications to it, and so I think there's a

number of avenues we can pursue. Obviously, we're in a very different potential budgetary environment, from the Fisheries Service standpoint, and so I think we need to be thinking carefully as well, in terms of what's even practical and feasible in the short-term.

MS. MURPHEY: Did you want to say something, Tom?

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Andy, for your comments there. I agree with you, and, you know, we've had a lot of conversations, you know, around this table, as well as at the AP, regarding that idea. Personally, I think that, you know, we should be not shooting to supplement, and we should be shooting to supplant, because that's really what our fishermen have been asking us for for years.

The other point I want to make is there's a lot of fishermen who are complying with this program, and doing a good job, and they don't currently understand that the data is not usable, and, when you explain that to people, they get pretty upset, and I want to preface that, if we can't make this program where the data is usable, and we're just asking people to waste their time by submitting logbooks that we know can't be validated, I don't believe we should have the program.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, everybody. That was a very good discussion on the AP. It sounded like AP had a lot of thoughts, and it's going to be a very valuable group to our council, and so thank you so much, Bob, and I guess our next -- We were going to hear from Captain Pearce from the Law Enforcement AP.

CAPTAIN PEARCE: Good morning, Madam Chairman and council members. Thank you all for letting me be here this morning to present this report, and so I'm just going to read through the overall report, and then I'll try to stop and expand on some things as we go. The Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting, SEFHIER, Program has been operating the South Atlantic since 2021.

The data being collected through the program cannot yet be used in management decisions because of, one, low compliance with reporting requirements, and, two, lack of validation. The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is also considering modifications to reporting requirements, since SEFHIER ceased operating in the region in February 2023, after a court ruling.

The council requested the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel discuss potential actions to improve for-hire reporting and to provide input from a law enforcement perspective. These are all comments from our advisory panel meeting. Consistency in reporting requirements between South Atlantic and Gulf is important, and encouraged. The NOAA Office of Law Enforcement has not received additional resources to help with monitoring reporting since the SEFHIER program's inception. Thus, it has been challenging for law enforcement officers to enforce the current requirements.

The open-access nature of the three fisheries presents a challenge for enforcement, I guess with the individuals entering and leaving the fishery. The NOAA Office of Law Enforcement representative acknowledged the SEFHIER program does a lot of outreach to stakeholders. It was acknowledged that there is currently no way to validate whether reports are being submitted for the accuracy of those reports. Fishermen sometimes submit did-not-fish, DNF, reports when they don't want to submit a report or don't have time, et cetera, and there have been instances where

they just haven't reported anything, when they haven't fished, and so you don't know whether they are just not complying or they just didn't fish, and they didn't do a did-not-fish report.

Currently, vessels that are federally permitted are still required to report through SEFHIER, even if they fish inshore. The NOAA Office of Law Enforcement would prefer that trip declarations and reporting all fish, what species need to be reported, may be a question for data analysts other than law enforcement, be still required for all vessels, and so, in other words, NOAA wants you to still have that requirement, but that is really up to you all to decide whether it's necessary to be to record all fish or just fish that are targeted under the federal permits.

Frequency of reporting and trip declaration, state agency representatives on the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel agreed that, for state agencies to assist with enforcing reporting requirements, there would need to be a requirement for trip declaration and hail-out and hail-in, and a more frequent reporting frequency would also be helpful, for shorter than a week. Basically, instead of doing it once a week, do the reporting on daily, as the trips occur.

Additionally, the joint enforcement agreement, JEA, currently in place in South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida could be modified to include activities to better enforce reporting requirements, and so the JEA could be used as a tool to help the states get involved and do more enforcement in those areas.

Compliance relative to reporting requirements has not been incorporated to JEA, since law enforcement resources are very limited, and it would shift focus from other activities that states are tasked with. North Carolina does not have a JEA, and so there would need to be a rule, or proclamation, to incorporate enforcement of reporting requirements. North Carolina is looking at mandatory reporting requirements in state waters for commercial and recreational sectors. However, reporting for the for-hire component is not being considered.

FWC officers would receive trip declarations when SEFHIER was operational in the Gulf. Enforcement officers used trip declarations mainly to verify vessels had their proper permits, but, also, you could monitor daily traffic of charter fishing that was occurring, and going on, and you could intercept vessels as they come back in, when you knew they were fishing.

Consider requiring reporting within six hours of the end of the trip, or twenty-four hours, or twenty-four hours may be too long away. That was the one recommendation, was to maybe go with a requirement to report within twenty-four hours of the end of the trip, but then it came back and said they felt better that six hours would be more reasonable for you to report at the end of your trip.

Hail-out and hail-in is critical. Reporting the day of the trip is fine, but prior to the trip would be better for enforcement, and so, in other words, having that hail-out, letting us know that a vessel is underway and going fishing, lets law enforcement know that, okay, there should be a trip report that's going to be completed, and you've got to consider that we're not -- You know, yes, this is something that law enforcement can monitor.

We could increase our ability to intercept vessels, do inspections, but it's more so for us to help you all with enforcement of the reporting requirement, because, if we know there's a hail-out, and there's a trip going on, then you could look and say, okay, did they complete that report before the

end of the day, or whatnot, and you can look at those records to see, and so, if we're going to hold people accountable for reporting, that hail-out and hail-in is critical, so we know the trip occurred. It went out, and they came back, and we're looking for a report within six hours of that hail-in.

If we're going to help with -- If the states are going to help with enforcing this, those are critical things we need to be able to say, okay, you didn't -- You failed to report, and so we can follow-up with that. It's more about the reporting part, and not so much inspection part.

The trip notification process in the Gulf was efficient when it was operational. Officers would get email notifications on their phones, and so, in the normal course of business, officers could intercept vessels. It would be good if, in the South Atlantic, officers could also receive notification the same way.

In the South Atlantic, the summary settlement, and this is from Office of Law Enforcement. In the South Atlantic, the summary settlement for not having a South Atlantic for-hire permit is currently \$500, as it is an open-access permit. The Office of Law Enforcement has recently requested that General Counsel consider increasing the summary settlement fee, to further deter those operating in federal waters without the required permits.

Requiring trip notification only for-hire fishing and not for other activities, and so, in other words, if they're not going to go fishing, we don't feel the need to have to have a report, or a required trip notification, if they're not fishing. That was a big topic in the Gulf.

Approved landing locations, the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement has experience with approved landing locations for commercial fisheries. Approved landing locations need to be accessible via a road and located on the water with a dock. Accessibility of sites to law enforcement officers is important. Approved landing locations need to be the point where guests are dropped off.

A private residence landing location would be required to have a clear pathway to access the dock, with no locked gates or obstructions, and officers would not have to walk through a private residence to access the boat or for inspection. Approved landing locations can create safety issues for officers, as a private property -- If at a private property and make families uncomfortable with the presence of law enforcement. Captains need to know that an approved landing location can be revoked if it creates issues for law enforcement officers. It is important to note that an approved landing location does not mean a mandatory inspection upon landing.

Did-not-fish reports, if there are trip declaration requirements, then the did-not-fish reports would not be necessary. If trip declaration is not required, then the did-not-fish reports are still useful. In other words, if you're hailing-out and hailing-in on a trip, you do you no longer need to do a did-not-fish report, because, if you didn't hail-out, then you didn't go fishing, is the mindset.

Decals, vessel decals may not be as useful in open-access fisheries as in limited-entry fisheries such as in the Gulf. Decal stickers are often hard to see. If decals are to be used in the South Atlantic, they should be easily visible. Decal stickers may not be the best way to identify vessels. Decals do not determine whether a vessel is boarded or not. Law enforcement officers would continue to conduct boardings regardless of whether a vessel is displaying a decal. A decal could serve to verify that a vessel is permitted.

A flag would be more visible, and may be a simple thing to adopt, and would be beneficial in areas with many for-hire vessels that also hold king mackerel commercial permits, such as in North Carolina. Decals in the Gulf are used to identify permitted vessels, but decals also -- Decals could also be beneficial in the industry to identify and advertise their businesses, but would require additional outreach.

In other words, in that situation, you could do an outreach program where people who are actually going out and hiring charter vessels could be informed to look for the permit decal on the vessel. That would encourage people to charter with people who are properly permitted, versus people who are doing it illegally, and so that's just one more way to identify -- Let people know how to identify a legally-permitted vessel.

Another thing that Bob Zales brought up with me was to remind that -- I know, in the Gulf, it's -- For commercial vessels, and for charter vessels, the documentation numbers, or registration numbers, have to be displayed in eighteen-inch block lettering, which typically is how we identify whether a vessel is participating in the commercial or charter fishery, and then, once we get closer, we can see the charter decal.

On the Atlantic I'm not sure if every -- I think it depends on the fishery, as to what's required with the marking requirements, but that is one thing to consider if there -- If the fishery is requiring that large block lettering to be displayed, then that is a clear identifier for law enforcement that that vessel is either participating in commercial or charter activities, and so that may factor into your decision on whether a decal is necessary. That that kind of concludes everything we talked about with SEFHIER, and I have one other thing that came up in Other Business, but I can hold off on that and answer questions on this first, if you like.

MS. MURPHEY: Does anybody have questions for the captain? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I've got a couple quick comments, and then a question, and so one of the things that -- A greater question for the council, and legal counsel, is, you know, when I was at the Gulf meeting, I had some -- The marking requirements, as required by federal statute, was an agenda item, and there was a lot of discussion, and I think -- In some of my conversations, we were questioning whether those don't technically apply to the South Atlantic as well, and I'm not sure, but I just present that as a question that I would like answered, going forward.

First of all, I was I was kind of surprised. I thought the conversation regarding like vessel marking, versus -- Stickers versus flags was really interesting. Personally, I'm going to disagree with some of the consensus points about that, because, in North Carolina, we have a for-hire sticker. It changes every year, and it's about size of an index card. You display it on your port side, and I can tell you that I can see that dang thing from a long way away, and particularly when you know what you're looking for, and particularly for us in the for-hire fleet. It's the first way to say who's that guy, who's that new guy, and so then you start, you know, looking for people. My point there was that, at least from what I've seen it, and with this, you know, annually-changing sticker, it was it was it was pretty interesting.

The other question I have is I thought the discussion on hail-in, or hail-out and hail-in, was really interesting. You know, one thing that's been forwarded to me a lot, and I know it's been discussed is -- Let me pull this up, so I get it right, if I find it. I know that the governor of Florida, Governor

Ron DeSantis, has been talking about asking state law to change FWC officers for making intrusive checks on boaters without probable cause.

I know that's been an issue in the press, and, you know, the reason I bring that up is, you know, we've had some discussions of that in North Carolina, on a different level, because, in North Carolina. we've got -- You know, you obviously have the Coast Guard, but we have two different law enforcement agencies. We have our Wildlife Resources Commission, which does do boater safety checks, and we have the Division of Marine Fisheries Marine Patrol, which does marine fisheries, and you can see all three of them in the same area, and we've had issues with people getting checked by multiple law enforcement officers in one day.

The reason I bring that up is that, if this is a thing going forward, where we have less -- What would you call non-probable cause check, you know, checking allowed, would something like a hail-out program make it easier for law enforcement to enforce some of these things, knowing that people should be actively fishing? Do you understand my question? Am I asking it clear?

CAPTAIN PEARCE: It could. I mean, in Florida, we have Florida statute that supports our ability to -- Basically, a vessel that's actively participating in fishing, or has all the conveyances of a fishing trip onboard, rod and reels and everything displayed, things like that, it would be probable cause that the vessel is participating in a highly-regulated activity, and so that's separate from what the governor was talking about with just the stops for boating safety checks, and so we do already have the ability, and that would be something that would encourage --

You know, I think that would apply in that area, where you have vessels hailed-out, that we know it's going on a fishing trip, and clearly, you know, identifiable markings that it's a charter vessel, and that -- You know, that we see that activity being -- You know, happening onboard, and so those are factors that would apply, and, in that way, yes, that would definitely be beneficial, I think, in that world, yes.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you for your clarification on that, and I think that's important to hear, because that's definitely been a topic of discussion among the fishing community up and down the east coast, and thank you for your clarification there.

MS. MURPHEY: Do we have any other questions for Captain Pearce? All right. Well, thank you, Captain. I appreciate --

CAPTAIN PEARCE: I had one other item on the report. I just wanted to -- For the record, I wanted to put it out there, and so our representative -- One of the representatives from North Carolina, non-law enforcement, brought up a question. An AP member asked whether a trip declaration requirement would help prevent instances in which a dual-permitted vessel, commercial and for-hire, lands and sells their commercial limit in addition to collecting a for-hire trip fee.

Also, how would a trip declaration requirement affect the current restrictions on number of crew members onboard a vessel on a commercial trip, and so we did -- We did have a Pat O'Shaughnessy, with the Office of Law Enforcement at NOAA, was going to circle back and clarify some things with that individual, but, just in case this were to come up in future discussions, I wanted to make sure it was on the record.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you. Any additional questions then? All right. Well, thank you, Captain. Next, we have Michelle Masi and Dominique. Are you guys online?

DR. MASI: I'm here. Good morning.

MS. MURPHEY: Good morning.

DR. LAZARRE: Can you hear me as well?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, ma'am, we can. Okay. If you guys would like to go ahead and do your presentation thank you.

DR. MASI: Sounds good, and so, today, both myself and Dr. Lazarre are going to be walking you through the outputs from the exploratory data analyses that you all requested at the last council meeting. All right, and so, to get us started, I just wanted to review with you all some of the data and analysis caveats.

First, these analyses only use reported data, and so there are no estimates to account for miss or non-reported catch or effort, and, if you recall from my council presentation last year, we had less than 50 percent of the South Atlantic for-hire permitted vessels that were compliant with the reporting requirements, and so that's just something to keep in mind as we go through these.

The next bullet is just saying that, in any analysis that shows catch data, please note that the catch term is referring to landings plus discards. Also, the following analyses only use logbooks from South Atlantic permitted vessels, and that does include any dual Gulf and South Atlantic permitted vessels in all years, for consistency, and then we further limited the logbooks to only those that ended their trip between the east coast of Florida through North Carolina, and we are not including headboat survey vessels in this analysis, just to note.

Then, for any analyses showing fishery management plan species, we're only considering logbooks that caught species in the Coastal Migratory Pelagic, Dolphin Wahoo, and Snapper Grouper FMPs, as that's what was requested, and, finally, when we parse those logbooks into state groupings, we're parsing by the reported end port state.

Okay, and so, with those considerations in mind, the first request was to visualize the reporting characteristics by fishery management plan. In this first figure, it shows the number of logbooks, on the Y-axis, that got species in each of those three FMPs, and that's shown there on the right-hand side, and so snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagic, and dolphin wahoo, and it's shown across the three years which are on the X-axis, and so 2022 through 2024.

The request was to show this by trip, and so I just wanted to note that a trip is equal to a logbook, and so I'm showing this by logbook, but just keep in mind AKA trips, and, importantly a logbook here is going to be potentially double, or maybe even triple, counted in each of the FMP bars shown if that trip caught species in multiple FMPs, and so, for example, a 2022 trip that caught red snapper and dolphin in that same trip would be tallied in both the snapper grouper and the DW bars in 2022.

You can see, from the figure, that the total logbooks that caught species in each of these three FMPs is pretty consistent across the three years, and it's likely due to the fact that the same vessels are reporting their trips across all three years, and so, if you think about that in reverse, the same vessels are probably not reporting their trips in all three years. Finally, in the analysis, you can see that, in all three years, the Snapper Grouper FMP has the highest number of logbooks, which is shown by that dark-purple bar.

All right, and now we're looking at the same logbook data from the previous slide, but here I'm showing the number of vessels, on the Y-axis, that reported those logbooks from the previous slide, again across those same years along the X-axis, and so you can see that the number of participating vessels is approximately equivalent across all the different FMP groupings, for all the different years, and it's likely equivalent, because these vessels will have all three South Atlantic for-hire permits. In this analysis, based on this figure, you can see that the number of vessels that caught species in the DW FMP is the lowest across all the years.

All right, and so this figure is showing the number of logbooks, along the Y-axis, that caught species by FMP, and those are the color-coded bars, but here I'm also parsing the number of logbooks by state, and the states are split into their own figures, and so Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina on the right side.

Again the years are shown on the X-axis on each of the individual figures, and, importantly, the Y-axis varies across the four state figures, which was a necessary thing to do for visualizing this data. Otherwise, Florida is just going to swamp out those other states and make it impossible to see those bars, and so you can see, in the figure on the left, that Florida has the majority of logbooks for all three FMPs, with about 15,000 logbooks catching species in the Snapper Grouper FMP in both 2022 and 2023.

Remember that the 2024 data is not complete, since many vessels report late, or some even wait until they're up for permit renewal, and so we do expect that those 2024 numbers are going to continue to increase as the vessels come into compliance for permit renewal. Here, you can also see that Georgia and South Carolina have the lowest number of logbooks that caught species in the three FMPs, but, in general, most of the for-hire trips, regardless of FMP species caught, are from Florida.

All right, and so, on this figure, I am now showing the number of vessels, on the Y-axis, that reported those logbooks from the previous slide. Again, I had to make the Y-axis vary across the four state figures, so you can visualize the dynamics in states besides Florida, and so the main takeaway from this figure is that Florida has the most vessels that caught species in the three different FMPs, which, obviously, is not surprising, since Florida had the most logbooks.

Georgia has the smallest number of vessels, with only a handful that caught species in the Dolphin Wahoo FMP in all three years. South Carolina has the second lowest number of vessels, and then, among Florida, South Carolina, and Georgia, there are fewer vessels catching species in the DW FMP, whereas DW is a bit more dominant in North Carolina.

All right, so now let's move on to the next request, which was to visualize the characteristics of participating permit holders by looking at trends in the logbook and did-not-fish reporting, and, importantly, before we go on I wanted to just say that, given our permit data is still being fixed, it

wasn't actually possible to show data at the precision of permit holder, and so, in these subsequent analyses, instead I'm going to focus on the number of vessels, since the permit, or permits, does get assigned to a vessel, and typically there's just one permit holder assigned to a vessel. However, I did want to note that vessels might have many permit holders, and so it's not exactly a one-to-one relationship, but it's the best we could do at this time.

All right, and so, also, I want to note too that, more specifically, throughout these analyses, we're going to be looking at things like, you know, how often they're reporting, or whether people are reporting more often, whether anyone reports more than once per day, and how many people are reporting just once per year.

All right, and so, in this figure, I'm simply showing the number of logbooks, along the Y-axis, that reported in each month, and the months are there in numbers, and so 1 through 12 on the X-axis, and then the years are stacked here, and so each color is representing a different year, and so light blues at the top there, for 2022, and the middle is 2023, and then 2024 on the bottom, just so we could compare across the years. Remember this is just representing the logbooks that were recorded, and so we still have more than 50 percent of vessels that are noncompliant in these years.

From this figure, you can just see basically some trends here, right, and so May through June is the peak effort months, with about 6,000 logbooks being submitted in those months, on average, and then, in the winter months, which looks like it's about September to February, the logbooks is closer to 2,000 in those months, across all three years.

This analysis started by quantifying the number of vessels that are reporting a logbook in each day, for all three years, so the years here are color-coded now as different color bars. However, showing this by day was a very busy figure, and so what I did here instead is I took the daily number of vessels with the logbook in each month, and then I averaged that daily number of vessels with a logbook by month, to show the daily average number of vessels with a logbook by month, and so I'm losing some of the precision, obviously, by not showing it by day, but it's, obviously, much more visually digestible this way.

The major takeaways from this analysis are that there are never more than 275 vessels that submitted a logbook in any day, across all three years, and, also, the trends are pretty similar across the years, which I guess is basically a general theme across these different analyses that I'm showing, and, really, you know, as I said before, this is probably reflecting the fact that the same vessels are reporting, or not reporting, among these three years.

All right, and so one of the questions that was posed to us was how many vessels have no logbooks reported among these years, and so, on this slide, I'm showing those numbers as a percentage of the total number of vessels that are permitted in each year, and you can see the total number of permitted vessels on the bottom of the slide there, for perspective.

So, for example, in 2022, there were about 1,919 South Atlantic federal for-hire permitted vessels, which remember it does exclude headboat survey vessels, and, of the 1,919, 44 percent of them never submitted a report in 2022, which, if you do the math, that's about 850 vessels, and there are slightly more permitted vessels in 2023 and 2024, and you can see, respectively, the percent of vessels without a logbook in both of those years is also larger, at 51 and 52 percent.

Then, below each of those donuts, I'm showing the number of vessels that had only one logbook in each of those three years, and so you can see, in 2022, there were seventy-five vessels that only had one logbook, eighty-two in 2023, and ninety-two in 2024, and so, really, this slide is just emphasizing that roughly half of the permitted vessels are not reporting, or at least not taking for-hire trips, in all of these years, and then, of those who are reporting, we have a relatively large number of vessels that only submit one trip, or at least tell us they're only taking one trip, and we'll dig into that a little bit more in a couple of slides.

All right, and so, in this figure, I'm showing the number of vessels that are taking more than one trip a day, and so on the Y-axis is the number of vessels, and then the months, again, is on the X-axis, and they're numbered 1 through 12, and so the main takeaway from this figure is that, on average, there are never more than thirty-three vessels that take more than one trip in any day, across all three years, and the number of vessels is pretty consistent from year to year, which also suggests that these are probably the same subset of vessels who take multiday trips throughout all these years.

All right, and so, on this slide, we're showing the frequency of the total annual logbooks that were submitted per vessel, where the logbooks are in ten-logbook intervals, or bins, and so the number of vessels is shown on the Y-axis, and the binned logbooks on the X-axis., and then the years are stacked here, again, and so 2022 at the top, and 2024 is at the bottom.

Also, just pointing out that that first bin is split, and it's split to show the number of vessels that submitted no logbooks in each year, and those numbers are listed there on the left-hand side of the slide, and so the main takeaways from this slide are that about half of the vessels are submitting ten or fewer logbooks in each year, and, of the vessels in that first bin, about half the vessels are submitting no logbooks in each year, which I also showed on Slide 11.

All right, and so, on this slide, we're showing the frequency of annual did-not-fish reports per vessel, where the number of vessels is shown on the Y-axis, and the number of did-not-fish reports is binned in two did-not-fish report bins along the X-axis, and I just want to point out that the number of did-not-fish reports ranges from zero to fifty-two, since did-not-fish reports are weekly reports, and there's fifty-two weeks in each year, and, again, that first bin is split to show the number of vessels that submitted no did-not-fish reports in each year, and those numbers are listed on the left-hand side of the slide.

The main takeaway from this figure is that, of the vessels reporting, most vessels are either submitting no did-not-fish reports all year, and, again, that's shown in that far-left bin, or they're submitting fifty-two weeks of did-not-fish reports, which is shown in the far-right bin, and that's consistent among the three years.

On this slide, it's showing the frequency of reports that were logbooks for each vessel that's reporting, and so the Y-axis is the number of vessels, and the X-axis is the percentage of submitted reports that were logbooks, noting the percentages are binned along the X-axis in 5 percent intervals, and so Figure A includes vessels that didn't submit a report every week of the year, and so maybe they didn't have to. or maybe they're out of compliance, whereas Figure B only includes vessels that submitted reports for at least fifty weeks or more in each year.

We did that because it removes those vessels that are artificially inflating the 100 percent column, which is the far-right bar in Figure A, and then the logic here is that submitting two logbooks for two weeks is equal to 100 percent, and submitting fifty-two logbooks for fifty-two weeks is also equal to 100 percent, and so the main takeaway from Figure B is that logbooks make up less than 5 percent of the total reports that were -- That these vessels are submitting in all three years.

All right, and so, in this figure, we're delving a little bit further into the characteristics of vessels who are submitting did-not-fish reports, where here I'm showing the percent of vessels that submitted a did-not-fish report in each month for all three years, and so a vessel was counted in a month if it had at least one did-not-fish report in that month, and recall the did-not-fish report is a weekly report, and so the percent is calculated as the total number of vessels that submitted a did-not-fish report in a given month divided by the total number of permitted vessels in that year, and, again, the number of permanent vessels is shown at the bottom of the slide, for reference. For example, there were over 75 percent of the 2,198 vessels in 2024 that submitted a did-not-fish report for at least one week of January in 2024, and that's roughly 1,650 vessels.

One thing to note is it is important to remember this analysis does ignore late reporting, and I showed, in my last presentation to the council, in March of 2024, that many of these did-not-fish reports are getting submitted past the weekly Tuesday deadline, and, more often, they're being submitted more than thirty days late, and this is important when you think about that downward trend in those last few months of 2024, as many vessels are still coming up for permit renewal, and so they still have late reports to get turned in.

All right, and so this slide is showing the number of did-not-fish reports along the Y-axis in each month, and, again, those months, and they're numbered from 1 through 12, are on the X-axis, for all three years, and the years are color-coded. What you can see in this figure is that the number of did-not-fish reports, in any given month, is in the thousands, and the reason the numbers are in the thousands is explained in the bullets.

I'll just summarize that, since the did-not-fish reports are weekly reports, each vessel can submit up to four did-not-fish reports in a given month, and so, if we have 1,919 permanent vessels in 2022. and those 1,919 vessels can submit up to four did-not-fish reports in each month of 2022, then the maximum number of did-not-fish reports that we could get in any month of 2022 is 7,676, and so, when it's approaching that number for 2022 you know that we got all did-not-fish reports from all the vessels.

Also, since we know, from the previous slide, that roughly 75 percent of the vessels are submitting did-not-fish reports in January of 2022, then, if you compare this figure to the previous slide, we can estimate that about 1,450 vessels submitted those did-not-fish reports in January of 2022.

All right, and so, in this analysis, the intent is to show -- It's really looking into the theory that some vessels are not reporting all year and then they just submit all did-not-fish reports, in order to renew their permits, and so this becomes really a rather complicated analysis, the more precise that you try to be in pulling out the vessels that are doing this.

Here, what I did to keep the assumptions pretty simple, is I counted a vessel if it had any did-not-fish reports that were submitted more than thirty days late, and then I only counted those vessels if those late did-not-fish reports were submitted after they had been reminded about permit

renewal, and so the did-not-fish report submission date was within sixty days of the permit expiring or they submitted them after the permit had already expired. Then, from that list of vessels, I excluded vessels if they had submitted any logbooks during the year, and so regardless of if the logbook was late, and, even if they only submitted one logbook, they were excluded.

Based on those assumptions you can see that, in 2022 there were 270 vessels that met this criteria., 332 in 2023, and 123 in 2024. However, I want to mention, or at least remind, that we do still have a large number of vessels in 2024 that have yet to submit their late reports, and so we're expecting that the 2024 number will continue to rise as those vessels come up for permit renewal.

In this figure, it's showing trip length characteristics for the reported logbooks, and, here, we're using the reported start and end time from the logbook to create these figures, and so the figure on the left shows the average trip length by state, for all three years, and it's important to note that the X-axis does vary, in order to account for the much larger magnitude in Florida.

This figure is highlighting that most vessels, in all states, are taking half-day trips, on average, except in North Carolina, which you can see has more full-day trips, on average, across all three years, and then the figure on the right is just summarizing the percent of logbooks that are reporting trip lengths as half-day, three-quarter, full, or greater than one full day, and, again, it's showing that, on average, across all three years, the majority of trips are half day trips.

Okay, and so, for the next request, we were asked to quantify the number of reminders that these vessels are given, and, really, the best way to illustrate that is to take a look at the amount of outreach our SEFHIER team does to help our constituents learn about their requirements, get them signed up to report, make corrections to reports, and also to help them get outstanding reports submitted.

In this first outreach-related figure, I wanted to just highlight the total number of correspondences that our SEFHIER team completed in each year since the beginning of the program, which was in 2021, and so, in the figure, you can see that the number of contacts, which is on the Y-axis, is upwards of 10,000 in 2022, and about 7,500 in the other three years, which really is a phenomenal amount of communication that our SEFHIER team completes in each year, and so I do just want to take a moment to acknowledge my SEFHIER team for that great effort.

I wanted to note too that 2022 does stand taller than the other years in the figure, and that's because, in April of 2022, we started holding permit applications for vessels that are non-compliant, for the vessels that are missing trip reports, and so that's why there's so many more contacts in 2022 than in the other years.

All right, and so this is my last slide before I pass it over to Dr. Lazarre, but, here, what I wanted to do is just put those contact numbers into perspective, in terms of how many vessels, and you can say here AKA permit holders, we're communicating with in each of those four years, and so these donut plots represent the percent of the total South Atlantic for-hire permitted vessels that we contacted in each of those four years.

Importantly, these contacts are being done through outgoing or incoming emails, or outgoing or incoming calls, and we do sometimes respond to text messages, if the captain has texted us and noted that they prefer that communication, that type of communication, and so you can see that

we've increased contacting, from just 68 percent of our permitted South Atlantic for-hire permitted vessels in 2022, to contacting 87 percent in 2024, and, also, that those percents start increasing in 2023, because we started including outgoing emails as a form of compliance communication to our constituents, and we found that those emails actually work really well, because these captains are out in their field doing their business during the daytime hours, and so they've told us that they can't pick up a phone.

Importantly, and it's bolded here, if a vessel is compliant, and they're fully aware of how to report, and they never have any technical issues, then we actually might not have communication with that vessel in a given year, and so, really, you would never expect to have 100 percent of the vessels contacted in any year, and so, for example, in 2024, 13 percent of the vessels just didn't need any of our help. All right, so I'm going to go ahead and pass it to Dr. Lazarre now, who is going to wrap up the rest of the presentation, but I do want to note that I'll be available at the end for questions. Dr. Lazarre.

DR. LAZARRE: Great. Can everyone still hear me okay?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, ma'am.

DR. LAZARRE: Perfect. So, good morning, everyone. My name is Dominique Lazarre. I'm an analyst in the LAPP Branch, and I was tasked with generating an analysis that compares the data collected in SEFHIER to the data that's collected by MRIP. I just want to highlight that this analysis is very preliminary. There are a lot of differences between these two programs, and it makes it difficult to draw direct comparisons between the two, and so this presentation really represents our first attempt to try to compare these two programs quantitatively, and additional analyses are likely needed to better understand what appropriate comparisons there are between the two programs.

Before we dive too deep into the actual analysis, I want to start by highlighting some of the characteristics that are associated with these two programs and identify some of the assumptions that were made before completing the comparisons between the programs. Because these programs differ structurally, making an apples-to-apples comparison was not always possible, and this table helps to highlight some of those key differences.

First, in terms of the temporal period that was used for the analysis, data from 2022 to 2024 was used. This timeframe best represents the overlap between the two programs, with SEFHIER data starting in 2021, but becoming more reliable in 2022, after the program was initiated in the South Atlantic. Also, data from Wave 6 was not available from MRIP at the time of this analysis, and so we excluded Wave 6 data from both datasets, to make them more comparable.

In terms of geographic region, similar to what Michelle mentioned earlier in the presentation, we aggregated the data, the landings and discard data, in the South Atlantic based on where the trips were landed, or reported, and so, in the South Atlantic, we tend to include data for some species that are landed north of our region, in Virginia northwards, that would be counted towards South Atlantic ACLs, but, again, for this analysis we only looked at data based on where the final landing, or reporting, location was for each of the trips, to make sure that we are only including South Atlantic state trips, to make the comparisons a bit more comparable.

It's also important to note that there's a difference in the type of records that's being collected between the two programs. SEFHIER corresponds with self-reported logbook data, whereas MRIP data is a mixture from multiple sources, and so, on the MRIP side, effort data comes from both a weekly telephone survey, and the catch data comes from vessels intercepted during the MRIP APAIS dockside sampling program, and so these two data components are combined to create expanded effort and catch estimates for the charter fleet, and so, whereas the logbooks from SEFHIER would ideally serve as a census, the MRIP data uses estimation to generate regional estimates for both catch and effort.

Lastly, I just want to highlight the difference in participants between the two programs. SEFHIER includes federally-permitted for-hire vessels, and that includes both federally-permitted charter vessels and some headboats that are not covered by the Southeast Region Headboat Survey. That's a small number, but there are a few headboats that are associated with the SEFHIER data. MRIP covers both state and federally-permitted charter vessels, but no headboats are sampled by MRIP in the Southeast Region.

The first part of the request that I started to take a look at was a comparison of the sample sizes between the two programs. I took that to mean that we were looking at different effort metrics associated with each of these programs, and so, again, there are some additional differences I should highlight that demonstrates some of the difficulty in drawing direct comparisons between the two programs.

First, going back to the fleet participants that I just mentioned, when we're considering measuring measures of effort, MRIP is likely to be higher than the values produced by SEFHIER, in part because there are both state and federally-permitted vessel trips that are included in the MRIP estimates.

I also want to highlight that this expansion is not using the Fishing Effort Survey, but it's using the for-hire survey, which is a weekly telephone survey. The for-hire survey is used to expand the effort estimates within the region. SEFHIER has somewhat different participants, with headboats being surveyed that would not be estimated in the MRIP charter vessel, and so, again, that shows kind of a difference between the two programs, in terms of who the reports, or estimates, are coming from, and so most headboats in our region are monitored via the Southeast Region Headboat Survey, and so the number of headboats in SEFHIER is small, but, again, it's going to lead to a difference in terms of the effort metrics that are coming from the two programs.

I tried to consider some methods to make the data a bit more comparable, maybe just limiting the analysis to trips that occurred in federal waters, so it would be more of a direct comparison of federally-permitted vessels, and their federal trips, but there was some more validation work that needed to be done, with some of the SEFHIER data, to ensure that the location data and designation of state and federal waters --

That the different fields within the datasets were correct, but, based on the timing that we had for this analysis, I wasn't able to do that validation, to make sure that we could separate and tease apart state-waters versus federal-waters trips, and so, unfortunately, making a direct comparison was not possible, in terms of just federal-waters trips for federally-permitted vessels. For this analysis, we're going to have to accept the fact that MRIP estimates will be skewed slightly higher, because of the state charter trips that cannot be excluded from the analysis.

An additional difference is that SEFHIER reports are provided at the vessel level, whereas MRIP APAIS trips, and the expansion estimation, is geared towards angler trips, and so I worked with NOAA's S&T to ensure that I could provide appropriate expansion at the vessel level, to make more direct comparisons between the two programs, but I thought it was still important to make sure I highlighted to all of you that there is still a difference, in terms of the way those data are collected.

Lastly I just want to highlight the low compliance in SEFHIER. I think Michelle did a pretty great job of kind of showing some of the compliance issues, and, because of that, it's hard to know whether the trends that we see in the SEFHIER data are actually representative of the entire fleet.

I included four metrics to try to best describe effort between these two programs. Three of them are from MRIP, and the total number of logbooks, represented by that yellow bar, corresponds with the logbook trips, vessel trips, from SEFHIER. So, because the magnitude of these different metrics are so -- They vary so dramatically, I created two figures to try to display these values.

For both graphs the Y-axis represents the total number of the metric, and the specific metric is labeled on the bottom of the X-axis. Blue colors represent MRIP, and yellow colors represent SEFHIER. The figure on the left has two bars that are pretty low in magnitude, a light blue and royal blue. These correspond with the number of MRIP APAIS assignments and the number of vessels interviewed by dockside samplers during the APAIS process, whereas the yellow bar corresponds with the number of SEFHIER logbooks, and so those much lower numbers are in part because of this estimation that's used to expand those kind of individual face-to-face contacts to the overall estimate for the region.

I know those blue bars are probably really hard to see, in terms of what the overall magnitude is for APAIS assignments and APAIS vessel interviews, but there are about 900 to 1,000 assignments in the South Atlantic each year for MRIP and 2,000 to 2,300 vessel trips intercepted between 2022 and 2024, in terms of APAIS interviews of charter vessels.

Again, the APAIS assignments and vessel interviews are unexpanded sample values that correspond with just the direct interactions between field staff and the MRIP charter fleet, but, if you look at the graph on the right, you can see that, when you expand those MRIP vessel estimates, there's a much larger contribution of total vessel trips in the South Atlantic, as compared to the number of SEFHIER logbooks that are reported within each year.

It should also be noted that the kind of the blue bar, representing the MRIP estimated vessel trips, is going to exacerbate the difference in magnitude between the two programs, because, again, state charter trips are included in that MRIP estimated vessel number.

Next, I broke down that same kind of information from the graph before, with MRIP estimated vessel trips and SEFHIER logbook trips by state. It becomes a little bit more clear that SEFHIER logbooks may represent only a fraction of the overall charter trips, even when you're looking at it at the state level, and so, again, orienting you to the graph, the columns are the different years, 2022 through 2024, and then the rows correspond with different states, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and the axes, the Y-axes, for each graph are varying, and so, again, like Michelle said, when you're looking at these graphs by state, Florida would swamp the signal from

the various other states, and so you can see that the Y-axes are varying to account for the magnitude within each individual state.

While there is some variation year to year, the estimates for each program, I think the magnitude of vessels reported by state from MRIP seems to be in line with what you would expect in terms of the amount of effort coming from each of the South Atlantic states from the charter fleet, whereas the logbook values are quite low.

Next, I wanted to double check, to see if there's any obvious bias in terms of the estimate of vessel trips or logbooks between the two programs, in terms of which state each of these estimates or logbook reports were coming from, and I think this graph helps to show that the proportions of trips from each state is pretty even over time, and so, again, if you're looking at the graphs, the Y-axis corresponds with the proportion of vessel trips, and then each of those different colors in the stacked plot corresponds with the state, and so the pink color on the top is Florida, the green is Georgia, North Carolina is a turquoise color, and South Carolina is in purple on the bottom.

Each of these each graph corresponds with a different year, 2022 to 2024, as the columns, and so, over the last three years it looks like there's a pretty similar proportion of trips associated with each state, regardless of the program. There's no obvious bias that can be seen, just based on the proportion of reports that are provided from each state, showing there being a greater contribution from one state or another between the two programs.

Next, I started to look into the catch data, and this is where there are some additional kind of comparisons that became more difficult to assess, and I have another list of caveats to kind of take into consideration as I pulled this data together, and so one of the first caveats to notice is that the catch disposition data are binned differently between the two programs, and so the different capture, data capture, programs for SEFHIER, those different apps that people use to provide their fishing data to SEFHIER, provide bin information in different ways for whether the fish was kept or discarded.

In some of the programs, there are just two options, and either you kept the fish, and it was harvested, or it was released, either live or dead, and there are other programs that have kind of a longer list of dispositions associated with the catch disposition for a particular species, and so the groupings made it difficult to try to aggregate the catch data and to clearly define catch and discard categories, especially the way we would normally do in terms of AB1, versus B2, and so, you know having harvest and dead releases binned as harvest, versus just live releases as your discards.

The differences in the way that that data is kind of categorized in the different programs makes it a little bit more difficult to try to make a direct comparison between the two, but, for the purposes of the rest of the presentation, it should be noted that the retained is only fish that were harvested, and discards includes both live and dead releases for the two programs.

Another confounding factor for this analysis is the way that the species names are identified, and so one example of this is dolphin versus dolphinfish, and so, in SEFHIER, both of those names could be used to represent dolphin in the South Atlantic, and there might be other common name mismatches that would need to be aggregated to more appropriately match the common names used in MRIP.

Additionally, there are a lot of general family groupings that were used in the SEFHIER data, and additional time looking and comparing the different name conventions that were used, to make sure that you're accounting for the various species in the right way, and making sure that they're associated with the -- Not necessarily the right FMP, but making sure that you're making a direct comparison between the same species between programs is just, again, another thing that would require additional investigation in the future.

Then, as I already mentioned, MRIP includes both state and federally-permitted vessels, and so the expanded catch estimates are likely going to be biased, in terms of some of the species that are caught in the state waters, in addition to federal waters, and potentially biased higher than what you would see in the SEFHIER survey, or SEFHIER program, because you're kind of looking at two different fishery participant groups between those two programs.

Again, just highlighting that low compliance in SEFHIER makes it unclear for us to understand if the species caught are representative of the entire federal fleet or if they're just representative of the same individuals that provide reports throughout each year.

The data request from the council staff, in terms of catch data, was to look at catch to discard ratios for a subset of species, and so hopefully you can read those names pretty easily, but we have black sea bass, blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, king mackerel, red snapper, scamp. This is the scamp complex, and so scamp and yellowmouth grouper, snowy grouper, Spanish mackerel, and yellowtail snapper, and so that's a mixture of coastal migratory pelagics, snapper grouper species, and some kind of deeper-water species, to try to represent some of the various FMPs that we have in the South Atlantic region.

As I started to investigate the data, I realized that there were a lot of trip records that had no discard information associated, and so this graph is just trying to provide some context for the number of trip reports for both programs that had no discard information, and so the dotted line that goes across horizontally would show -- Anything above that means more than 50 percent of the trips that caught that species don't have any associated discard information for the trip record, and so, when trying to provide a catch to discard ratio, it becomes a little bit more difficult, when there is no discard information associated with the record, to generate those values and to compare them.

Just to highlight a couple of species, black sea bass and red snapper, those are species with pretty high regulatory implications, and so those both fall below that 50 percent line, because most of the records with those species have some discard data associated with them, whereas some of the coastal migratory pelagics, and some of the deep-water species, have a higher proportion of reports with no discard information.

When trying to compare the catch to discard ratios, I thought part of what the council would be interested in is whether or not you see similar trends at the vessel level, in terms of how many fish are being caught versus discarded, but more investigation really needs to be done into this data to figure out how to best use this data when there are a large number of reports that have no discard information.

That might be reasonable for some of the species, but I think more thought needs to be put into place before we get into maybe trip level information showing the differences in catch and discards

in comparison to each other, and so, moving forward, I looked at more annual estimates of catch to discard ratios for the species that are listed here.

This next plot shows the proportion of catch that was retained, versus discarded, for the species of interest at the annual level, and so, again, to orient all of you to the plot, each column corresponds with a year. The top row corresponds with MRIP, and the bottom row corresponds with SEFHIER. Each of the bars relates to a specific species, and so the red is discard, and yellow is retain, and so you're looking at the proportion of each of those species, dependent on the program, the proportion that was discarded versus retained for each of the species.

Again, species like black sea bass and red snapper, you see really high discard to catch, or discard to harvest, proportions, which I think you would expect, and then, overall, when you look at the pattern between the two programs, for these species that were investigated, you see very similar trends between MRIP and SEFHIER, and so the MRIP data aligns fairly closely with the SEFHIER reports, from the individuals who are reporting, but I think, again, there's a concern -- We don't know for sure whether the SEFHIER data is representative of the full fleet.

I will highlight a few differences between the species, in terms of the -- Or the programs, in terms of the retention versus discard ratios. One in particular is scamp, where, in 2022, and, to a smaller extent, in 2023 and 2024, you see kind of a higher proportion of discards, or discard to catch ratio, when you're looking at the scamp complex in MRIP versus SEFHIER, and so I think, again, more investigation into specific species that we're interested in, and maybe trip-level comparisons between the number of fish caught and discarded, would be something to look into in the future.

Then, lastly, when trying to evaluate the differences in the programs, I looked at the difference between the species that are retained most often by both programs, and so the tree map above shows the top-ten species caught, in terms of number of fish, for both programs. The MRIP data is in blue, and the SEFHIER is in yellow and orange, and, again, we do see a lot of overlap, in terms of the two programs produce, in terms of which species are caught most often.

Dolphin, gray snapper, gray triggerfish, king mackerel, vermilion snapper, and yellowtail snapper are seen in both lists, which does show quite a bit of overlap between what the two programs are showing are the most commonly-caught species, but some of the differences might be something that we should be looking into in the future, and so one major difference is the MRIP top-ten species list shows red drum, whereas the SEFHIER list doesn't include red drum at all.

That might be in part because of the inclusion of the state-water trips that are occurring, and included in the estimation for MRIP, whereas the SEFHIER trips are more focused on federally-permitted vessels, and potentially more trips in federal water, and so, again, more investigation into the species that don't overlap may provide us more information, in terms of key species that might be missed by either program in the future.

Overall, I think that the take-home message, from my portion of this presentation, is that we're seeing a lot of similarities in terms of where reports are coming from, similar trends in terms of which species are being discarded for the key species that we looked at, and similar trends in the kind of largest, or most commonly kept, species between the two programs, but this investigation really only just starts scratching the surface, in terms of the comparisons that can be made between the two programs, and so that's it for me, and I'll turn things back over to Michelle to wrap us up.

DR. MASI: All right, and so that concludes the presentation. I'm going to go ahead and open the floor to questions.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you very much, Michelle and Dominique. Do we have questions? I've got Tom.

MR. ROLLER: So, first of all, Dr. Masi, thank you, and Dr. Lazarre, thank you for this presentation. It is extensive. There is so much information here, and I want to emphasize a couple of things, and feel free to comment on them, and also don't feel, when I reference a slide, that we need to flip to it.

First of all, Dr. Masi, thank you for all that you do, and also relay my thanks to your team, and one of the things that I want to preface is, when you talked about the amount of outreach you've done over the last couple of years, it is a lot. Most of my permitted colleagues in the fire-hire industry have heard from SEFHIER. I'm not embarrassed to say I've heard from SEFHIER multiple times, and they have been extraordinarily helpful for me for correcting errors.

You know, in this program, it's very easy, particularly with did-not-fish reports, to submit a few days too many, right, on your calendar. It's also not too hard to miss a day every once in a while, and I've done that, and they've been so helpful, and there's been so much outreach going on, and I just want to make sure everyone here at the council knows that they've been doing that.

There was -- Particularly in Dr. Masi's report, there was a couple of really interesting points that I wanted to reference, that I thought was very interesting and helpful in me kind of understanding the different aspects of our for-hire fleet. One of them, you know, on the page 6 data, is the different amounts of trips in different states. I think that's a really good characterization of the difference in the size of our fleets, right, and, also, what I found was really interesting was on page 9, and it was the trip lengths.

That really shows a huge difference in how our fleets utilize our resources differently. First of all, look at the number of half-day trips in all the states, versus North Carolina, which runs a lot of full-day trips. I mean, if you look at the numbers of trips run in the state of Florida, versus the state of North Carolina, I think we're almost -- Despite Florida having vast numbers of more trips, North Carolina almost has half as many full-day trips, because our fisheries are more offshore, and they take a lot longer to get there, right, and that has always been -- You know, when you have offshore trips, my understanding with MRIP's intercept of kind of this small percentage of overall fishing trips is that gets -- They don't necessarily capture all of it.

I do think a couple of things. From the second half of the report, I thought there were some really interesting points here. I'm looking at my notes. First of all, when we looked at -- I guess my question is, when we looked at like the APAIS interviews and stuff, was all that data -- Is that just for-hire, or does that include a lot of -- Does that include any rec anglers as well? That wasn't clear to me as we went over that.

DR. LAZARRE: So, the APAIS assignments, you're allowed to intercept both private boat and charter vessels, so the assignments would be the assignments that include both private boat and charter effort, but the vessel intercept numbers specifically were just for charter vessels. There are

additional interactions between the MRIP samplers and private boat vessels that was not included in the presentation.

MR. ROLLER: Okay, and so, like on page 26, for example, the dark blue line would -- The APAIS vessel interviews, that would be for for-hire interviews, and is that correct, or no? Am I misunderstanding that?

DR. LAZARRE: Yes, that's for-hire interviews only. Charter interviews, specifically.

MR. ROLLER: Okay, and, you know, I would just bring up this point for conversation going forward is, you know, we've had this discussion, in North Carolina state fisheries, that we know that MRIP doesn't always capture for-hire vessels as well. No fault to the program, and it's mostly just that for-hire fleet is very, very different. We leave at different times, we leave from different areas, et cetera, and so forth, and that's been a reoccurring theme as we analyze data on our state fisheries as well.

I would say that, you know, when we look at the last half of it, regarding the comparison of MRIP to the SEFHIER program, I would definitely agree that, while a lot of those different fish kind of correspond with my understanding, or my experience, with the fisheries, there's definitely a lot more that needs to be done there to see where that data -- There definitely is a lot more analysis that needs to be done to more accurately look at that, and I guess there was a comment on the last couple things, and I believe you made a comment looking at the top-ten species, and you mentioned something about red drum wasn't included, and could you -- Could you say what you meant by that? I was just a little confused.

DR. LAZARRE: Sure. I guess, in terms of what I'm showing here, it's that the top-ten species for each program are highlighted with this tree map, and, on the left side, the MRIP side, you can see a value corresponding with red drum occurring in the top-ten species that were estimated from the MRIP survey, whereas, on the SEFHIER side, red drum doesn't make it to the top-ten list, but SEFHIER is highlighting federally-permitted vessels. While they do have some state-waters trips, the state charter trips that are included in MRIP might be influencing some of the kind of inshore species, or coastal species, that are shown in the top-ten list on MRIP that might not show up in SEFHIER. Does that make sense?

MR. ROLLER: That does make sense. I'm going to have to sit back and wrap my mind around that, I mean, particularly since we have a lot of short trips analyzed, and I would expect there to be more -- Particularly in North Carolina, I would expect more red drum being reported from even in the SEFHIER trips, but thanks again.

DR. LAZARRE: One quick thing is, also, this is South-Atlantic-wide, and so I did do some additional work that looked at kind of the list by state, and I think you would probably see that show up in the like by-state comparisons, but, when you're looking at the South Atlantic numbers in total, the Florida landings are probably going to overcompensate the other states, just because of the magnitude of the fishery in Florida, as compared to the other South Atlantic states.

MR. ROLLER: Okay. That definitely makes a lot of sense. I would just say, given my conversations, and experience with a lot of people who are fishing in both state and federal waters,

particularly North and South Carolina, I would expect to see more red drum harvested, but, given the magnitude of Florida, I think that makes more sense. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tom. Carolyn.

DR. ROLLER: So, to that point, Tom, red drum are prohibited in federal waters, and so the SEFHIER folks -- If they're just federally-permitted, they're not going to have red drum retained, which is what that slide is, or at least that's what I'm seeing, is it's the top-ten species retained, and so, if they're prohibited in federal waters, nobody is retaining them, but, if you're state and federal permitted -- It's a question of how, I guess, the intercept would pick that up, and how that person gets assigned, because, even though they have a federal permit, they may be fishing in state waters, where they can retain red drum. Does that make sense? That's why, to me, I'm just thinking from the fact that you cannot retain red drum in federal waters.

MR. ROLLER: I understand that, Dr. Belcher. I guess my point was that, as a permitted for-hire vessel, I'm reporting all of my trips, state waters and federal waters, when I'm fishing, and those include the harvest of red drum, and I'm knowing that from a lot of my colleagues. That's just why I was surprised that it didn't show up, because, unless I just don't understand the analyses here, I was -- My point was that, if we're also reporting our state-waters fish, and I feel I'm getting too into the weeds this, and I'm going to wrap this up, but like I just felt that you would see a little bit more representation from that.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you. Jimmy, and then Amy.

MR. HULL: Thank you. I have a question. Can you provide us the compliance, reporting compliance, rate for headboats?

DR. MASI: I personally don't have that information, but I know there was a presentation, I think, given by Ken Brennan last year, in 2024, and I know it was upwards, in the high eighties, or 90 percent, or maybe even 100 percent, compliance for that program.

MR. HULL: Okay. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Michelle, I give you and your staff a ton of credit for the amount of outreach that you guys have been able to do. I had two questions for you, and then maybe one for Dominique, and so I know you've included, and I really appreciate you doing this. A lot of this was -- It was a lot of work, and we really do appreciate that effort.

You included dually-permitted boats from the Gulf, and I know that permit information is a little difficult, but do you have any sort of an idea of the magnitude of the dually-permitted boats that were used in the analysis, from respect to like the did-not-fish reports and what have you? I'm just trying to get a perspective of the South Atlantic versus the Gulf.

DR. MASI: So, in terms of permit numbers, on average, there's something like maybe 200, to 225, dually-permitted Gulf South and Atlantic vessels. In terms of which ones are reporting, I don't have that. I didn't split it out in terms of, you know, how many actually submitted a logbook,

whether they were dually-permitted versus just South Atlantic permitted, and so I couldn't speak to that, but, just thinking about permit numbers themselves, I have looked at that information before, and, by year it's about, you know, somewhere around 200 to 225 have a dual Gulf and South Atlantic permit.

MS. DUKES: Perfect. That's exactly what I was just needing, in order to kind of wrap my head around some of this, and then, with that extensive outreach, do you feel like most of it is reactive outreach, versus proactive outreach?

DR. MASI: So it depends. We do both. We actually contact folks when we haven't seen any reports coming in, which in some senses is reactive, and others we get, a lot of the time, especially when the program was new, where folks had never heard about the program, and so it's that opportunity to say, hey, by the way, here's the program, and we send them information about, you know, what they need to do to get into compliance.

Other times it's because they -- You know, they know about the program, and we've already contacted them, but they still aren't reporting, or maybe, you know, like Tom was speaking to, they might have just forgotten a report, or missed a couple of weeks, and so we reach out and let them know that they're missing reports, before they come up for permit renewal, and, you know, run into that snag where they're not going to be able to renew their permits. Then we also have folks that call us, whether it's, you know, hey, I'm up for permit renewal, and I can't renew, and what's going on, or, you know, I've never heard about the program, and I want to get into compliance, and so we get those types of incoming calls as well.

MS. DUKES: That's great, and I've been in your shoes before. The program is still pretty relatively new, and I remember, when we pushed ours, we did almost all reactive outreach, with very little proactive, and, now that our system has been in play for so long, most of our outreach has kind of shifted to that proactive, and I do really feel like you get better response, and so keep doing what you're doing, because you're going to get there, I promise.

Dominique, dude, I miss you, babe. I can't wait to go drinking with you at some point in the future. I had a quick question about the magnitude and the proportions. I really appreciated you putting all of that kind of together, and, when you look at those proportions, when you're looking at the MRIP versus logbooks, I don't know, and I guess my thought process is just like somewhere in between all of those bars is likely where the truth really lies, and so I was just curious to see what your thoughts were, and like what did you think about your analysis, and just to provide your perspective would be helpful.

DR. LAZARRE: I guess my perspective -- That's a difficult question. I think I would need a little bit more specifics, in terms of what part of this presentation I would give my perspective on. I guess, when talking about the magnitude of vessel trips in MRIP, as compared to SEFHIER, I made sure to break down those numbers by state, because I thought it would be really important for the state representatives to see what the MRIP estimates are for charter for your state.

I know there's a lot of controversy over the expansion for MRIP on the private boat side, but I think there's probably less heartburn, or hopefully there's less heartburn, over the magnitudes provided by the expanded effort estimates on the charter side, because of the for-hire survey and that weekly effort information that's used to expand the APAIS intercept data, and so hopefully

like that showed through, and I think that having the magnitudes associated with the effort from the MRIP side seem more in line with what people would expect is hopefully positive, in terms of a plug for there being some things that are working well, maybe, with MRIP.

There are always improvements that are necessary on all sides, but I guess that was one of the takeaways that I had, just at least looking at effort, and I think looking at some of the catch information. There's just a lot more questions that I have. Just by starting to dig into this data, and knowing what the council is most interested in, will definitely inform how I can move forward and improve these analyses and bring you more information that you want to see in the future.

MS. DUKES: Great. Thanks. I really appreciate you getting excited about diving into this data a little bit more, and we'll work to get you some more information. The last thing that I'll have is just that you point out sort of a lesson learned, which is the species list that is currently what is available for SEFHIER. That list is beyond extensive, and I'm wondering if paring that list down a little bit, getting rid of some of the fluff, and there are marine mammals, and isopods, and turtles. I mean, there's all kinds of crazy stuff, and I'm just wondering too, if we were to pare down some of that species list, we could clean up some of the errors, and just try to streamline it a little bit more, and so I appreciated you highlighting some of those difficulties. Thanks.

DR. LAZARRE: Yes, and Michelle might be able to speak to the possibilities of changing the list more than I could, but just a bit more time being able to compare the unique values between the two lists. We should be able to come up with some ways to aggregate things appropriately, but, just based on the timeline, I couldn't verify some of the family groupings, and things like that, and how they should be associated, and, knowing that there are some more general species groupings used, there might not be really good direct comparisons between the two programs. If you have just general mackerel as your species name associated with your catch, making sure that you associate it with the right species, and not counting it in the wrong way, I think is kind of the problem that we're dealing with.

MS. MURPHEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. Amy, I agree with you, particularly in the extensiveness of this list. I think that, particularly when a user of the eTRIPS app does that, you'll find that that extensive list makes the app a little bit less user-friendly, right, and there's -- You know, we've been giggling about the isopod listing on there up here, just so you guys who aren't here understand, but one point that I wanted to make on outreach, and this is more of a comment for the council, is I want to preface that the SEFHIER staff is doing a lot.

They're doing a great job, but they can't be on the ground making sure that we have uncompliant fishermen who don't have the permits, because they don't want to report, and it's our job, as the council, to make this permit work better, right, or to make this program work better, and I think that's what we need to be focused on. There's only so much outreach they can do, and I believe that they're doing a very good job.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tom. Any other questions or comments? All right. Well, thank you so much, Michelle and Dominique. We appreciate all the work that you do for this program and all the information you brought us. I know you spent a lot of time doing these analyses, and so I just really want to thank you for your efforts on that.

DR. MASI: Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Are we all interested in a break? I see heads shaking, and so we'll just go ahead and go for fifteen minutes. Is that okay with everyone? Okay. Fifteen minutes.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MURPHEY: All right, and we'll go ahead and call us back to order, and so now I've got -- Myra is going to go through the decision document for the Modifications for the For-Hire Reporting, and I'm going to go ahead and turn it over to Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Trish. Good morning, everybody. This is Attachment 3c in your briefing book. This is the decision document for the amendment that would make modifications to the SEFHIER Program. However, you'll notice that the title is different, and that is because we need to discuss whether you intend to also modify the Southeast Region Headboat Survey, and we'll talk about that when we get to the purpose and need, but that's why we're calling it Modifications to South Atlantic For-Hire Reporting.

I'm going to skip over the background, in the interest of time. I do want to remind the council that the Gulf is about a year ahead of us in revisions. It's actually not revisions in their case, and they're kind of standing up the program back from scratch, after it was set-aside.

Remember, also, another reminder that last -- In December, you received a presentation from Highly Migratory Species on their proposed changes for reporting, and you submitted a comment letter to HMS, and you instructed us to include, in those comments, four main points, one being consistency in reporting and avoiding duplicative reporting, validation, and the importance of that component. Reporting of non-HMS species was also mentioned, and reporting of economic data, and so, if you haven't seen the comment letter, I'm happy to send it to you via email.

You heard, this morning, what your advisory panels had to say, and so I'm not going to go over that. The objectives for this meeting, I'll skip over the first two bullets there. We do need to talk about the timing of this amendment, and how it's going to move forward from now, review the updated purpose and need, and the IPT had some suggestions for you guys to consider, review the list of potential actions, and the range of alternatives, and tell us what of these things you want to take out to scoping.

That's where we are in this amendment. We're considering approving for scoping, and so what I have here in the amendment timing is just we've obtained feedback from the two APs, as I said, and we accomplished that, and you're going to review, and potentially approve for scoping, at this meeting, and then we would get feedback from the APs that are meeting in the spring.

In June, we would bring you an updated amendment, and same thing in September. In December, we would be looking to approve for public hearing, and then, you know, we'll see how things progress, given where we are. Any questions?

MS. MURPHEY: Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. While I would just note that our briefing materials don't contain a draft amendment, we have a decision document. If we're going to approve something for public hearing, I strongly recommend that we include the document that's being approved in the briefing materials for that meeting. Thank you.

MS. BROUWER: Shep, we are considering approving for scoping. Public hearing approval would come in December of this year. Any other questions?

MS. MURPHEY: I've got Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I don't know if this is the appropriate time to ask, but how does this fit with the ten-for-one? When do we have those discussions? I guess I'm kind of not really sure in the process. It's like do we proceed, and then at the end of the meeting decide what things we're going to prioritize? Do we have a conversation as to whether or not we're going to pause now? If it's out of order, then I apologize, but I was just curious how we're going to address this relative to that.

MS. MURPHEY: No, and that's a good point, Carolyn. Myra, do you have any thoughts, or do we need to bring John up, or --

MS. BROUWER: Well, I'll remind you that, yesterday, Andy mentioned that it was something that the agency was looking to give some guidance. I imagine that there isn't any specific guidance at this point, and so what I would suggest is that we proceed with reviewing this document and just keep that in the back of your minds.

MS. MURPHEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Myra repeated what I had said yesterday, and so, at this point, I don't think we have any solid guidance for you to really indicate how the deregulatory and regulatory work is going to proceed going forward. Keep in mind that this is something that's going to also be managed nationally, right, and so it's across the entire Fisheries Service.

What I will say is I think, you know, we'll be able to provide better guidance in coming meetings, and we will need to probably be very thoughtful, and careful, with regard to the regulatory burden this places on industry members, on the agency, as well as, you know, where we can make improvements that actually might alleviate some of the burden that's being placed on the industry members, and how we balance that out, what the end outcome of this amendment looks like, right, could really dictate whether this is a regulatory or deregulatory action going forward, but I just would emphasize, you know, we're going to give more guidance, but it just isn't ready yet for primetime.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy, and I think I agree we might as well just keep going until we know something more, and just stay flexible, and so -- But thanks for those comments. Go ahead, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you. In front of you is the draft purpose and need. You reviewed this in December. We are -- The IPT is suggesting the changes that you see highlighted in yellow, to include the Southeast Region Headboat Survey. We also just suggest a more specific for the South

Atlantic permitted charter headboat vessels that participate in the three fisheries, and so those are the edits we're suggesting.

I'll go over the recommendations from the IPT. We also have -- One of the things the IPT suggested was to look at the purpose and need that the Gulf Council has in their document, and I will put that up on the screen here in a minute for you guys to look at.

The Gulf's program is going to be picking up some of the items that the South Atlantic is considering, and so here is the purpose and need statement from the Gulf, and so we don't see the need to really change anything. I think the two statements are similar. We know that we want to maintain that consistency between the two programs, and so, if you guys are okay with these edits, we can proceed. As I said, we're at the very early stages of the amendment, and so we would just be scoping this, and so I don't believe that we need to make a motion, but just be aware and keep your purpose and need in mind as you go through the various actions.

MS. MURPHEY: Do we have any comments or edits for the purpose and need? Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would just say that, you know, adding the headboat survey into the purpose and need -- It doesn't seem like we have heard that there's any real issues, at least with compliance, but it seems to be working pretty well. I don't know if you can improve upon the precision of landings and discard fishing effort data, or economic data, but, you know, it seems like the headboat survey works pretty good. Why mess with it, or even include it?

MS. MURPHEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and, to piggyback off of what Jimmy was going down, is the For-Hire Reporting AP did not include anyone from the headboat group, correct, and so there's no really representation there?

MS. BROUWER: No, there was.

MR. DUKES: Oh wait. Haley. You're right. I'm sorry. You're right. You're right. You're right. I'm sorry.

MS. BROUWER: You will see, as we get through each action -- Of course, you can do whatever it is you want, but, if you want to just focus in on SEFHIER, then we'll just have to make some changes to the actions and alternatives, the way that they're worded now, which is also okay.

MS. MURPHEY: Should we go ahead and just proceed forward then, at this point? Okay. Thank you. Go ahead.

MS. BROUWER: So the first action would look at modifying the frequency of reporting for for-hire vessels. You can see under there what the purpose of the action is. Here's some recommended changes to the wording of the no action. This is something that, when I went back and looked at the Code of Federal Regulations for the language that is used there, it is not very consistent regarding this item, this wording that I have highlighted, "regardless of where the fish are caught, state or federal waters", but I believe that is currently how the regulations are enforced, and so we would suggest including that in the no action.

So Alternative 2 has various subalternatives, and they're a little bit hard to understand, and so the way I broke it down for myself is Subalternatives 2a and 2b don't include wording that would say anything about prior to offloading, whereas the other subalternatives do include this wording, and we are suggesting that -- You had "arrival at the dock" back in December. The IPT talked about this, and we're suggesting that we change it to "arrival at the landing location", to be more specific.

Subalternatives 2c and 2d, the reporting would happen if fish are retained, and it's either within an hour or within thirty minutes of arriving at the landing location, and so all of these subalternatives under Alternative 2 are going to be for trip level reporting. If we move down to Alternative 3, this is for daily reporting, and, again, with the options to not report prior to landing, or to require reporting prior to offloading, or arrival at the landing location, and so those are the alternatives that we have in the discussion here.

You can see that we've checked with the Gulf Council staff, and they are considering similar measures, and then this table should be familiar to you. It was sort of adopted and revised from what HMS had in their presentation, and so it's showing you what's currently in place, in the top row, and then what is being proposed.

The Gulf of Mexico is also proposing reporting prior to offload within thirty minutes of the completion of each trip or each trip daily. In the Greater Atlantic Region, the vessel trip reports are generally required forty-eight hours after entering port, and, for recreational tilefish, it's twenty-four hours after the end of the trip. HMS is not proposing any changes in the current rule, and then -- I'm sorry. I was reading the GARFO. HMS is proposing electronic reporting twenty-four hours after the end of the trip.

Then we have to remind you the guidance that you had given us back in December. You asked that, when we do go to scoping, and the reason we haven't is because, just to be clear, you wanted to have your AP feedback before you took this out to scoping, and so this is the guidance that we have, if you have anything else to add, as far as what you want to retain in this action prior to taking this to scoping.

MS. MURPHEY: I have Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. First of all, I agree with the staff and the changes to the highlighted language. Obviously, that's appropriate. My comments here are that I believe that this list of actions really encompasses all the options that we have looking forward, and I think that this particular action is what we're going to get our most comments on, particularly given the AP and whatnot, and we're going to have to also approach this from an angle of what's the best for data collection, right, but I think that, as far as putting this forward to the public, my question for you was going to be on Alternative 3, just to make sure that that gives us some flexibility, right?

Like, if we say each trip daily, that means that we can say within twenty-four hours, right, and that's obviously clear within the rationale. I wanted to make sure that is very clear, but I don't see the need to add any, personally, and I think this is going to encompass all of it, and would -- Not warn the council, but comment that this is going to be what we're going to get the most feedback on, most likely.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tom. Anyone else? Okay. Carry on.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you. There's a list of IPT comments, and recommendations, and I think I covered most of them. You'll see that the IPT suggested changing that language. I've already covered that, and so I think we're good to move to Action 2, unless anybody has questions. I don't see anyone, and so I'm going to move forward.

Action 2 would require the trip notification for-hire vessels. There are only two alternatives here, and so Alternative 2, as you can see, is structured so you can have more flexibility in choosing the activities that would require reporting, and so you have individually listed various activities, and the one that you asked us to add in December was a subalternative that would be for any time the vessel is leaving the dock, and so we've included that.

This is the trip notification. The Gulf Council is also requiring a declaration for trips that would be engaged in any type of fishing, and that would include charter, bait fishing, private trips, commercial trips, or for-hire activity, and that would be -- It would include non-fishing activities that are involving people paying money, paying passengers.

Previous guidance from you, you asked us to clarify the intent of Alternatives 2 and 3, and that those would apply to dually-permitted vessels. As far as what would happen if a for-hire trip changed to a commercial trip, that's really actually not allowed, is my understanding, and so I didn't think we needed to talk about that some more, and then, you know, we did talk about other for-hire activity, involving things like dolphin cruises, or sunset cruises, and that type of thing.

The IPT talked about the value of having the trip notification, that it would be useful to evaluate the social and the economic characteristics of the fisheries. You already heard what law enforcement had to say about that. Declaration can also help with trip accounting, from beginning to end, and there are some areas where multiple trips can be taken in a day, and the example there is HMS vessels that have for-hire and commercial permits are allowed to sell their catch. They're supposed to make a decision on the trip, and that is an instance in which, you know, that switch can happen.

This is an action that would have to be built into the system. There isn't a mechanism in the current platforms to include a trip declaration, and so, again, consider if this has all the elements that you would like to include when this goes out to scoping. Any questions or comments?

MS. MURPHEY: I'm not seeing any. I'm sorry. I've got Tom.

MR. ROLLER: So I guess I worry about, in Alternative 2, the interpretations of the language, right, and so 2a, and what was the rationale for bait fishing?

MS. BROUWER: The rationale for including it?

MR. ROLLER: It's just the term "bait fishing". Like why are we utilizing that term?

MS. BROUWER: I'm not sure I understand your question.

MS. BROUWER: So like require that the owner or operator of a charter vessel or headboat issued a valid, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, submit a trip declaration for trips that will be engaging in any type of for-hire fishing or bait fishing. Like I guess I just don't understand like why that's a distinction we're putting in there as a subalternative.

MS. BROUWER: I see. Okay. I see what you mean. I think you would have to have multiple preferreds, in this instance, and so you have the flexibility to say, okay, if a boat is going to go bait fishing, prior to engaging in a chartered for-hire trip, then they would need to --

MR. ROLLER: I think that -- Okay. I understand that. I think we need to clarify that, because that's -- I didn't understand that, and now I do. I think we're going to have to clarify that. That would be -- Actually, and Jessica just said here that we're getting ice, and that's a very, very valid thing, and I think that we're going to have to make sure that we clarify that language there, so the public understands why we're putting that in there.

MS. MURPHEY: Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Do you have any recommendations on how to clarify it? I mean, it popped in your head, and so how are you seeing it?

MR. ROLLER: We may have to revisit this, but I think it's very important. We've dealt with this in North Carolina, with some of our new regulations to rebuild our mullet fishery, right, and we had to change things to allow different possession limits for for-hire vessels, and so I would say activities -- We're going to have to revisit this. I'm going to have to think about this one, workshop it.

MS. MURPHEY: I think I've got Jessica. Do you have a suggestion? I'm sorry. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, I recognize we're early in the process. I guess a couple of comments. I feel like 2a, b, and c potentially could be combined into any non-for-hire fishing activity, or something like that, but, with the Gulf, I guess a lesson learned with -- This related more to vessel monitoring systems, right, and so there was a lot of outcry that, every time you had to move the vessel, you had to, you know, declare a trip, regardless of where you were going, right, and so 2e has me concerned, but, once again, this is scoping. This is early in the process. We could always eliminate that.

I think the way the Gulf has been heading is focusing more on the actual activity itself, and the passengers onboard, right, and so it's not so much the activity of fishing as much as the activity of a for-hire trip with passengers onboard and whether that constitutes fishing or non-fishing activities. It's important, I think, for us to know when they're going offshore, you know, operating as a non-charter vessel, sunset cruise, other activities, so that we can distinguish that from fishing activity and determine that we would not expect a logbook report, right, from that particular trip, and so I think there's definitely just some consolidation that could be done here as we move forward.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy, and I've got Jessica, then Tom.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I like how Andy was suggesting to edit that, and then, if this is going out to scoping, 2d, the other for-hire activity, maybe giving the public some example of that, and like is that getting ice, or is it getting fuel, and like what does that mean, but I like how Andy was suggesting it's kind of thinking about the activities when you have passengers onboard, but I just thought we needed to clarify what we -- Some examples, and it looks like Myra was adding some things there. Then I guess, at some point, it seems like we would need to be able to tell people how to cancel a trip declaration, and so I think that's too far down in the weeds at this point, but just later on we need to be able to tell them how.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jessica. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: So, Andy, I think that you're helping workshop this idea really well. Looking at this, I view 2a, 2b, and 2e as kind of the same thing, right? It's non-for-hire activities, whether it's -- I mean, bait fishing maybe is a little bit different, but, I mean, we can only draw so many distinctions here. I am concerned about having 2e in there. I don't think that's going to be perceived well with the public, and I'm not so sure that's something the council wants to go forward with.

I also really appreciate Jessica's comment for giving a Subalternative 2d, other for-hire activity. I think our intention there was to say things like sunset cruises, dolphin watches, eco tours, where fish will likely not be harvested, because, if fish are not going to be harvested on that trip, it's not a fishing trip, but you still need a captain's license, and likely a for-hire permit from your state, in which to do that.

MS. MURPHEY: Jessica, is this to Tom? Go ahead, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I think I would leave bait fishing, at this point, and maybe leave anytime the vessel leaves the dock, because I think the public is not going to agree with that, but the bait fishing -- You might have customers onboard when you go get bait, maybe on the way out, and maybe not, and I don't know.

MR. ROLLER: Well, from that example, I would argue that that's part of your for-hire trip. I'm viewing this as a separate activity, and like, okay, I'm meeting customers at 8:00 a.m., and don't -- I'm not saying I do that, but I'm going to go out at 5:30, and I'm going to catch bait, and I'm going to then meet my customers later at the landing location, and so that would be something that you do in addition to the trip.

MS. MURPHEY: I think I had Amy's hand.

MS. DUKES: Yes, and thank you, Madam Chair, and I'm just thinking about some of the for-hire folks in North Carolina and this idea of the IPT, and I'm glad that they pointed it out, that you cannot shift from being a for-hire to a commercial, or vice versa, and, Tom, you have probably a better handle on this than I do, but, from conversations with for-hire fishermen in North Carolina, they may go out as a for-hire trip, and, as long as the number of passengers on that boat still applies to them having a commercial trip, and the first fish over the rail is a giant bluefin, they have the opportunity to switch that trip. That's more of an HMS thing, and we'll need to definitely follow that, as it's going, and so, if they bring a giant over the rail first, then they can shift to a commercial trip, correct?

MS. MURPHEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Absolutely correct. I mean, I think that's an HMS issue, and that's for clarification there, but, up and down the East Coast, particularly with giant bluefin fishing, there is a lot of joint trips that go recreational to commercial really quickly, right?

Now, in the state of North Carolina, we have a different issue, and, again, it pertains to state-vessel fish, is we don't have a statutory distinction between a commercial trip or a for-hire trip, and you can essentially sell some state-managed -- Some state-managed species from a for-hire vessel, if that species -- If hook-and-line is an allowable gear, which it's not for many, but it is for some, and it's small, but it is an issue, and it's something we discuss a lot.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Amy, and then let's move on.

MS. DUKES: Sorry, and, to that point, I just want to make sure that, when we're thinking about reporting, regardless to what platform, we really want to make sure that it is a one report that meets multiple people's requirements, so that HMS stuff will come into play.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Amy. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and not suggesting you have to do it this way, but I was looking at the Gulf Council's amendment, and they have it streamlined to essentially two alternatives besides the no action. One is engaging in any type of fishing activity or engaging in any type of fishing or for-hire activity, right, and that would be the kind of trip notification requirement, and so that -- Kind of going back to my suggestion of kind of rolling this up and simplifying it based on those two standards.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. Tom, and then we'll move on.

MR. ROLLER: I'm supporting of Andy's comment there of wrapping these up potentially into two different alternatives. I think that really simplifies it. I worry about all these different options being potentially just very confusing to people coming into this long document, and so I would support -- I'm not sure we want to do that now, but I would entertain that option, if we do want to wrap it up into two alternatives like the Gulf has.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. That sounds -- I think we can do that, and do you have what you need from those comments? Okay. All right. Thank you for that discussion.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. Action 3 looks to establish approved landing locations for for-hire vessels. There's only two alternatives, the second one being to require that a charter vessel or headboat provide a landing -- Or land at preapproved landing locations, and here it -- I think it's a little bit confusing, the way it's worded, because there isn't -- This is not an action that would make it so that a charter vessel would not be allowed to land at a location unless that location is pre-approved, right, and I think, when the AP talked about this, there was a little bit of confusion.

The process would involve the charter captain would have to call, if they want to land at a location that's not already been approved, and provide the information where the new dock or marina is,

and then the SEFHIER staff -- What they do is they simply check that the location is on the water, and that it is accessible, and so it would simply involve captains calling, I guess, or, you know, sending an email.

I don't know if email is a way to do it, but it's a very straightforward transaction, and, as you heard this morning from the law enforcement folks, they're already familiar with landing location approval, from commercial fishing, and I think that -- Just to reiterate your previous guidance, you talked about making sure that there would be an allowance for, you know, in a case a vessel is not able to return to that location, for unexpected reasons, and so I think that could be included in the discussion for this action. I don't know that we need to have alternatives to analyze that. It would probably need to just be included in the rulemaking.

The other thing that was discussed was there are no restrictions on where these locations are, and so it could be anywhere from, you know, along the east coast, all the way up to Maine, and, of course, you know, the Dolphin Wahoo FMP extends to that area, and so the other thing is, and that you heard that this morning too, is fishermen can choose to include their private residences as an approved landing location, but you heard from Captain Pearce this morning what the caveats would be with that.

MS. MURPHEY: Any questions? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: So, again, this is going to be one of the comments that I think is going to have a lot of initial comments from the public on, but this is also one, when you explain it to people, I think it makes a lot of sense, and you remember some of my discussions when I first heard it. I didn't understand it, and I went and apologized for not fully understanding it, but I think, when we look at this, this is going to be one of the things where it's going to be a big deal for a year, and then it's not going to be a big deal anymore.

However, I do want to put this caveat in, when it comes to private residences. We hear a lot from our fishermen, of all sectors, that shoreside infrastructure is a huge issue, and it is a huge issue, and, with gentrification, and development, and changes to all our coastal communities, it is really hard for for-hire operators, and commercial fishermen, and, while that's not relevant to the conversation, it is one and the same to have places in which they can leave from.

I hope that this action -- That we just make sure that it is not going to limit people from leaving from private locations, because there will be a point where there's going to be more and more of that just, because there's just not enough marinas, and they're too expensive, and, you know, does that make sense? So I want to make sure we encompass that, because we don't want to be too restrictive going forward, given how difficult shoreside infrastructure is now.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tom, and I think Myra is capturing that for you. Anyone else? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I'll just offer to add, and I think it's a great point, that we explain the process to people. I think there's just a lot of confusion about preventing, you know, people from landing at certain locations, and we have a process up front, and we quickly approve these locations, and try to get as many added to the list, and they can be used -- Obviously, if it's a private location, that's one thing, but public locations can be used by multiple entities, right?

It's not like it's their own location, that they only can use, and so we'll give more information, and make sure the process is clear, so that, when you go out to the public, they clearly understand how that would work, and, based on our experience previously in the Gulf, right, we did a lot of upfront work, working with fishermen to develop the list, so that we were at where we at 95, or 98, percent of all landing locations within startup of the program.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. Ready to move on? Do I have another? Okay. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: So I think this is also an interesting point for conversation, because I would say, from an efficiency standpoint, one of the number-one complaints I hear from fishermen is I don't get surveyed. They don't come to my dock, and they don't come to my marina. Well, this is a way to tell the samplers where you're leaving from, and, as a complaint that I hear from fishermen, I think that this is a good way to add more sites in there and be able to do it, as a user, and, if we explain that to people, I think that can increase buy-in on this issue.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Tom, and Myra is capturing that, too. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Just a quick question for Andy. Andy, previously, is there an easier -- Or is it a cumbersome process to quickly add a new location? Like, if you had a preapproved location at your dock, and then, you know, a storm came through and knocked your dock down, and you couldn't do that, you couldn't use your own dock, is there a quick process to get a new approved place, or is that cumbersome? Would you have to go to an already preapproved place?

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, so you could go through an already preapproved place. In terms of is it a cumbersome process, I would say, no, it's not a cumbersome process, right, and you're limited by working hours, you know, things like that, but, you know, when we were doing this in the Gulf, I think it was as simple as a Google form, right, and someone getting online, filling it out, and then, within a few days, us then circling back and either approving it or not and adding it to the list.

MS. MURPHEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Sorry, and I just have a quick question, because I might be confused. Does each person, sort of when they sign up, or get their permit, or renew their permit, have to say these are the places that I expect to land fish? Like did they -- Does each person have its own group of preselected landing locations? So, in other words, if that -- In Tim's example, if someone's dock was erased, they wouldn't necessarily need to go through you, and they just need to make sure where they land is on the list? Okay. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, everyone. Would you like to go on to validation?

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and so Action 4 would require participation in a validation and estimation survey. That and estimation was a recommendation from the IP, and so, currently, there's nothing that would mandate a validation survey. It could be voluntary, and I believe some of the AP members said, well, why couldn't it just be voluntary, and I think, to get at what needs to happen for these, for this program to take the place, I should say, of MRIP at some point, and to be certified,

we need to have that validation component, and so it's a very important part of what needs to happen.

Some of the things that came up in the IPT discussion was, okay, who would run this survey? Would it be something that the region would be responsible for? Would this be something that the Science Center would take on, and so I think the agency would have to work that out, of who would be the lead in administering that survey.

Another thing that IPT pointed out is that ACCSP already has developed a validation survey, and, if that is successful, there is a possibility that that could be incorporated as well into the SEFHIER program. The IPT thought it prudent to look at the language that HMS has in their rule regarding validation surveys, and I did that.

That language refers to allowing inspection of catch, logbooks, statistical records, sales receipts, et cetera, and it also declares that additional data may be collected by the agency, or contractors, reporting agents, or authorized officers, et cetera, and so that's the language that is in the HMS rule, and so, again, here, do we keep it? Do you want to add anything to it? Is it okay as it is?

MS. MURPHEY: Comments? Seeing none, I guess it's okay. Okay. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Sorry, Madam Chair, and I know you're pushing the schedule. Just out of curiosity, as I think about this document going out to scoping, a couple of things come to mind, and maybe some of that perspective from the Gulf would be helpful. It would be neat to kind of understand the percent validation that might be needed, from my perspective, and I guess I'm -- I guess I'm struggling with the fact that a potential validation and estimation survey could potentially be a third intercept event for this fleet.

They might get intercepted at the dock under MRIP for catch. They might be subject to the FES phone call surveys for their effort, and then now perhaps a third intercept event with a validation, and really could be a fourth from law enforcement. It's a lot of intercepts for this one fleet, and I'm just worried about how that might make this group feel.

MS. MURPHEY: Does anyone have any thoughts? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Amy, that's a very good point. I would argue most of the examples you put forward are already in existence, right, the interception by law enforcement, interception by FES, or the MRIP survey, or an APAIS surveyor. I think it's a very valid point. I guess the question is how do you combine some of that, right, and I think that's the valid question. I do agree with you that we don't want too much of that, but I would say that, as long as we can make sure like -- Or not make sure, but look into dockside samplers could participate in some of this, I think that would eliminate -- Or not add another layer to this already existing layers.

MS. DUKES: Two, just food for thought, it would be good for us to be keeping, in the back of our minds, that there's hopefully going to be some for-hire dedicated observer coverage, if funds and proposals come together like we hope they will, and so I want to make sure that we're thinking about that, moving forward as well, and how that could potentially assist and play into this as well. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Amy. Anyone else? All right. Carry on, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you. Then we come to revising the reporting of economic data for charter vessels, and so this would not apply to the headboat fleet. Currently, that information is required to be provided, and so it's essentially a census, right, and this action would narrow that and make it only if you are selected that you would have to provide that information, and I believe it's just three things. I believe it's the charter fee, the fuel, and another one I can't remember.

You know, here again, only two alternatives, and then the selection of vessels that need to participate in reporting economic data would be done annually, and it would be approached the same way that the center approaches selecting commercial vessels, and so it would be a stratified random sampling design of permitted vessels. I don't -- You know, there's your previous guidance from before. I don't know that there's anything else. The IPT didn't really have anything to say here, and so, if you're good with it, we can carry on.

MS. MURPHEY: Everybody good? Tom? I've got a thumbs-up.

MR. ROLLER: No, and I think the two examples are encompassing of what we need, right, and so I think that's important, and I believe that that was a sticking point for people in reporting, and -- But, then again, we do need the data, but, if we do a smaller survey, you know, at some point, like you either give data or you don't, right, and so I believe it encompasses -- I believe it's good.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Tom. I did see a thumbs-up there.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and so the last little bit is, you know, any other items that you would like, and the one thing that has come up is this issue of the did-not-fish report. The letter that you received from the agency last year did include that did-not-fish reports should be required weekly, which they already are, and so here's another table showing you what's currently in place and what's being proposed.

The Gulf Council is proposing monthly DNF reports. In GARFO, they are not required. We talked about this in December, and HMS -- Their proposed rule would be monthly, and without a limit of how far in advance you can submit a did-not-fish report.

You asked us to get a little bit more information for you on the current -- You know, whether we need to make any changes, and also where that thirty-day notice originated, and what is the rationale, and so the IPT talked about it, and that thirty-day rationale came about to be consistent with other requirements at that time, and also due to patterns of activity for that for-hire fleet. One thing that the IPT did suggest, and the Gulf Council is considering, is adding a program review to, you know, what the improvements for SEFHIER or for-hire reporting would do, and I think that's it, and my computer is not advancing for some reason. Any questions?

MS. MURPHEY: Do we have any questions. I see none.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and so do you want to go back to the purpose of need at this point? Is there any need to talk more about how the headboat survey would be included? My recollection, from when you initially gave us direction to begin work on this amendment, was to include

headboats, and, as we noted earlier, there is representation in your For-Hire Reporting Advisory Panel from the headboat component of that fleet.

The last thing I will ask is how do you want to conduct scoping? We have done it various ways. We have the webinar option. You'll hear, from Mike Schmidtke later, about how we conducted scoping for black sea bass, a little bit more general, and we provide a short presentation, a very concise document online, and then commenters just give us their feedback, and so either way, whichever you would prefer, and just let us know.

MS. MURPHEY: Does anybody have any thoughts on how to conduct scoping? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I mean, regardless of how we conduct it, I think online is good. That's just what we do now, but I think it would be important to get it to some of our advisory panels beforehand. Remember, our fishing community is small. Once we get them to discuss it, I think that that word is going to spread, and that may give us better feedback, particularly on something that's going to greatly affect a big portion of our -- Not a big portion, but a lot of our fishermen, right, and does that make sense?

MS. BROUWER: Right, and I'm just thinking of the timing, and so those three APs are meeting in-person in the spring, and so I believe everybody will have met by the end of April, and so we could bring you their feedback in June, and then do scoping after the June meeting. If we do it after all the APs meet, and before you guys get back together, then you would not -- You know, we would bring you all the feedback from the AP and the scoping comments all at once at the June meeting.

MR. ROLLER: Is there a timeframe to do online scoping meetings after the AP meetings meet, or is that too close?

MS. BROUWER: It depends how we do them, and so, if we are going to have a webinar, we need to submit an FRN. There's more steps than if we just upload a video and a document and a comment form to the website. There's no FRNs or anything, and we don't need to have a chair for the hearing online, and so it's more flexible.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other thoughts? How do people feel of having the other APs hear this, and then we can send the scoping to June, or are folks interested in getting this out sooner? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I mean, if we're going to have it to our APs this spring, I would be interested in getting it out sooner. Then we can consider -- However we scope it, we can consider all those comments here going forward in the near future.

MS. MURPHEY: I'm sorry, and you're saying go ahead and go to scoping before the AP? Is that what you just -- I didn't understand what you said.

MR. ROLLER: Well, I mean, I'm trying to -- I mean, there's some staff technicalities here, which I'm looking at you guys for, but, I mean, do we really need to consider AP comments, and then scope it, or why can't we consider -- Exactly. Why can't we consider all comments at our June meeting, and so I would argue we would move this out for -- However we move it out for scoping, we do it now.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Is everybody good with that? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, I'm good with that. I did want to go back, and sorry, about the did-not-fish report, and so are we going to at least scope this with regard to getting input on alternative timeframes for submitting did-not-fish reports, because I feel like that's important to ask participants.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, and so you're suggesting add the did-not-fish reports within this for the scoping?

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, I don't know if we need alternatives, or we just want to scope and make sure that we're getting input on the frequency at which we receive did-not-fish reports, because I think that's a valid, you know, consideration.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, I think so, and I'm seeing heads shaking yes. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Do we need to add more alternatives, is the question that I'm asking. I mean, obviously, we have rationale for the thirty-day, but we have heard from stakeholders that, hey, I would like an option for more, you know, like whether it's sixty days or whatnot. Obviously, I'm looking for the analysts on what's best way to proceed with that, but, you know, we should have some consideration, if people don't like thirty days.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, and, just in response to that, I see, obviously, scoping handled very differently across councils, right, and we tend to be more prescriptive here, in terms of the details of what we're gathering from scoping, versus more open-ended input and feedback with regard to consideration of various alternatives, and so I'm not suggesting we need to put alternatives and actions -- Or actions and alternatives in this amendment at this point, right, but I think it's good to get that feedback and be asking specific questions about did-not-fish reports.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, and so we're to the point where I think now the decision we're going to go with scoping now, or before the June meeting, and so the question is do you want to do an active webinar, where we have chairing and all that, or do you want to go with the more passive way of we'll have it like they did with black sea bass? What's everybody's feeling on that? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm just curious what comments we got. I don't remember. I know I should know that, but I don't know what the outcome was from the black sea bass ones, and how well it was received. Three? You have to take into account what it was, what would we have normally expected, had we -- Probably about three would be about this, and so probably about the same.

MS. BROUWER: I started a draft motion on the screen, because I would like to get a motion to approve this for scoping, and then, like Trish said, we can either do a live online scoping or a passive-type scoping.

MS. MURPHEY: So does anybody want to make a motion to approve for scoping? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: **I move that we approve this amendment for scoping.**

MS. MURPHEY: Second? Kerry. Any discussion? Any objection? Okay, and so we are going to approve for -- I'm sorry. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Just for my clarity, I understand it will go in front of the APs, Snapper Grouper, Dolphin Wahoo and CMP, but will the For-Hire AP also have another opportunity, between now and June, to gather, or no?

MS. BROUWER: My understanding was that, well, we just brought them together, ahead of this meeting, and so, I mean, we could, if you wanted to, but that's a lot of meetings. We have three APs and the SSC and the SEP coming up.

MS. MURPHEY: Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I think, Tom, your motion did not clarify whether we were going to do the passive scoping or live scoping, and so I would just ask if you would clarify that, for the motion, because I think staff needed that.

MS. MURPHEY: I think we wanted to discuss that more. That was -- I think that was the reason. What do you all want, passive or -- We're going to do passive. Okay. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: **Yes, and I was going to make an argument for passive and clarify that that was in my motion, for us to have passive scoping, as recommended by staff.**

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, and so we're making that -- **We're adding that to the motion, and is everybody good with that? Okay. All right.** Thanks. Amy.

MS. DUKES: So, Myra, based on the schedule, the tentative schedule, with us doing the scoping meeting here in the spring, and it will come back to this committee, or come back to us, in June. Would there be an opportunity for the For-Hire AP to meet prior to it coming back to September meeting?

MS. BROUWER: Yes. Absolutely.

MS. DUKES: Okay. I would ask staff to please try to find some time for that. Thank you.

MS. BROUWER: Yes.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, everyone. Let's go ahead and move -- We're getting behind, and so let's go ahead and go to Dolphin Wahoo meeting topics. I think Myra is handling that, or we will have John online.

MR. HADLEY: Can everyone hear me?

MS. MURPHEY: Hi, John. Yes, we do.

MR. HADLEY: Hi. I hope everyone is doing well. There's an attachment in your briefing book that has the draft list of topics for the upcoming Dolphin Wahoo AP meeting. I believe Myra is

bringing it up on the screen there, and so really what we're looking for is just to run through this draft list and just get your feedback and approval of it.

The Dolphin Wahoo AP will have a -- Basically, it's two half-days put together, and so one full day, and so they'll meet the afternoon of April 22nd, and the morning of the 23rd, and in front of you is a list of the AP's draft agenda topics, and so we have Regulatory Amendment 3 on there. You have received some AP feedback, but it sounds like that the intent is to bring that back, and get it up and running, and you'll be reviewing that at your June meeting, and so to get the idea is to get some additional feedback on that for that discussion in June.

We'll have the For-Hire Electronic Reporting Improvement Amendment, as we just went through, and there was another item on there, and we added feedback for the for-hire limited entry. The Snapper Grouper and Mackerel Cobia APs have provided their input to you on this, and the Dolphin Wahoo AP has not, and so I thought it may be helpful to get their feedback on that.

Review of the council's research plan, and then, as we move on down, there's the lines of communication, sort of a run through with the APs that you'll see on the various AP agendas. You know, this is something, if we have time, it would be great to do with the Dolphin Wahoo AP. We'll just have to see how packed the agenda is.

Then the last two bullets there are just sort of an update on the recent council and management topic, kind of bring the AP up to speed on developing amendments, and also the dolphin management strategy evaluation that the Southeast Fisheries Science Center is conducting, and then other updates on best fishing practices and citizen science, and so I'll turn it over to the council for feedback on the draft list of Dolphin Wahoo AP topics. Thank you very much.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John. Any feedback? Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't know if these are in some type of priority order, but I would want to make sure that they get to the management strategy evaluation, and so I don't know if we need to move that up in the list, or that's just understood about how important that is.

MS. MURPHEY: I see folks agreeing with that. Everybody else good with this list? It looks like people are, and so thank you all very much on that, and so we can move forward.

MR. HADLEY: If I could, really quickly.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead.

MR. HADLEY: Can I speak to the MSE, very quickly?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes.

MR. HADLEY: Okay. Great, and so one thing about the MSE, and we can certainly bring it in front of the AP. As far as the, I guess, detailed feedback that the council is going to use on the analysis, I don't believe those will be ready, and so, just kind of trying to frame what the AP could review, and we can certainly update them on the progress that has been made, but I think the plan for the MSE modeling run, and those results, are going to go to the SSC, at their spring meeting,

and then will come to the council after that, at the June meeting, and so just kind of getting an order of events there. That's all to say, you know, I'm not exactly sure those will be ready for the AP's feedback just yet, but we can certainly update the AP and bring them up to speed on what has been accomplished so far, and so just kind of setting expectations there.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and thank you very much, John. I had Kerry had something to say.

MS. MARHEFKA: Hi, John. First of all, I'm just mad that there's not a baby picture on this presentation, but I'll let that slide. Maybe you're trying to have no paparazzi, but I think the important thing with the MSE is just -- If you recall the last time we discussed it as a council, there was a lot of confusion about sort of the intersection between what we were doing maybe with Amendment 3 and with the MSE, and so I think that the importance of having those items next to each other is mostly just making sure that the advisory panel understands what we understand, as far as how the process is going to go, more than the analysis, if it's not ready.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Kerry. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, as well as the delayed timing, and so I think making -- Helping them understand the timing, kind of like what we discussed at the last council meeting.

MS. MURPHEY: Is that okay, John?

MR. HADLEY: Absolutely. That's very helpful. I appreciate that, and I'll work on that baby picture, you know, for the next presentation. I believe there's even maybe a dolphin outfit that could be integrated there, and so, anyway, thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John, and congratulations. Okay, and so the next thing is the Keys Sanctuary, but I'm not sure we've got time. Is there a way you want to -- We could have Beth do the presentation, and go to lunch or -- Would that work, or -- Jessica, go ahead.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So I don't know if she's going to continue to go through the presentation that was provided. She is going to talk about the protocol, but I think she has a statement that she's going to read from the sanctuary, because the governor issued a letter yesterday, and so, if she's available now, I can -- I see thumbs-up from Myra, and so we could probably get this done before lunch.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Let's go for it.

MS. DIEVENY: Good almost afternoon, and I just have a quick question of if you can clearly hear me, given the state of my voice?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, we can hear you.

MS. DIEVENY: Okay. Great. Thank you. Well, first off, I want to thank you for the invitation to present on NOAA's final rule for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Restoration Blueprint and the current draft of the MOA for coordination of fishing regulations in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

As Jessica just noted, and as you may be aware, the National Marine Sanctuaries Act gives the Governor of Florida forty-five days to review the updated regulations, and, through that review, can identify any regulations that are not acceptable in state waters. Any regulations identified as unacceptable would not go forward in state waters.

We received that letter yesterday afternoon, and the governor has certified that the entirety of the new and updated regulations, definitions, marine zones, and management plan are unacceptable in state waters. The governor indicated that with this objection, prior rules and management plan, which recognizes Florida's sovereign right to manage its resources in state waters, will remain in place, and so these include the 1997 regulations and the 2007 management plan.

NOAA is currently evaluating how this will impact the restoration blueprint in both state and federal waters, and, therefore, we felt that it would be premature, and would be more confusing, to provide the briefing presentation that I had prepared for you today.

In addition, included in your briefing books is the current NOAA and FWC agreed-upon draft of the MOA for coordination of fishing regulations in Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, and I'll just remind you that the signatories on this are NOAA, the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, National Marine Fisheries Service, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and each of the two fishery management councils within the region of the Florida Keys, and so you are a signatory on this agreement.

We do welcome input on that, but, however, there are some aspects that may be impacted, due to the governor's veto of updated regulations and associated definitions in state waters, and so it may be premature for the council to review and comment on the current draft. However, I did speak with Jessica this morning, and, given that you do have a copy of the current version, if you do have comments to share, we would take those and consider any of those comments as FWC and NOAA comes back together to revisit the current draft to determine what might need to change, and so your comments at this point are welcome.

However, we will also keep the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council leadership and staff updated, when we have more information and clarity on next steps, both related to the restoration blueprint and regulations and this agreement. Finally, I do want to thank the council staff, council members, and the interested public for your continued engagement throughout the restoration blueprint development process. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Beth. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Thank you for that. In reviewing the cooperative management agreement, I think there's an opportunity here to address the habitat support structures, which are a center point in the governor's letter, and other letters provided by FWC and other state agencies, and so I would suggest we look at it and see if there's a way through this agreement, where the parties can agree that, in Florida, and I just drafted something, and just I'll provide it here.

I would add a new Section 5C, called Habitat Support Structures to Enhance Marine Resources in Monroe County, and that will provide for the parties acknowledge and agree that permitting for habitat support structures can be handled through same process used in state waters outside of the sanctuary.

The parties agree that permits for habitat support structures will be obtained from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Army Corps of Engineers without any further requirements from the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary or ONMS. The parties further agree that installations that do not require excavation shall not require archaeological surveys. I think a provision like that would probably help move other things along, and, given the State of Florida's focus on restoring habitat, I think this would be very helpful. Thank you.

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

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and thanks for that. Hopefully Robert can email that over, and we can make sure that gets in there. Just a little bit more about this document, and so it is on the council's meeting page, so folks can review it. It's still in progress. This is the document formerly known as the fisheries protocol, and so this document explains kind of how fisheries regulations are going to be implemented in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, in state waters, in federal waters, in the council's jurisdiction. That's why there's so many signatories on the document.

The original document is very old, and the agreement is with the Marine Fisheries Commission, which is a predecessor agency to the FWC, and so the document needs to be updated. There are, I believe, six, or nine, of these management agreements that are getting updated as part of this process, including a cooperative management agreement between the State of Florida, FWC, DEP, and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, because it's co-trustees involved in the sanctuary process.

I'm not sure, as Beth said, the timeline now, based on the governor's letter yesterday, but the intent, at this meeting, was to try to get comments on this document and to try to finalize it prior to the South Atlantic's June meeting, but the Gulf still has to review this document. I believe they're going to review it at their April meeting, and so you may see it one more time, but John Carmichael is the one that would sign the document on behalf of the council, just to give you a little bit more background information. So, if there's any other comments that people would like to see addressed in here, then now would be the time to give us the feedback, like what Robert gave us.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Anybody have any other comments? I think there would probably be an opportunity to -- If you do have any, you could email those comments to Jessica and John, if -- You know, if you haven't had a chance to really look at these. Thank you, Robert, for your comments to be added. Anybody have anything else?

MS. DIEVENY: This is Beth. I'm sorry, and just one more comment, and I'll, obviously, work with Jessica and John, but, any comments that we receive, it would be nice for us to see as well, and so, Robert, if you could share that statement that you read, please do so.

MS. MURPHEY: So if you can include Beth in those comments. Anything else? I guess we caught back up. All right. Thank you, everybody. We'll adjourn, and we'll meet back at 1:30.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MURPHEY: All right. We're going to go ahead and get started. I hope everybody had a good lunch and got to chill for a little bit. I did, and so we're going to go ahead and start with --

We've got Lara Klibanisky here, and she will be going over our climate readiness projects. I think -- Does everybody know Lara? I think she was introduced at a previous meeting.

MS. KLIBANSKY: Well, I'll introduce myself.

MS. MURPHEY: Please introduce yourself, Lara.

MS. KLIBANSKY: All right, and so good afternoon. I appreciate the opportunity to provide this update to you today. I was brought on as the Climate Projects Coordinator last August, and I've had the pleasure of working with some of the people here in the room, but I know some of you really aren't aware of who I am.

So, just for a little bit of background, I've been working in fisheries, in different capacities, for about twenty years now, which sounds crazy. I've worked as a fisheries technician in different states. I started actually on the bottom trawl survey out of Woods Hole, and I moved down to my home state of North Carolina after that, and worked in blue crab and snapper grouper, with Chip actually at that time, and then moved into the trip ticket program.

I did a little time in the Protected Resources group, and then, most recently, I served as the Marine Fisheries Commission liaison in the director's office, actually with Trish, which was lovely, and so I'm really excited to be onboard for these projects and to work with the council staff and with the council in getting these projects underway. I don't have to tell you guys, but your staff are wonderful to work with, and so I'm really looking forward to working with them more.

All right, and so this is just a really brief outline. I am going to cover the council projects, but, first, I'm going to talk about the climate resilient fisheries initiatives, and I'm just going to give a brief overview, just sort of as a background to how they interact with these council projects, and then I'll wrap up with timelines and next steps, and I'll be happy to take any questions that you have at that time.

Okay, and so a couple of things. First, as with all projects, there are a lot of acronyms that have popped out of these. Those have been updated in your list of acronyms, and so you should be able to look those up. I've also included them on the slides, and that's just for information. I'm going to try to avoid saying them during this meeting, because probably they're not familiar yet to you.

I'm also going to be going over these projects and initiatives and teams that all involve different management agencies, and so you'll see this blue bar on the right-hand side. I'm probably not going to say all of the agencies that are working on these projects every time, and so you'll see those listed on that blue bar as I go through. One last thing is that this information was accurate last week. I don't know what that looks like going forward, but this is where we've started, and so I think this is still really valuable to talk about.

Okay, and so the first initiative is the East Coast Climate Change Scenario Planning. Hopefully, most of you have heard of this. This occurred from 2021 to 2023, and it was an effort by a number of the east coast fishery management organizations that you can see here on the bar. They collaborated in this process, along with several hundred stakeholders from across the region, and so, during this process, they essentially asked what governance and management issues need to be

addressed to account for increased uncertainty and to get to more resilient fisheries in the near future.

The actions that were identified during this process were gathered and prioritized into a potential action menu that can help guide each of these agencies as they work toward changes that are needed, and so this initiative wrapped up in 2023, and it resulted in the formation of the East Coast Climate Coordination Group.

This group is composed of leadership from all of these participating organizations, and their primary responsibility is collaboration, and they work together to prioritize, to estimate resource needs, and also to support coordinated implementation of the various actions that each of the organizations is undertaking, and so, in the same year this was completed, NOAA Fisheries announced funding to establish the Climate Ecosystems and Fisheries Initiative.

There's a lot to this initiative, but, for our purposes today, our focus is on how this initiative plugs into the council's projects, and so, very basically, CEFI is leveraging advanced modeling techniques to develop regionally-specific information and advice that's needed to support decision makers for things like more effective resource management, industry planning, and community adaptation, and it's doing this by establishing regionally-specific decision support systems.

An important part of this is ensuring that the science that's coming out of these projects, or this work, are it's relevant to the needs of the decision makers, like the South Atlantic Council, for example and so, to that end, as part of this initiative, there is something called a CEFI Decision Support Team, and, in the Southeast, this decision support team includes representatives from NOAA, from the Gulf, and from the Caribbean Councils, and also from Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, as well as from the South Atlantic Council.

This group works together to identify the needs of the management agencies and make sure that the products that are coming out of the initiative can best support those, and so that same funding that supported this initiative also provided funding for the council's climate projects, and these projects are focused on challenges that have been identified by the council, and, in some cases, can be addressed using the actions that were identified during that scenario planning process.

Each project has a project oversight team, who serve three main purposes. The first is to provide regional expertise and support to the contractors, next is to ensure that the deliverables will meet expectations, and, finally, they serve as the method of coordination with our management partners who are conducting similar work, but in different regions.

All right, and so that's the quick overview, and I want to talk now about how these interact. So, as I said, the scenario planning initiative identified and prioritized the actions needed to make fisheries more resilient in the face of increasing uncertainty. The Climate Ecosystems and Fisheries Initiative and the South Atlantic climate projects then essentially provided a pathway for the council to implement actions to address existing governance, and also management challenges, and so this injection of funds set off a lot of projects that are performing similar work, but in different regions.

Because of that sort of potential coast-wide impact, and the overlap, say like in the cross-jurisdictional issues, it was really apparent that coordination would be key, to ensure that these

initiatives are effective and efficient, and so, to do that, these three teams, both individually and together, sort of provide that necessary communication and collaboration between these different agencies, and so they provide the agencies with the ability to coordinate time and resources, to find mutually-beneficial opportunities to collaborate, and to ensure and increase sort of a mutual awareness, given the potential impacts of any management and governance changes that could occur out of this effort.

I'm going to end there with the overview. I do want to point out, on the right, the number of agencies that are imperative to this effort and the commitment that has been given to making them successful. It's not a little thing, and so hopefully, this gives you sort of a sense of the larger ecosystem of these initiatives and what's going on in the background as we proceed with these council projects, which I will now spend the rest of our presentation on.

You received a copy of the initial proposals that were submitted to NOAA back in March of 2024, and so about a year ago, and, over that year, the council staff have been working with NOAA Fisheries to complete the proposal review process, and so two of these projects are funded, and contracting is underway, and the other two are very close.

I do want to mention that you'll see the projects numbered, and that's not an indication of priority. I've maintained that because we have these projects that are similar enough in the different regions. They're often referred to by the council that they're being done by and their number, and so Mid-Atlantic Council Project 3, South Atlantic Council Project 4, things like that, and so I've kept those numbering, but it's just to help in any confusion in the future.

Our first project is the Climate Response Readiness Review. The goal of this project is to identify ways that the council can be more responsive to environmental drivers of risk and to make progress implementing the priority action items from that scenario planning initiative, and so I'm not going to read through all the objectives, but you can see that they all pretty much deal with reviewing or evaluating processes and data use and management.

The big point is that the results of this project are expected to help the council move actions through their processes more quickly, and so a possible outcome could be reducing implementation from two years to two meetings, as we sometimes see at the Mid-Atlantic Council, and this is where working together with our management partners directly on these processes is really important, so that we can make progress more quickly. This is one of the projects that's still in development, and we're hoping to get an RFP for this one out sometime in mid-May, but we will have to wait and see.

All right, and so next up is our Project 2, which is Management Strategies for Data-Limited Fisheries. You are well aware of the challenges of managing data-limited fisheries, and this project aims to hire a contractor to identify and implement a stakeholder-driven management decision tool to develop management advice for a data-limited fishery.

Staff identified two possible candidate species for this project. They were rock shrimp and wreckfish, and the contractor, along with council staff, will be reviewing sort of what their proposed project, or what their proposed tool or framework is, and which species would be best served using that, and then they'll make the decision on which one to pursue.

The objectives of the project are to have a data-limited stock assessment completed for one of these species and then to use a very focused stakeholder-driven management decision tool to recommend catch level management strategies to the council, and so the request for proposals for this project went out in December, and I believe we now have a signed contract, as of today, and so that's our first one. It's fantastic, and so that will be getting underway as soon as we can get Chip to a meeting.

Moving on to Project 3, this is a project focused on updating spatial distributions and essential fish habitat for species managed under the Snapper Grouper, Coastal Migratory Pelagic, and Dolphin Wahoo Fishery Management Plans. It's a lot of species, and the objectives are to update the spatial information for as many of them as possible. Then the plan is to use that information to then provide recommendations for potential changes to the EFH designations.

We do expect that this is going to provide potentially the most substantial update to these EFH designations since they were first approved back in 2000, and so it could be pretty impactful. The updated spatial distributions will also help identify and clarify when and how cross-jurisdictional governance changes may be indicated and what those indicators might look like. Contracting for this project is underway, and hopefully should be in place soon.

Okay, and our fourth and final project is Communicating Climate Impacts with Fishing Communities, and this project is focused on improving the resolution at which the council describes and manages the social impacts of fisheries management decisions, and so we currently are describing fishing communities at the county level, and we sort of know that that's not really sufficient to understand the real impacts of these potential distribution shifts in fisheries, and species, and also things like increased flooding on infrastructure, for example, and so getting a clearer picture of what these fishing communities, or where they're located, collecting information about how they prefer to communicate or engage with the council, and also trying to identify their specific challenges, will help in the evaluation of the council's role in mitigating those challenges. This project is in development, and we are working on finalizing that review process with NOAA, which we hope to do soon.

All right, and so I'm going to wrap up with an overview of the project timelines, and so, on the left, you can see we have our list of projects, with the shorthand name for each, and you can see that our timeline is broken up by year and then by quarter. There's not a lot of detail on these. We are just getting these contracts in place.

We're at very early stages, and so we don't have a ton of detail about each project, but what we do know, for Projects 2 and 3, is that we now have the contracts in place, and we have the expectation for when each of these projects will come to either the SSC or an AP for review and input on their topic, and it's dependent on which project, which one of those will happen. You can also see the dark orange circles, and those indicate when we expect the final report to be presented to the council, and that will be the point at which the council can begin implementing any actions they choose, once these projects are wrapped up.

Let's see. All right. I think that is it, and so I'm happy to take any questions that you might have, and I'll go ahead and prime a comment. We are looking for input about how the council would like to be updated on these projects as they move forward, and so, if you have any thoughts on that, that would be really appreciated.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Lara. Anybody have questions for Lara? How about as far as updates? Would you like to hear something a couple of -- I don't know, and what does staff think, as far as what would be good timing for updates, since you know how these projects will progress?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and what we're worried about with this -- Obviously, you saw that there's four projects. We're also going to be having -- Lara is going to be leading up, or facilitate, a workshop, and so there's a lot that's going on. It could take up substantial time at council meetings.

You guys are already plenty busy, and so we were thinking, you know, maybe include this in the staff report somewhat, but then also maybe update you on a project a year. That way, you guys are getting the flair of what it has, and making sure that it's on track to hopefully be implemented into management, and so that's our thought, but, if you want more regular updates on how these projects are progressing, we can definitely work that in. It might be council staff giving some of those updates, in order to minimize the time it takes for some of these contractors to put a presentation together. We would rather them work on the product than give a presentation in the early phases.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you for that clarification. How does everybody -- Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I'm just saying like, if we want updates, and I'm not going to put more work on Lara, but I'm sure you can provide us with a little memo, or have a conversation, of course, right?

MS. KLIBANSKY: Yes, absolutely. That would be doable.

MS. MURPHEY: So is everyone -- Amy.

MS. DUKES: No, and I agree. Just some simple updates would be helpful. I was curious. As these contracts are completed, is that information -- That it's going to be made public, so then we can go back and read the proposals that were submitted, so we have a better idea of the content of the projects, or no?

DR. KLIBANSKY: I'm always a little nervous about putting somebody's budget out there, and so I probably wouldn't do that. We might -- What we'll do is we'll put a synopsis of the projects on the climate readiness page, and, that way, people can see what those projects are doing, and what their proposals include.

MS. MURPHEY: That's a great idea. Any other questions? Is everybody good with what Chip proposed, as far as keeping everybody informed? I see heads shaking yes. Okay. All right. Thank you very much, Lara.

We're actually down for a break, but do you all want to go ahead and push through? I think we had a little bit of a change of presentation here, as far as the CEFI, but I believe -- John Walter, are you going to be talking about where we are with CEFI?

DR. WALTER: Chair, would you like me to begin? All right, and so we will not be presenting the presentation that Holden Harris was going to be giving on the Climate, Ecosystem, and

Fisheries Initiative. Unfortunately, Holden is no longer employed by the agency, and neither are any of our other federal staff associated with CEFI. They were all recent hires.

That substantially reduces our capacity to contribute to this initiative, both from the quantitative standpoint, the ecosystem modeling, and the socioeconomic aspect of the work. In particular, we had experts in oceanographic modeling, in outreach and socioeconomics to the fishing communities, and then in ecosystem modeling. Loss of that expertise is going to substantially limit a lot of the quantitative analyses that are going to go into this.

We, with the staff we continue to have, remain committed to this work. We think that it is evergreen, and, in fact, that regardless of how one feels about many of the political aspects of climate change, the aspects of environmental variability, of changing oceanography, on the fact that our oceans are changing and our trust resources are responding to that, is something that is irrefutable, and that our communities, and our fisheries, have to deal with the changing environment is something that this council certainly is well aware of, and so the work continues, in terms of that need.

We think that largely we haven't been -- We are not on the front lines of much of the political debate. In fact, we're kind of on the back ends, of trying to deal with what did our fish just do, where did they go, and how do we advise the council on how to manage in a situation like that. That's a situation that's almost unambiguous. I think we're seeing that with many of our stocks.

We feel that we still have a strong role to play. We think this council still needs that advice, to be able to effectively manage in a changing environment. I think most of our assessments, that are dealing with things like recruitment declines, and/or species range shifts, and/or new species coming into an area that might not have quota, and how do you deal with that, are the kinds of things -- Exactly the kinds of things that this council, its adjacent councils, and we as a whole, need to be able to give guidance and advice on, because they're the challenging management issues of our day.

The other aspects that we feel that are evergreen are the support for the resilience of our fisheries through environmental change, and we think that's something that particularly resonates in terms of we're talking about the sustainability not just of our fish, but of our fisheries, in light of the threats that they may face, both related to changing environment as well as due to international competition and other economic challenges, and that we actually play a key role in being able to provide that information to the council.

Just today, we provided an economic analysis of the Gulf of America shrimp fishery to the Gulf Shrimp AP. That's the kind of economic analysis that we can provide to this council's Shrimp AP, and was something that was part of our Shrimp Futures Initiative. We're not sure where we stand on things like that, in terms of what our capacity is, but our desire, and our belief, that that is a value to this council remains.

So, with that, we hope to be back to brief this council on what initiatives we can continue to sustain. We had multiple different initiatives under the CEFI decision support tool that we were going to embark upon. Right now, it would be premature for us to say that we can or cannot continue with any of the initiatives that were outlined in the presentations we've given to the past couple meetings. With that, I'm happy to take questions and conversation. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John. Does anyone have any questions for John? All right. Well, thank you, John. I hate that you guys are having to go through all this, but I appreciate that the staff that you have with you are still committed to the work that they're passionate to do, and so thank you. I think that is the end of Council I, and so I think we'll be moving into Habitat.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on March 4, 2025.)

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Amanda Thomas
April 16, 2025

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Revised January 1, 2025

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SAFMC March 2025 Council Meeting

Attendee Report: (03/3/25 - 03/7/25)

Report Generated:

03/10/2025 08:52 AM EDT

Webinar ID

564-916-027

Actual Start Date/Time

03/03/2025 02:47 PM EST

Staff Details

Attended

Yes

Interest Rating

Not applicable for staff

Attendee Details

Last Name

First Name

Alnes

Alex

Adam

Bailey

Barrows

Katline

Batsavage

Chris

Beaty

Julia

Bianchi

Alan

Blough

Heather

Borland

Gary

Bristle

William

Brouwer

Myra

Bublely

Walter

Bunting

Matthew

Byrd

Julia

Cermak

Bridget

Cheshire

Rob

Cody

Richard

Curtis

Judd

Dancy

Kiley

DeVictor

Rick

Dobbs

Jeffrey

Evans

Joseph

Finch

Margaret

Foor

Brandon

Foss

Kristin

Gentry

Lauren

Gomez

Josalyn

Gore

Karla

Gray

Alisha

Griner

Tim

Hale

Robert

Helies	Frank
Helmey	Judy
Hull	Jimmy
Iberle	Allie
Iverson	Kim
Klasnick	01Kelly
Knowlton	Kathy
Kolmos	Kevin
Larkin	Michael
Lazarre	Dominique
Lee	Jennifer
MCCLAIR	GENINE
Malinowski	Richard
McGill	Maria
Mehta	Nikhil
Merck	Nicole
Muffley	Brandon
Murphey	Trish
Neer	Julie
Newman	Thomas
Oliver	Ashley
Ott	Emily
Peterson	Cassidy
Pierce	Brett
Poland	Stephen
Ramsay	Chloe
Records	David
Reichert	Marcel
Roller	Tom
Runde	Brendan
Sagarese	Skyler
Seward	McLean
Silvas	Rachael
Smart	Tracey
Smillie	Nick
Solinger	Laura
Spanik	Kevin
Spurgin	Kali
Stephen	Jessica
Stephens	Haley
Turley	Brendan
Waldo	Jennifer
Walia	Matt
Walsh	Jason

Walter	John
Wamer	David
Webb	Greyson
White	Geoff
Williams	Erik
Withers	Meg
Woodstock	Matt
Zapf	Daniel
colby	barrett
gwin	earlgwin
moss	david
sandorf	Scott
thomas	suz
vecchio	Julie
zales	robert
Aukeman	Trip
Binion-Rock	Samantha
Bogdan	Jennifer
Carvalho	Avelino
Darrow	Jamie
Davis	Conor
DeFilippi Simpson	Julie
Delrosario	Leeanne
Dieveney	Beth
Franco	Crystal
Gahm	Meghan
Gloeckner	David
Guyas	Martha
Harrison	Alana
Hemilright	Dewey
Hendon	Read
Hildreth	Delaine
Keppler	Blaik
Lam	Sarah
Lewis	Savannah
Markwith	Anne
Masi	Michelle
Mason	Gina
Matter	Vivian
McWaters	Mark
Mendez-Ferrer	Natasha
Meyer-Gutbrod	Erin
Mitchell	Kathy
Moore	Jeff

Nietert
Nuttall
Owens
Package-Ward
Paul
Poholek
Ralston
Reichert
Rutherford
Salmon
Shirley
Sinkus
Sramek
Stein
Stephenson
Stewart
lavine
scott
zales

Dessie Anne
Matthew
Marina
Christina
Eric
Ariel
Kellie
Marcel
John
Brandi
Jody
Wiley
Mark
Sarah
Sarah
Jimmy
craig
sean
bob

SAFMC March 2025 Council Meeting

Attendee Report: (03/3/25 - 03/7/25)

Report Generated:

03/10/2025 08:53 AM EDT

Webinar ID

564-916-027

Actual Start Date/Time

03/04/2025 07:50 AM EST

Staff Details

Attended

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Interest Rating

Not applicable for staff

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Aukeman

Trip

Baker

Scott

Barrows

Katline

Beckwith

Anna

Bianchi

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Samantha

Blough

Heather

Bogdan

Jennifer

Borland

Gary

Bristle

William

Brouwer

Myra

Bublely

Walter

Bunting

Matthew

Byrd

Julia

Cass-Calay

Shannon

Cathey

Andrew

Cermak

Bridget

Charydczak

Jenna

Cheshire

Rob

Coleman

Heather

Corey

Morgan

Curtis

Judd

DD

D

Davis

Conor

DeFilippi Simpson

Julie

DeVictor

Rick

Delrosario

Leeanne

Denson

LaTreese

Dieveney	Beth
Evans	Joseph
Finch	Margaret
Flowers	Jared
Foor	Brandon
Forrestal	Francesca
Foss	Kristin
Franco	Dawn
Garber	Chip
Gentner	BRAD
Gentry	Lauren
Gore	Karla
Gray	Alisha
Griner	Tim
Hadley	John
Hale	Robert
Hart	Hannah
Helmey	Judy
Hildreth	Delaine
Hollensead	Lisa
Howell	Mary
Huber	Jeanette
Hull	Jimmy
Iberle	Allie
Iverson	Kim
Karnauskas	Mandy
Keppler	Blaik
Kimrey	Captain Chris
Klasnick	01Kelly
Klibansky	Nikolai
Knowlton	Kathy
Lam	Sarah
Larkin	Michael
Lazarre	Dominique
Lloyd	Victor
Loeffler	Michael
MCCLAIR	GENINE
Malinowski	Richard
Marhefka	00Kerry
Marinko	Jeff
Masi	Michelle
Matter	Vivian
McGovern	Jack
McWaters	Mark

Mehta	Nikhil
Merck	Nicole
Merrifield	Mike
Moore	Jeff
Muffley	Brandon
Murphey	Trish
Neer	Julie
Newman	Thomas
Norelli	Alex
Nuttall	Matthew
Oliver	Ashley
Ostroff	Jenny
Ott	Emily
Package-Ward	Christina
Petersen	Andrew
Peterson	Cassidy
Pierce	Brett
Ralston	Kellie
Reichert	Marcel
Rios	Adyan
Roller	Tom
Runde	Brendan
Sagarese	Skyler
Seward	McLean
Shultz	Chris
Siegfried	Kate
Silvas	Rachael
Sinkus	Wiley
Smart	Tracey
Smit-Brunello	Monica
Smith	Matthew
Solinger	Laura
Spanik	Kevin
Spurgin	Kali
Sramek	Mark
Stam	Geoff
Stein	Sarah
Stephen	Jessica
Stephens	Haley
Stevens	Molly
Takade-Heumacher	Helen
Thompson	Laurilee
Turley	Brendan
Vaughan	Nathan

Waldo	Jennifer
Walia	Matt
Walsh	Jason
Walter	John
Wamer	David
Webb	Greyson
Wheatley	Thomas
White	Geoff
Wiegand	Christina
Williams	Travis
Withers	Meg
Woodstock	Matt
Zapf	Daniel
colby	barrett
collier	chip
curtis	Joe
everett	Nathan
I	I
lavine	craig
leonard	edward
moss	david
sandorf	Scott
thomas	suz
vecchio	Julie
zales	robert
Balderson	John
Batsavage	Chris
Beaty	Julia
Carvalho	Avelino
Cody	Richard
Cox	Jack
Dancy	Kiley
Darrow	Jamie
Dobbs	Jeffrey
Franco	Crystal
Gahm	Meghan
Gloeckner	David
Gomez	Josalyn
Guyas	Martha
Harrison	Alana
Helies	Frank
Hemilright	Dewey
Hendon	Read
Kolmos	Kevin

Lee	Jennifer
Lewis	Savannah
Markwith	Anne
Mason	Gina
McGill	Maria
Mendez-Ferrer	Natasha
Meyer-Gutbrod	Erin
Mitchell	Kathy
Murphy	Allison
Nietert	Dessie Anne
Owens	Marina
Paul	Eric
Poholek	Ariel
Poland	Stephen
Ramsay	Chloe
Records	David
Reichert	Marcel
Rutherford	John
Salmon	Brandi
Shirley	Jody
Smillie	Nick
Stephenson	Sarah
Stewart	Jimmy
Williams	John
Williams	Erik
gwin	earlgwin
scott	sean
zales	bob