

# **SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

## **COUNCIL SESSION I**

**North Charleston Marriott  
North Charleston, South Carolina**

**September 15-16, 2025**

### **Transcript**

#### **Council Members**

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

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

#### **Council Staff**

John Carmichael  
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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  
Eugenio Pineiro  
Sonny Gwin  
Dr. Walter Bublely  
Dr. Clay Porch  
Spud Woodward  
Kathy Knowlton

Rick DeVictor  
Chris Schieble  
DeLaney Farrell  
Adrian Hordyk  
Kristen Foss  
Heather Blough  
Tom Carruthers

#### **Observers and Participants**

Other observers and participants attached.

The Council Session I of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the North Charleston Marriott, North Charleston, South Carolina, on Monday, September 15, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Trish Murphey.

MS. MURPHEY: I'm glad everybody is here. It's great to see everyone, and so I'll go ahead and just start out. First, I would like to welcome our Gulf Fisheries Management Council liaison, Chris Schieble, and so hi, Chris, and thanks for coming. It's great to have you, and, of course, our good Mid-Atlantic Council buddy, Sonny Gwin, is here and so thanks for coming. It's good to see you again, and then the other exciting thing we've got is we do the oath for new council members, and so we'll welcome Dewey Hemilright for North Carolina, and so, Andy. I'm sorry, Gary. Gary is -- I didn't forget. I didn't. You've been here. Sorry. Yes, and Gary from South Carolina.

(Whereupon, the oath was issued to new and returning council members.)

MR. STRELCHECK: Please join me in welcoming our newest council members. Thank you. Just real quickly, on behalf of the Fisheries Service, I want to thank both Gary and Dewey for their interest in serving on the council. Gary, you're no longer a newbie, and so we expect a lot out of you. Dewey, you've been here before, and so we look forward to working with you. We know this takes away time from your businesses, your jobs, your family, and we are grateful for the time you're serving on the council, and so thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy, and congratulations, Dewey and Gary. Some other fun stuff we get to do today is we get to do the 2024 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award, and so I see all our officers in the back, and also families. It's great to see the families come and see your folks get awards, and so I guess we'll start out with South Carolina.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Do you have something that you're going to read?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Good. Are you asking them to come upfront?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes. Can the South Carolina folks come up? I would like to present one of the 2024 Law Enforcement of the Year Awards to the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, PFC Andrew Alexander, and so PFC Alexander works in the Beaufort Unit, and he is responsible for enforcing recreational and commercial saltwater regulations. He's a certified field training officer for new hires, and he is the go-to officer for JEA activities, logging over 100 hours of JEA patrols in 2024.

He's known by his fellow officers as Turbo. PFC Alexander was the lead officer in a two-month long investigation resulting in seventeen cases of undersized saltwater gamefish, a commercial crabbing investigation that resulted in eleven cases and two JEA case packets. One was for undersized black sea bass, and the other was a possession of red porgy out of season, and one for gag grouper out of season.

Turbo also assisted in detaining a shrimp trawler found dragging inside closed waters without commercial decals, resulting in \$4,000 in fines and a seized catch. Turbo is also constantly helping his coworkers, and he uses every opportunity to teach other officers and pass on his skills, and so

he is one of the most productive fishery enforcement officers in the region. On behalf of the council, congratulations, and thank you.

We're excited to have a second award, if the Florida law enforcement folks would come up. I will say it's really great to see your families here. I know they're very proud. The South Atlantic Council is pleased to present the other 2024 Law Enforcement of the Year Awards to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's SRA offshore patrol vessel team. This includes Lt. Edwin Harp, Senior Officer Specialist David Moss, Officer Specialist Casey Schroer, Officer Specialist Alexander Bruder, and Officer Zachary Dudas, and so congratulations, you guys.

This team has patrolled over 100 miles of southeast Florida coastline, aboard two patrol vessels, and specializes in federal and state fisheries enforcement. They are special operations group members, field training officers, and one team member fills in as a tactical flight officer. Very cool.

There's a total of 411 JEA patrol hours, exceeding their required hours by 54 percent, forty-four fishery cases, which include twenty-seven federal and seventeen state, that resulted in forty federal citations and thirty-four state misdemeanors, two details, resulting in four federal cases, fourteen state fishery violations, and fifteen state fishery warnings. The team assisted with eighteen Bahamas federal fisheries cases.

The team has participated in several outreach events and conducted trainings, and the OPV team has a passion for teaching officers about federal fisheries, helping officers put their federal case packets together, talking with other officers on the scene who needed some direction, and getting officers in contact with the local NOAA agent and NOAA officer, and so, on behalf of the entire council, congratulations, and thank you so much. I just want to thank all you law enforcement officers for all the work you do. I know it's a tough life, and so thank you for everything you all do.

I guess now we will move into the approval of the agenda. Does anybody have any comments on the agenda? Is there any comments on the agenda? Seeing none, the agenda is approved by consensus. All right, and next is the meeting minutes, right? Okay, and so the same thing. Any substantial changes to meeting minutes? Does everyone approve the meeting minutes? I think I see heads shaking, and we'll approve by consensus. All right. Thank you all very much. Monica, do you have any litigation brief you would like to provide?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I can give you a quick update, and so recall that we, the Fisheries Service and the Secretary, were sued on some red snapper rules, both the 2023 temporary rule and then the 2024 interim rule, and so a suit was filed by Slash Creek Water Works, J&C Charters, Tilman Gray, Doing Business as Avon Seafood, Antonio Giambanco, and J. Ryan Speckman.

At any rate, I've been keeping you updated on that case, and you may recall that, this past January, the court issued an order granting the Fisheries Service and the defendants -- They found for the service on all the merits. The court held that the annual catch limit did not have to include dead discards, and that the challenged rules did not create a de facto reallocation, because of the amount of discarded fish by the recreational sector, and then the court concluded, to the extent that the regulations do allocate fishing privileges, or harvest restrictions, they do so in a manner that's fair and equitable and reasonably calculated to promote conservation.

The plaintiffs filed a notice of appeal, and I have sent to you that their first brief, their opening brief, which was due, I think, July 27. Our next -- Our brief, essentially our opening brief, is due next week, on September 26, and, when that's filed, I will send that to you. There's a couple more dates for briefs to be filed, and then the final briefs will be filed on November 8. I'm not sure how quickly the court will rule, but we'll keep you apprised.

Then, in the meantime, you'll recall that there was this thing called a secretarial amendment, and there was a final rule that was issued in June to implement the secretarial amendment, and we had a lawsuit on that. Again, it was Slash Creek Water Works, Tilman Gray, Antonio Giambanco, J. Ryan Speckman, and Strawberry Inc., and so J&C was moved out, and Strawberry Inc. was included.

That case was filed on July 3, that complaint, and then, because the issues are so similar to the main red snapper case that I just talked to you about, and that we've been briefing, the parties agreed to stay the proceedings, meaning we're not going to have any briefing on that, on the lawsuit that was just filed, until the appeals court rules on the issues. Because the issues are so similar in each case, the parties thought that that was appropriate, and so, depending on what the appellate court rules, there's a chance that we will be briefing that new case that was filed on the secretarial amendment, and so we'll keep you posted on those going forward, but just more red snapper litigation.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Monica. Does anybody have any questions for Monica? All right. Seeing none, I guess we will move on to our state agency reports. I thought I would go ahead and start with Florida and work our way north.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Madam Chair. At our August FWC commission meeting, we provided some updates on what's going on here at the council, including our EFP projects, and so, speaking of EFPs, we finished year-one of our three EFPs with over 22,000 applications for people to participate in that project, and then, based on the numbers, there were 1,230 participants, and we intend to give you guys a detailed breakdown of some of that data at the December council meeting. Year-two of those three EFPs is already underway, and so the application period was in August, and participants that were selected could start fishing in September.

Then another thing that I just want to make folks aware of, and so we had our first annual seatrout symposium in August. There were over a hundred people there. It was held in Daytona, Florida, but it was a statewide event. We do other events like this for snook and redfish, following the release of the stock assessment and when we're getting ready to go to rulemaking, and so we're doing statewide public workshops on seatrout right now, and the intent is to go towards a more holistic management structure, like we have for snook and redfish, and to go to the nine different regions, and the seven different metrics, that we're using on the other two inshore species, and we will bring those proposed rules to our commission meeting in November, and I'm happy to take any questions, but I'll stop there.

MS. MURPHEY: Anyone have any questions for Jessica? All right. Seeing none, we'll move to Georgia, and so we've got Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Georgia, the basic news that we have right now is we have successfully hired our for-hire observer, and Kristen Palmrose is the person we hired. She's actually been able to get out and start doing some of the trips, and so that started early in July, and so hopefully we'll get some good information over the next couple of years, while that project runs.

We also received funds, and I think I talked about that at our June meeting, from the state to go ahead and increase our number of creel intercepts through the APAIS survey, and so, basically, we're doubling the effort.

That effort officially got kicked off on September 1, and so, as of right now, Georgia is doing twice the number of interviews that it has done in the past, in support of what we're trying to figure out moving forward with these offshore species and how to get better estimates for rarely-encountered species, such as red snapper and other offshore fish, and so we've increased our full-time staff, to basically double that, and hopefully we will be able to keep part-time staff. We thought we had a full stable last week, and we had two people already skip to other jobs, and so that's going to be our hardest part, is the revolving door on the part-time.

Then, lastly, we are going back into the legislative session with the idea of picking up where the landing permit for offshore species left off at the end of our legislative session last year, and so we still will be pursuing a state offshore landing permit, and so stay tuned on that, and the good news is we've got a lot of support for it, and so we don't anticipate it being a problem at this point, and that's all I have.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Carolyn. Any questions for Carolyn? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Carolyn, apologies if I asked you this at the last meeting, and so it's great to hear you're doubling sampling. Are you doubling sampling essentially consistent with allocating the sample sites the same way, or are you trying to look at different ways of also distributing sampling to capture more offshore sites?

DR. BELCHER: So it is 100 percent. Basically, the draw is done through ACCSP MRIP, and so it's just, whatever their allocation is, that's exactly what's applying. There's nothing outside of this right now that's dictated any differently than how MRIP would be allocating, and it's just twice the number of trips, or intercepts.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I mentioned that, and it may be worth having a conversation when Evan Howell gets here this week. The main concern I have is, if you double sampling, you're likely going to continue to oversample the inshore species, that are very abundant, and we're not, obviously, able to sample those offshore species as adequately, and so, if there's maybe some ways we could explore some of the offshore sampling, that would be good.

DR. BELCHER: So our intent right now was to basically -- Where we were being asked by the industry to move forward with it, the best that we could do was to double the MRIP. That was the quickest thing, what we got the most purchase for, knowing that it's probably not the best sampling approach. Our hope is, once the permit comes into play, and we get a better idea of what that universe looks like, and then we can do an additional survey to try to get some of the characteristics

and metrics that might help us with that, and that's the plan for in the future, but it's not going to be right now.

I mean, this was kind of more of that idea of what can we do, knowing that we don't have a large staff, and a large involvement. We kind of understood that there was a chance that we were going to over focus on those inshore species, but it was the best that we could offer for right now.

MS. MURPHEY: I've got Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Your offshore species that you're looking to have a permit for, was that snapper grouper species, or species or what species does it cover?

DR. BELCHER: There are currently nine species that are federally managed that are identified in our state codes, and so it's focusing on those nine species, and it also includes king, Spanish mackerel, and dolphin, and so it was easy. Our thought was let's focus on the species that the state recognizes, so that we at least have that leverage for why the state should invest in that, as opposed to trying to go after the fifty-five species total, but, further down the road, there, obviously, could be worked-in nuances, but, right now, it's just those core species.

MS. MURPHEY: Any more questions for Carolyn? All right. I'll move to South Carolina and Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. From the state-specific side of the house, we have our red drum ASMFC public hearing next Tuesday to discuss the potential regulatory changes to reduce harvest in red drum for South Carolina.

Kind of shifting more into our fisheries, our artificial reef group recently purchased an ROV, and so they are working to put that together, and to incorporate that into sampling moving forward, trying to get sort of a baseline to our reefs look like. Personally, I'm really excited to get out to some of the deepwater reefs, and to start sampling some of those. They were previously sampled by the NOAA folks, but, unfortunately, funding has cut that, and so I'm hoping to kind of pick back up on that.

We too have officially started our charter observer program and were successfully able to hire Ms. Jordan Wolfe. She has already begun trips with our charter fleet. It's been a little bit of a slow start, but we're gaining momentum very, very quickly and the charter group has been very accepting of her, and we're really excited for that program to continue.

Additionally, the red snapper discard funds have been allocated as well. We are doing observer trips on both for-hire and private rec boats, and some of those have already started as well. In addition to that red snapper discard, we did add additional voluntary fields to our for-hire data reporting requirement. Specific to red snapper, if you discard a live red snapper, it requests the number of fish within size bins that were released. It also asks about treatment to those fish, whether they were vented, descaled, both, or no treatment, and we're excited, and we're already getting some data back with that as well.

Moving into our fishery-independent sampling, the South Carolina SERFS has been very busy with sampling. Since the June meeting, the R/V Lady Lillian has actually gone out and done two

chevron trap video cruises, in collaboration with SEFIS, as well as having NOAA personnel onboard those two cruises, and the R/V Palmetto has completed four chevron video trap cruises in the last three months, with three of those four cruises also having SEFIS personnel onboard. I'm very thankful for that collaboration.

To date, that brings the number of stations sampled to 1,448, with a typical average of about 1,500 a sampling season, and I was looking at Tracey, to make sure that number was right in my head, with the remaining areas to be sampled in northern Onslow Bay, both the inner and mid shelf.

Our coastal trawl survey has also begun its second season of sampling on the R/V Lady Lillian, and they've done two cruises thus far, completing about seventy-five of the targeted just a little over a hundred stations. Most of the Florida, Georgia, and Raleigh Bay area has been completed, and we're going to be doing some South Carolina, Long Bay, and Onslow Bay sampling moving forward.

A quick update on SADL, the big program that we all love to see that data, the contracts and the cooperative fisheries awards and sampling has begun. Yay. Check box. They're actually about halfway done with most of the strata, and/or will be finishing that up this week, and then, also, we got some MARFIN funding to collaborate with NC State University to begin to develop an index and reading the life history samples that the SADL group has been collecting, from 2023 to at least 2025, with hopes to maybe even get things into 2026, and so, with that, I'll take any questions.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Amy. Does anybody got any questions for Amy? All right. Well, thanks, Amy, and I guess I will cover North Carolina. In North Carolina, we've had a couple of state record fish caught, both in June. We had a seventeen-pound-twelve-point-eight-ounce mutton snapper off Ocean Isle, in June, and we also had an almaco jack that weighed fifty-six-pounds-and-four-point ounces off the Outer Banks.

During the red snapper mini-season, we had recreational anglers donate their red snapper fish carcasses and complete a required catch card, and that made them all eligible to receive an inverted hook descending device, and this was donated through Sea Grant. Those that didn't donate their carcasses were also automatically entered into a drawing to win one of three SeaQualizer descending devices, and, through that, we ended up collecting around 140 carcasses, and some of the ones from Morehead City are apparently pretty good size, not many under ten or twelve pounds, and so I think we had a pretty good successful carcass collection there for a red snapper.

In July, North Carolina worked with Florida, who transferred 250,000 pounds of Spanish mackerel quota from the south to the north. Thanks for working with us, Florida. We also opened the recreational southern flounder season from September 1 through September 14, with one fish per person per day at a fifteen-inch size limit, and then we also announced the opening of the commercial southern flounder season. Some of it started today and the other will start October 1. It's based off whether you're a pound netter or gill net, what areas you fish in, and so that has kicked in.

At our August commission meeting, we increased that this year's southern flounder allocation for the recreational fishery by adopting Amendment 4 of the flounder plan, and that expedited a 50-50 quota allocation shift between the commercial and recreational fisheries for this year, instead

of next year. The division is also exploring more comprehensive management measures through the development of Amendment 5 of the southern flounder plan.

The commission also discussed current trends in the sheepshead fishery, because of concerns related to increased fishing pressure, and we will be having public meetings in the fall to gather stakeholder input on that. The commission also asked the division to start drafting proposed rule language for five-fish-per-person recreational bag limit on Atlantic bonito, and this will go forward to the commission in November for consideration.

Some of the stuff you also may have heard, our research vessel, the Carolina Coast, it had been damaged, and it ended up being damaged beyond repair, and we were unable -- So we are now unable to continue our Pamlico Sound survey. The survey has been going on since 1987, and, at this point, we just -- There's just no funding in the budget to replace her, and so we are working on trying to develop a method to continue the survey, but, right now, we just don't have a budget for it.

Then I need to share this with my -- Because you guys are my council family, and it's with great sadness that we lost one of our colleagues last week, Mark Hamrick. He passed away while out sampling with other staff in the field. He had been with the division for twenty-eight years, working in our fisheries management section, and he collected commercial fisheries data, and he also worked on several of our independent sampling programs.

He was probably one of the most experienced and dedicated employee in the division. He was respected by his co-workers, by the commercial fishermen, and also by our fish house owners. He collected probably the vast majority of our snapper grouper data from North Carolina, and so he was a colleague and a mentor and a friend to me, and so if you all could please keep his family in your thoughts, and my DMF family in your thoughts, and that's it for North Carolina.

I guess we will move to -- Well, let's see, and so the staff report, that is just a written report, and so you guys can view that on your own time, and then, also, the best fishing practices, the plan -- You know, there was a report, and a recorded presentation and survey, and I'll let Christina talk a little bit about it.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you, and so I did just want to remind everyone that there's a recorded presentation. We did a recorded presentation this time around, just to sort of be respectful on the amount of things that the council has on their agenda, and so we're trying this sort of new method to get you guys important information, without taking up too much agenda time, and so there is a link in your briefing book to a recorded presentation that goes over sort of the best fishing practices initiative and everything that it has accomplished over the last three years, and we're asking that you review that presentation, and then there was a form sent to you.

It's been sent in sort of each of the briefing book announcements. I also sent a reminder this morning, and so it should be near the top of your inbox. Please take the time to watch the presentation, and fill out that form, and, if you could do it by the end of Wednesday, that would be helpful.

Ashley and I are then going to summarize the results of that, so that we can present it to you and have a very brief discussion on Friday, and I will note that one of the questions we're asking is for

first and last name, so we will know who has completed it, and who has not completed it, and, if you have not completed it by Wednesday, I will be politely haranguing you to please get it done, and so thank you, guys, for taking the time to review that presentation.

MS. MURPHEY: You kind of do have a little test in there too, that you had, and I saw that, and so thank you, Christina, and, if you guys haven't had a chance to review the recording, and do the survey, please, if you could get to it, that would be great, or Christina will come after you. Let's see. Next, I've got council liaisons. Chris, would you like to go through your Gulf Council report?

MR. SCHIEBLE: Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. I appreciate the earlier introduction. My name is Chris Schieble. I am the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Fisheries for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, but I also serve as the proxy for our Assistant Secretary, Ryan Montague, on the Gulf Council, and I appreciate you all allowing me to participate here in the meeting this week and to give you this report.

The council most recently met in San Antonio, Texas, from August 25 through 28, a couple weeks ago. Three new council members, Brenda Ballard from Texas, Johnny Marquez from Mississippi, and Dr. Mike Allen from Florida, were inducted for a three-year term. The council elected J.D. Dugas from Louisiana as the chair, and Dr. Kesley Banks from Texas as the vice chair, each for a one-year term.

The following is going to be a summary of our council actions, and I'll paraphrase a few things here from the report as I go. First, we tackled executive orders. After hearing recommendations provided during a series of advisory panel meetings and a public engagement session, the council developed a list of management recommendations that it plans pursue in response to Executive Order 14276, Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness.

These management recommendations include the following: explore permit requirements and active participation from commercial IFQ holders; consider extending the sending and venting tool requirements from the DESCEND Act, and I'll touch on that a little bit later; and consider removing low-priority species from federal fisheries management plans. We also developed a relevant list of items that are outside of the council's purview that could be shared with other federal agencies. The council will develop a workplan and submit a letter to the Secretary of Commerce detailing its approach to the executive order.

The second executive order, 14192, Unleashing Prosperity Through Deregulation, we also developed a list of regulations that could be considered for removal. The council plans to submit a letter to NOAA Fisheries detailing its suggestions.

We then worked on yellowtail and mutton snapper. The recent SEDAR 96 stock assessment for yellowtail snapper and SEDAR 79 stock assessment for mutton snapper showed that neither stock is overfished nor experiencing overfishing, and it resulted in new catch advice for both species.

We began work on Gulf Reef Fish Amendment 55/South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Amendment 44, which considers modifying the catch limits and the allowable harvest proportion to each council. The Gulf Council narrowed the range of alternatives being considered to split allowable harvest between the two jurisdictions by moving Alternative 4 in Action 1 to Considered but

Rejected. You all will continue this work on the amendment this Tuesday afternoon, before it goes back to the Gulf Council for further consideration.

The for-hire red snapper season, after hearing a brief summary of public comments that were received, the council took final action on a framework action that considers opening the federal for-hire red snapper season earlier in the year, on the Friday before Memorial Day. The duration of the for-hire season has doubled since the implementation of the June 1 season opener in 2015. Charter fishermen have indicated that opening the season earlier is preferred over extending the season further into the fall, which is typically a lower demand time of year for the for-hire fishing. This framework action will be transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce for consideration and implementation as soon as practical.

We then moved on to deepwater grouper. The deepwater grouper complex is comprised of warsaw, snowy, and yellowedge grouper, as well as speckled hind. It's managed with a single annual catch limit for the complex. Following the 2024 SEDAR 85 stock assessment, yellowedge grouper were deemed to be experiencing overfishing, and the SSC recommended revised catch limits for yellowedge grouper.

After hearing a summary of public comments received, the council took final action on Reef Fish Amendment 58B, which considers the deepwater grouper status determination criteria, catch limits, sector allocations, and recreational accountability measures that included establishing catch limits for the complex to represent approximately a 50 percent reduction in allowable harvest to end overfishing of yellowedge grouper.

The council also chose to establish sector allocations and sector-specific ACLs, which allocated 10.21 percent to the recreational sector and 89.79 percent to the commercial sector, recognizing increasing recreational landings in recent years. The council created a recreational accountability measure that triggers a reduction in the recreational season duration if average recreational landings exceed the average recreational ACL and the average total complex landings exceed the average total complex ACL over a three-year period. This new recreational accountability measure is expected to correct for consistent overages of the recreational annual catch limit without being overly sensitive to most single-year overages.

This table included in the report contains the newly recommended deepwater grouper catch limits expressed in pounds of gutted weight and in MRIP-FES units. Establishing sector allocations and modifying the recreational accountability measure are expected to prevent overfishing in the future. This amendment will be transmitted to the Secretary of Commerce for consideration and implementation as soon as practical.

The council also asked that a presentation exploring the use of a mandatory reporting system for recreational deepwater grouper be given to the council during a future meeting. Recreational deepwater grouper landings estimates are very uncertain, and a mandatory reporting system is being considered as a mechanism for improving estimates that inform management decisions.

We then moved on to shallow-water grouper. The other shallow-water grouper complex is comprised of scamp, yellowmouth grouper, yellowfin grouper, and black grouper. The council's SSC recommended update catch advice for scamp and yellowmouth grouper based on SEDAR 68. The council reviewed Amendment 58A, which considers splitting the other shallow-water grouper

complex in two, establishing biological criteria and management benchmarks, catch limits, and accountability measures for each new subcomplex.

The council then selected preferred alternatives to set biological reference points, status determination criteria, catch limits, and sector allocations for both complexes. The council also chose a preferred alternative that would establish a recreational annual catch target 14 percent below the annual catch limit for scamp and yellowmouth grouper. The council decided not to consider allowing flexibility measures among the deep and shallow-water complexes.

The council modified alternatives related to recreational accountability measures. The council also decided to reconsider alternatives for distributing IFQ shares for the new catch share categories. The council will continue work on this document during a future meeting.

Red grouper was next. The most recent red grouper stock assessment, SEDAR 88, indicated that red grouper is not overfished or experiencing overfishing. The resulting catch advice is a significant increase from the current catch limits. The council worked on draft Reef Fish Amendment 62, which addresses catch limits and allocations based on historical landings in Florida State Reef Fish Survey units and results in new catch limit recommendations.

The council selected a preferred alternative that would eliminate the recreational shallow-water grouper closure beyond the twenty-fathom boundary from February 1 through March 31. The council selected preferred alternatives that would phase-in total ACL increases over a three-year period and would establish 68.2 percent commercial and 31.8 percent recreational sector allocations.

The revised sector allocations account for a change in the recreational data unit from the federal MRIP-FES to the State of Florida's State Reef Fish Survey. These catch limits would maintain the current buffers of 5 percent for the commercial sector and 9 percent for the recreational sector. The council plans to continue work on this document and expects to take final action in January of 2026, after it gathers public comment.

The council also initiated work on a new document that considers establishing a pilot program that would set aside a portion of the commercial red grouper quota in the future and distribute it in a manner that aids new entrants in the IFQ fishery.

Recreational reef fish management, the recreational initiative is an effort to evaluate past and current recreational reef fish management strategies and explore potential innovative management approaches that could be applied in the future. The council reviewed a suite of recommendations made by the recreational initiative working group. The effort focused on five species of red snapper, red grouper, gag grouper, greater amberjack, and gray triggerfish. The council selected a number of educational management recommendations to develop a workplan to move forward with during its upcoming November 2025 meeting.

Venting and descending requirements, the Direct Enhancement of Snapper Conservation and the Economy Through Novel Devices Act, the DESCEND Act, which requires reef fish anglers to have descending devices or venting tools rigged and ready when fishing for reef fish in federal waters, is scheduled to expire in January of 2026. The council directed staff to expedite work on

an abbreviated framework document to replace provisions in the DESCEND Act for consideration during its upcoming November 2025 meeting.

Greater amberjack, the council discussed the planned start date of the September 1 for the greater amberjack recreational fishing season. However, the 2024 landings data indicated that the recreational ACL was exceeded. This overage was expected to trigger a reduction in the 2025 ACL and ACT, resulting in the recreational season being closed.

To date, no clarity has been provided to the public regarding the overage and its effect on the 2025 recreational season, which, in the absence of agency action, opened on September 1. NOAA indicated that a closure notice was prepared and sent to NOAA Headquarters some time ago, and that closure notice remains under review. The council wrote a letter to NOAA Fisheries requesting feedback about its concern regarding the lack of compliance and requested an explanation for the delayed rulemaking, a timeline for implementation, and a plan for ensuring compliance in the future.

Moving on to shrimp, the council worked on Draft Shrimp Amendment 19, which considers the upcoming expiration of the shrimp permit moratorium in October of 2026. The council selected a preferred option that will continue the moratorium and require a review of the program in ten years, or as otherwise deemed necessary by the council. The council plans to solicit public comment on this amendment before taking final action during its November 2025 meeting.

The NOAA Protected Resources Division has restarted a formal review of the southeastern shrimp fisheries. This review, required by the Endangered Species Act, is necessary because new information has shown that shrimp fishing might be affecting smalltooth sawfish and giant manta rays more than predicted. The council decided to create a working group comprised of shrimp harvesting sector representatives, NMFS staff, council staff, an SSC member, researchers, and others to identify workable solutions that aim to reduce interactions with sawfish and giant manta rays in the Gulf federal shrimp fishery.

Wahoo, wahoo is currently unregulated in the federal waters of the Gulf of America. The states of Texas, Alabama, and Mississippi do not regulate wahoo. Florida manages recreational harvest of wahoo in state waters. Louisiana currently regulates wahoo in state waters and notified NOAA of its intention to extend its regulations into federal waters. States may extend their regulations in the federal waters adjacent to their state for species not under federal management. NOAA Fisheries acknowledged this notice, and Louisiana will regulate those vessels fishing for wahoo in federal waters.

Commercial vessel telecommunication requirements, you all talked about this briefly in the previous committee. The U.S. Coast Guard gave a presentation on the telecommunication safety requirements for commercial fishing vessels that carry observers. Based on current regulations, Starlink is not an approved emergency radio telecommunication method.

In recognition of the fleet's growing use and positive experiences with Starlink, the council decided to write a letter to the U.S. Coast Guard requesting that Starlink be certified as an acceptable satellite communication device, and then, finally, our SSC committee membership, and a seat on the SSC was recently vacated when Dr. Mike Allen was appointed to the council. The council

appointed former Florida Gulf Council representative Dr. Tom Frazer to fill that vacancy until all SSC members are reappointed in 2027. Madam Chair, this concludes my report.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Chris. Does anybody have any questions for Chris? All right. Seeing none, we'll go ahead to Sonny.

MR. GWIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council met in August in Annapolis, Maryland, and the complete summary is in your briefing books. I'll touch on some of the important things that you all would like to hear, and one is we met jointly with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission to set specs for our flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish specifications, and all species have a substantial increase in quota.

We also sent a letter out of engagement on the blueline tilefish that you all talked about last meeting, and we voted for a new chair and a new vice chair. Joe Cimino, from New Jersey, is our new chair, and Skip Feller, from Virginia Beach, is our vice chair, and all of this is in the summary in your briefing books, and, if there's any questions that I can't answer, Bob Beal is here, with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and he can certainly help us out. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Sonny. Any questions for Sonny? All right. I guess we will be moving right along. Andy, I think you're up next with your region report.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and so I will point you to the document in the briefing book with regard to Protected Resources. I'm not going to go through this. I think the main takeaway is we will be discussing this week about the shrimp BiOp and take of giant manta ray and smalltooth sawfish, and so we'll save that for later in the week, for a more robust discussion.

I mentioned, earlier, permits, and so we have a launch window for our new permits 2.0 system in October. We are working to troubleshoot some bugs, and essentially data requirements, that will meet that launch window, and so we're hoping to have an improved system, with a better backend for data processing, in the next month or so.

A positive news story, although Trish scooped me, and so she said there was a record mutton snapper off of North Carolina. I got an image, from Rhode Island fisherman, of a mutton snapper caught off of Rhode Island in the last couple of weeks that was thirteen pounds, and so I'm not sure what's going on there, if they were blown north from hurricanes, or if they're starting to extend their range, but mutton snapper must be doing really well along the east coast.

If Myra or John could bring up a slide for me, I want to briefly talk about our SEFHIER program while they're doing that. Here we go, and so, as you're all well aware, we've had a number of uncertainties related to our staffing and budget within the federal government this year. We were asked to carefully review all of our contracts within the Regional Office, and we had to make a very difficult and strategic decision to let go of our contract for the SEFHIER program, given budget uncertainty, and so we have now a substantial reduction in support right now related to the for-hire SEFHIER program.

We have two permanent employees, FTEs, that are essentially doing the work that was previously done by six or seven employees, and so we have put together this slide just for the council to share out. We now are taking, essentially, voicemails, rather than real-time calls. That's not, obviously,

ideal for what we want to do, in terms of handling customer service, but, essentially, the voicemail will provide additional information with regard to how we can respond to constituents.

We are directing people to email us, if they have questions, and there's also a lot of self-service information that we're providing, since a lot of the questions that we receive are fairly redundant with one another, but, once again, this is just kind of a necessary step that we're taking, given staffing limitations.

If the budget changes, if we have more certainty going forward, then, obviously, we can look to reinstate this contract, but certainly it's going to have some impacts for stakeholders and the level of customer service that they receive from us, at least in the short-term, and so I just wanted to make you aware of those changes, and that, if for-hire captains reach out to you, please, you know, let them know kind of what is going on, and certainly direct them to some of our resources. We're going to do the best we can to help everyone that calls into our office, or emails us, or contacts us in other ways, but there's a lot of information that we are trying to provide to constituents to help in this area.

Then I wanted to give an update, and so thank you to Clay and his team, and so one of the bottlenecks we've been experiencing is we lost a considerable number of economic and social science staff. Clay has been able to provide some support from his economics department for development of amendments, and we've also brought on a contractor that's an anthropologist, and so we are starting to get up to speed to help with that bottleneck. I just wanted to let you know that there are still some challenges there.

We've also implemented a prioritization process, that I think we briefly shared with everyone last meeting, that's a cross-council prioritization process, and so this is looking at all of the both amendments and things that you're working on around this table, but also rule makings and other activities that fall on our plate once the council completes the work.

We're trying to be as transparent as we possibly can, looking at those through the lens of administration priorities, statutory mandates, and so we will continue to kind of juggle and prioritize workload, especially when we have these bottlenecks, to let John and team know, and you know, kind of, you know, where we're prioritizing our work, and why we're prioritizing it the way we are.

One other thing I'll mention is that there's a national effort that was shared with the CCC about prioritization of species, or species complexes, and aligning that with funding and resources across the nation, and so there's a regional pilot that's just now wrapping up along the west coast. That's going to be extended to other regions, but we're learning from that pilot. Ultimately, the goal is to have a regional prioritization process that also can be looked at nationally to determine how the Fisheries Service can allocate and spend its limited resources and funding to the -- You know, within the best interests of the nation, and so more to come on that, and I'm sure we'll give some updates at the upcoming CCC meeting.

Then the last update is some sad news, but, for those of you that have been around working with the Fisheries Service for a while, on September 5, we lost John Oliver. He was the former Deputy Assistant Administrator for Operations, and he served in that role until he retired in 2011, and he

had retired down here to North Carolina, and so he was a larger-than-life personality, for those that got to know him, and he will certainly be missed. With that, I'll take any questions.

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

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks. I have two very separate questions. My first one is going back to the OPR report. It says in here the Snapper Grouper FMP reinitiation to address giant manta rays and white tip sharks, and it says that there is, I guess, suggesting interactions between giant manta rays and the snapper grouper fishery, and it's been a long time since I've been through like one of these Section 7 consultations, and so if you could talk about how that's going to work a little bit. Then the second thing is related to -- It's completely different, but related to what's happening with the red snapper commercial closure that needs to get closed.

MR. STRELCHECK: In terms of snapper grouper and the reinitiation for giant manta rays, we would look at any sort of data and information with regard to take of giant manta rays. I'm not as up to speed on issues within snapper grouper as I am with shrimp, but one of the issues we encountered with manta rays is the mortality estimates were considered very low, or maybe zero, at some point when we did the initial take estimates, and so, in terms of reinitiation, we're just going to have to look at that. I'm not aware of any substantial issues related to snapper grouper, but it's part of just the reauthorization process under Section 7 consultation.

In terms of red snapper, that's a great question, and so, just to inform the council, the Regional Office -- We have procedures with regard to quota monitoring. As you're well aware, we post the quota monitoring updates weekly. When we are starting to approach a quota being met, we draft a notice, and we send that to our Headquarters Office. We've done that, taken those steps to do that, and, right now, all I can say is that decision remains under review.

MS. MURPHEY: Any follow up on that, Kerry?

MS. MARHEFKA: Briefly, I think the Gulf Council is also going through this with rec amberjack, and I forget, and maybe, Jessica, when you go next, maybe you can speak to how they handled it. Did they write a letter, or is there something -- I just would like to say, on the record, it's a bad look. I don't like it. The optics are very bad, especially considering red snapper, and we'll pay for it later. It's not a good thing that it's still open. It needs to be closed.

MS. MURPHEY: I understand, and thanks for bringing that up. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: The Gulf Council sent a letter on greater amberjack, and about the fact that the greater amberjack fishery was still open, and they have a fixed season, but, Chris, I don't know if you want to speak to it more, because there was a follow-up letter that came from Louisiana following that, but, the Gulf Council's letter -- Didn't it ask the Assistant Administrator to go ahead and close the fishery? Can you remind me what all was in that letter?

MR. SCHIEBLE: Yes, and I can try to dig up the actual letter that was sent after the council meeting in San Antonio, and you guys could provide it here, if people want to see how it was actually worded, but, yes, and so that was particular to the recreational greater amberjack season, which I mentioned in my report, and so it technically was requested to close way before we even got to the season, based on landing estimates that are done in MRIP-FES units.

The State of Louisiana provided a response letter, which included concurrence with the commercial closure for greater amberjack, based on trip ticket landings, but, in the letter, we stated that we intended to fish the recreational fishery, if it were to close in federal waters, in our state waters out to nine miles under state management, because we just feel that the landings are off. Something is seriously off with amberjack, especially on the recreational side, and the MRIP-FES units are what are used to derive landing estimates that are in that stock assessment. In a nutshell, that's what the state letter said, but I can try to find the council letter to distribute to staff here.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Go ahead, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, Kerry, was it to that? Was it to -- Go ahead.

MS. MARHEFKA: Can someone just remind me if we have a payback provision for red snapper? I think we do, don't we? No? Okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: What I had raised my hand for is I know that the Gulf Council wrote a letter to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center about priorities, and stock assessments, and those types of things, but, Andy, I know you told us, at the last meeting that you might have priorities ready to go for us at this meeting. Is that something that you could share with us? I know you talked also this morning about some things that are going on with permits, and how the permit system is being updated, and you might have new information in October, but I wasn't sure if you were ready to share any of the Regional Office's priorities.

MR. STRELCHECK: We have, for lack of a better term, a spreadsheet, essentially, that we use to prioritize our workload, and I think what you're asking maybe is a little bit broader than that, but it's -- You know, that regional effort is focused on cross-council prioritization for rulemakings and amendments, like I discussed.

In terms of broader prioritization, I mean, we're really in this time of great uncertainty, right, and we're hearing maybe some positive developments from House Appropriations about our budget, but we were looking at potentially a \$400 million swing in our budget between the House and Senate marks, just a month or so ago, and so, at this point, you know, I think Clay is up next. He can talk a little bit about the prioritization that they're doing within the Science Center.

What we are trying to do is, obviously, focus on how do we meet the council's demands and priorities in the short-term, where do we fill bottlenecks, and then, in that prioritization, carefully looking at the administration's priorities and making sure that those are rising to the top, in addition to meeting our statutory mandates.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Andy. I've got Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you. Andy, my question is in regards to the SERO office sends the notice for closure to Headquarters in D.C., and who exactly is reviewing? Who is that? Who is Headquarters in D.C. that would review that notice and get it on the Federal Register?

MR. STRELCHECK: I don't fully understand all of the layers of review, but it's NMFS Headquarters, as well as potentially NOAA and DOC review as well.

MS. MURPHEY: Anybody else have any questions? Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair. Andy, just from a standpoint of trying to have that timeline in front of us, can you provide us sort of when staff initiated that process from your office, or the Science Center, to start that process with leadership in NOAA Fisheries?

MR. STRELCHECK: We started it prior to the last council meeting, and have been, obviously, kind of refining that process. We've had some, you know, conversations, and so one of the goals, and, if you recall, at the last council meeting, early on, and I think it was Tuesday of that meeting, we decided to shuffle, you know, things, and have a conversation about priorities, and we used that as kind of an input to that process.

There's nothing, to me, magical about it, other than it's shedding more light and making sure that, when we talk to John and Myra and Trish and others, that we are on the same page with where the council views the priorities and what the Fisheries Service throughput can be to meet those priorities. If we're not on the same page, it, obviously, provides a dialogue point for us then to discuss how do we change some of that prioritization to meet our current and emergent needs.

MS. MURPHEY: This is just my question, and maybe because I'm not -- But I guess I'm trying to picture how are we going to -- With setting these priorities, because you said you have to do it across councils, and so you're dealing with three councils, and when do we get that intermeshing dialogue between the South Atlantic Council, and I can't -- I'm not picturing how that dialogue is working. I mean, will you come to the council with your priorities, and we discuss it, and compare it to our priorities, and come up with something, and so I'm just kind of wondering about the process of that.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and, I mean, we'll integrate it with the workplan that we discuss by the end of this meeting. What I guess we're trying to do is shed light on -- You know, what we're doing with the South Atlantic Council can't be looked at in isolation, and so, for example, my number-one priority, back prior to June, was completing the secretarial amendment. My number-two priority was completing a red grouper emergency rule for the Gulf Council, right, and so that wasn't your priority, but it was, you know, what we needed to get done from the Fisheries Service's standpoint.

Now those roll off, and then the next set of priorities come. We had a priority high on the list, the scamp and yellowmouth rebuilding plan, because there's a statutory requirement to meet that rebuilding plan, and so, yes, we can have that dialogue in more depth, but we'll be working with the team, between now and Friday, with the prioritization.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. That's great. I just needed that explanation. I have a better understanding now, and so thank you. Any other questions for Andy? Okay. I'll go ahead and move to Clay.

DR. PORCH: Good morning, everyone. It's good to see you all. I have a couple updates for you, and then I can take some questions, but, first of all, I just wanted to thank the council for the letter advocating for our Beaufort facility, and, currently, there are several alternatives under consideration. I won't go into the details there, but, at this point, all of them will in one way or another maintain our current presence in Beaufort, and so we're grateful for that.

I also wanted to give you an update regarding the impacts of the reduction in staffing at the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. I alluded to it a little bit in a previous meeting, but I'll give you a little more detail here.

It's certainly fair to say that we've met, and even exceeded, the administration's goal of reducing the size of the federal workforce, making it a more efficient organization. We did not fill sixteen vacant positions, due to the hiring freeze, and we've since lost sixty-seven staff, and so we're about one-third down from what we had planned to be in January in our staffing plan, and so, consequently, in the short-term, of course, our ability to manage operations, and collect some basic data, and provide scientific advice is a bit compromised.

We're working with NMFS Headquarters, and some of our partners, to prioritize and mitigate these impacts. I would say, right now, we're really in the triage phase, where we're just trying to understand what the main impacts are, and how we can compensate for some of them, and I'll go into a little more detail later, but suffice it to say that we are making good strides in using advanced tech, and artificial intelligence, and expanding our partnerships, and so I expect many of the challenges we're facing right now to be reduced as time goes on.

The first thing, that many of you are already familiar with, is we lost a lot of administrative staff, and so our budget execution has been slowed, our grant and contract processing, and some of you have experienced that, particularly our partners in South Carolina. We've been moving to outsource some of it to NMFS Headquarters, but they too had some reductions, and so we're still working on how we're going to do that. There's actually a national-level effort to look at how we make those processes more efficient, maybe centralized in some cases, to get an efficiency, an economy of scale.

We also have reduced ability to maintain our aging facilities, and there is some interest in looking at how NOAA can more efficiently utilize the space they have, given that there's a reduced workforce, but no details yet for that.

We have had some reductions, and potential spatial gaps, in our resource survey sampling. That's our fishery-independent surveys, and there's going to be some delays in the survey data product availability, particularly the video-based abundance indices. We're working to use, again, automated image analysis to make that more efficient, and we're on the cusp of doing that in the Gulf of Mexico, and we're working towards that goal in the South Atlantic. Again, with the reduced workforce, that has slowed a bit, but we are making good progress.

We also have lost three experienced vessel captains, which will make it a little more challenging for us to back up the surveys when the NOAA white ships aren't available, and to do some of the other surveys that those vessels cannot do, and so we're hoping to be able to at least backfill one or two of those experienced captains, because we have the Southern Journey, the Coretta, and we have the Gladys Reese, our research vessel coming online, hopefully by spring 2026, but, of course, we need the experienced captains to run them.

The way we'll mitigate that, in the time being, is contracting people to -- Like we've contracted South Carolina DNR to do some sampling, using the R/V Savannah, and we will look into trying

to expand cooperative research surveys, like we do with the South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey.

Another thing that has happened is we lost about half of our port agents, which makes it hard to get good spatial coverage of all the fish houses. We have plans to mitigate those losses by increasing the geographic area of responsibility for each of our remaining port samplers, maybe moving some around, but also working with our state partners, to see if they can cover some of those gaps, and we're in those conversations now.

The reductions in staff, particularly our ageing staff, have slowed progress to transition to more efficient ways of collecting and processing fish abundance and age composition data. We were looking for advances in near-infrared spectroscopy, and I think we'll actually be able to implement that for a couple species shortly, and we're also looking at using genetic approaches, epigenetic approaches, which allow us to age fish from samples that don't require even killing the fish, and so we could actually get samples from discarded fish. It just needs a tissue sample, and so we're working on that technology, but, again, it will take a little time to get those online, because we do have some reduced research capacity.

We did lose our ability to do bycatch research and fishing gear consultation. Many of you know we were leaders, once upon a time in that, and our group was the one that really advanced the TED program, the turtle excluder devices, and other bycatch reduction devices. We right now have very diminished capacity in that area.

As you've already heard through the SEDAR, and you'll hear later, we do have a reduced ability to support the current stock assessment enterprise and to provide timely scientific advice. Remember, we essentially have four councils that we serve at the Southeast Center, because not only do we have the three fishery management councils, but also Highly Migratory Species, the Atlantic sharks, and the ICCAT, which acts like a fourth council for us, and so we're spread pretty thin there, and we're trying to figure out the best way to cover it.

One thing I will say, just anticipating the upcoming SEDAR discussion, is that we're going to have to move away from trying to use thorough plows to plow the field, and we're going to need to use, you know, mules and oxen, and so we're going to have to simplify, in other words, and get the right tools for the job. We're not going to be able to do these Rolls-Royce assessments. To put it another way, we need pickup trucks, and that's the thing we're looking in, so we can get more scientific advice out quicker, and we'll talk about that a little bit more.

Our ability to provide scientific support for protected resources has also been impacted. We lost quite a few staff there, and so it's going to affect our Endangered Species Act compliance, marine mammal stranding coordination, and protected resource surveys, and, finally, and this is germane to moving towards ecosystem-based management, our Changing Ecosystem and Fisheries Initiative, or CEFI, program has been discontinued, because we've lost all the staff that were actually implementing that, and many of them were new employees, with the exception of developing the ecosystem status reports, which I'm really excited about.

In the Caribbean now, we have almost a fully automated ecosystem status report. The Gulf is next on the list to fully automate. The South Atlantic has an ecosystem status report, and we'll be moving towards trying to automate that, so that we can basically get annual updates of it quickly

and easily, and, in that regard, we are combining resources from what used to be our integrated ecosystem assessment program with what remains of the CEFI program, and having them focus more on ecosystem-based management approaches, and ensuring that the products have on-ramps to be used more efficiently and directly by the councils, and so I think you'll be hearing some good things about that, and, again, we're maintaining our work on ecosystem status reports, and some programs like the Shrimp Futures program, and that's my summary for the impacts of the Southeast.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Clay. I've got Jessica, and then Tom.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks for that report, Clay, and I was wondering if we wanted to send a similar letter to the Science Center, like what the Gulf Council sent, requesting a list of prioritized items that the center can no longer complete, based on these staffing levels, and then also letting us know what items that you're hoping the South Atlantic states can help cover, and so I would like to send a letter like that to Clay, if possible, Madam Chair.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. I don't see a reason we couldn't do that, if everybody is good with that. Okay. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: This is just a quick comment. Clay, thank you for your report. I just want to say how happy I am to hear the positive news about the NOAA Beaufort Lab. You know, that lab has such a long history, and it's such a big part of the robust scientific community in North Carolina, but also, as a resident of Beaufort, I can state how important that lab is to our economy of my small rural town, and rural county, and so thanks for the good news.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Tom. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair and, Jessica, I appreciate you bringing up the Gulf letter. I do agree that we could continue as states to partner with NOAA, in order to sort of bridge some of these gaps, and we're already doing it with SEFIS, and it's been working out really well, and so that list of prioritization, with additional sampling and age and growth analysis, would be really helpful to determine what the states would be able to do and the level of funding that may be associated with it.

MS. MURPHEY: Does anybody have any other questions for Clay? All right. Seeing none, I think it's lunchtime, and so we will break for lunch, and we'll start back at 1:30, and so thank you, everyone.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MURPHEY: All right, we'll go ahead and get started. I think we've got a busy afternoon. The first thing we're going to do, real quick, is we're going to have Allie go through the FAQ document about the amendment process. I think that was SG -- Attachment 5a in the Snapper Grouper, but we just thought we would go ahead and switch it over to this, and let her go over it real quick, and so take it away, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: I had originally planned on kind of walking you through this in a little more detail. However, I'm just going to kind of go over how this document works, and how you use it, and then

kind of set you guys loose, and then, if you want to, we can revisit at Full Council, or we can revisit this at a different time, but we had heard feedback about kind of needing some more guidance on choosing an amendment type, and kind of incorporating that into the planning process of starting actions, and you guys developing your workplan, and then sometimes factoring in rulemaking, and the time for rulemaking, both the council process and then the NMFS rulemaking.

I've started by looking at all of the different amendment types for each FMP, and it got a little unwieldy, and so we kind of narrowed it back just to snapper grouper, and so snapper grouper is our starting point, and then we're hoping to expand this out to the other FMPs, but, essentially, what you have is an eight-page document. However, page 1 is meant to be your tool, and so everything else is just the information that you might need in making decisions, that's additional, and so it's all in one place, but you don't need to read this like a book report.

On page 1, you have a decision tree that helps you -- Again helps, because this process is pretty complicated, and there's a lot of nuance in action types and amendment types, but it asks you questions to help kind of guide you into what type of amendment, and so, when you were talking earlier about -- I believe it was, it was gear stowage, and now I already forget, because lunch, but you were asking if something was applicable for an abbreviated framework or regular framework. This is where you could come to this document, and kind of help guide you through that process, and so it goes through, you know, and kicks you to certain amendment types.

The other thing that I wanted to highlight quickly was the framework criteria, and so there are several FMPs that have framework criteria, and, if it's going to let me, but I went through the Code of Federal Register, or the CFR, and kind of compiled these what is framework-able into kind of like an easy sheet that you can reference.

Again, the CFR is where you go to get the nitty gritty details, if you have questions, and then the other thing we have here is kind of a caveat that NOAA GC is here to kind of give you guys more guidance on what is framework-able, but this list kind of shows you per FMP, so you don't have to dig, what actions would be framework-able.

As you go through this document, after page 2, you have a summary of amendment types, and then pages 3, through I believe 6, is a little bit more detail on each amendment type, and then you have examples, and so those are going to link you straight to the council's website page for that amendment, and so it just gives you, you know, something to look at, some precedent to reference there, and I'm going to scroll through all of the different amendment types.

The other thing I wanted to note is that each page has a jump back to page 1, just to help you guys if you're -- You know, you just want to look at timelines, and then you want to jump back to that decision tool, and that's there for you, and then the last few pages are kind of timelines, and so to help you in thinking about your workplan, you know, the time investment on the council side, and so this is kind of more of a council timeline, and then the next page is the NMFS rulemaking timeline, and, again, these are all, obviously, subject to, you know, a little bit of change, depending on what the action type is.

There's definitely a lot of nuance, but this can kind of help you as you're starting to plan your workplan, and think about different types of actions, and so I would love it if you guys took a look at this. I'm here all week, obviously, and so come to me with any questions or concerns, and then

we'll kind of come back to you, as staff, as we continue to develop this for other FMPs and so forth.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Allie. I've got a question from Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's not a question, but just a comment. I just really appreciate this document. It's super cool. I like how it's broken down, especially the timeline portion. I haven't had a chance to really dive into it too much, but I'm looking forward to it, and I think it will be a nice reference, and so I appreciate it.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jessica, and I was -- The same thing. I was playing with it last week, and I'm like, this is cool, and it's simple, and so thanks so much for the time you spent on it, because it's a great tool, and so thanks. All right. So, next, we have Christina, and she is going to lead the Executive Order 14276 response, and so I will turn to her, and you all be ready.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you, Chair, and so I am going to start out by going over what is Full Council I Attachment 2a. This is the feedback we received on the executive order. We had a public comment form on our website that was open from July 28 through August 15, and then we also hosted a meeting of all of our advisory panels, as well as our citizen science advisory panels, to gather input, and so that document includes a link to the public comment form, but also sort of notes on almost every comment we received.

There's over a hundred comments in this document, which is fantastic, but I'm not going to go over them in nitty-gritty detail right now, because it would take an extensive amount of time, but I do sort of want to orient you into how the table is set up, and then I will go over some broad themes that were noticed throughout all of the comments.

Your first column here is going to be what sort of section of the executive order the comment would address, the focus, whether that's a specific FMP, whether it's data collection or something similar, and who it was that ultimately recommended this action, and was it the council, at your June meeting, or was it a specific advisory panel, or was it public comment, et cetera, the recommendation, the responsible party, if this is something that falls under the council's purview, or if it falls under say the agency's purview, or even outside of both the council and the agency's purview, and then you have staff notes.

These are things just letting you know, like, for example, with this first one, talking about removing or considering ecosystem component designation for Snapper Grouper FMP, and the council has already initiated that amendment, and is currently working on it, and so that's how you can navigate this table, if you want to dig into it in a bit more detail, but, starting with things that are relevant to the council, things that you all can take action on, comments sort of fell into a couple of broad categories.

One was really protection of species and habitat, in order to increase production. Things like protecting dolphin during their spawning time was brought up by the Dolphin Wahoo AP. The Habitat & Ecosystem AP talked a lot about maintaining things like spawning special management zones, and so increasing production through protection.

The second one was sort of reducing regulatory uncertainty. We heard from a number of groups about the importance, especially for the commercial fishery, of having year-round access to species. There was a lot of talk about uncertainty in seasons, that it can be challenging for fishing businesses to plan when seasons fluctuate significantly from year to year, and so trying to create some stability, and, for example, also things like consistent catch levels. The Mackerel Cobia AP talked a lot about sort of the need to facilitate transferring of quota between zones, and so really knowledge of what the coming fishing year is going to look like, and less uncertainty.

The other one, not surprisingly, was removal of excessive regulations. People talked about the operator card, for example, in the rock shrimp fishery, limited access privilege programs, and closed areas, and sort of removing some of those regulations to create better access, and then there was also a lot of talk about increasing production opportunities, and these are things like the Dolphin Wahoo AP brought up bag limit sales.

There was a lot of talk about separating headboat regulations, to allow more flexibility for headboats and things like minimizing regulatory discards, and so, again, those things are sort of very vague, but the specifics are in the public comment form, and we'll talk quite a bit more about specifics when we get into the draft recommendations.

I also just wanted to note that there were also some themes that came out that wouldn't necessarily be under the council's purview, but could be something that you recommend NMFS focus on. These would be things like the need for better data and the importance of supporting citizen science efforts to get fishermen involved in the data collection process.

Fishermen brought a lot up in terms of challenges they're facing with tariffs and different requirements for crew, challenges related to imported seafood, and the need for better regulations on imported seafood, concern about the graying of the fleet, and there needing to be more programs that would support young fishermen, and, of course, concerns about sharks, and so that was a very, very quick and dirty overview of the hundreds of comments that we were able to get on the executive order, and so I'll pause real fast, to see if anyone has questions about the comments, or questions about how we solicited comments from the public and advisory panels.

MS. MURPHEY: Any questions for Christina? Seeing none, go on.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so, with that, we'll dig into the nitty-gritty of the recommendations. The first page is just a letter that it will go with, and then it jumps right into the recommendations, and so staff, in sort of putting together the initial list of recommendations, pulled comments forward that were addressing specific management actions, as opposed to more of a broad goal that the council should work to achieve.

What I would like us to do here is spend most of the time focusing on actions that are within the council's authority, and I will sort of go over each action, and I would like this council to discuss sort of whether they want that to be a high priority, medium priority, or low priority, and the hope would be that we could come out of this meeting with three to five actions that are high priority, that could get incorporated into the council's workplan, because part of this executive order was developing a timeline to achieve these actions.

Once we get through all of the ones that are within the council authority, then we can, if there's time, move into talking about some things that may fall a bit more under the authority of the agency, and whether or not you think those should be high, medium, low priority for the agency, and we can include those recommendations as well, but we really want to focus on what this council can do in response to the executive order.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you. Does everybody understand the directions there? Okay, and so I've got Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so, thinking about how the Gulf Council went about this, I guess I would just go back to something that Christina mentioned. I think, at the end, we only need like three, maybe, to five of these, and I guess I would encourage us to put things on our list, in our letter, because we have to develop a workplan and a timeline for it, and I would encourage us to maybe select things that are already underway, or that we know we're going to work on, and so just to try to help frame the discussion a little bit more.

I feel like this was a challenging discussion at the Gulf Council, and so trying to set the stage and reiterate some of the things that Christina said, that -- I mean, things that we know we're going to do, and not aspirational, and I feel like this executive order was a little bit different than the one last time, where it could be more broad, and you didn't necessarily have to get into all the specifics of when you were going to complete it, et cetera. This one is a little bit different, and so I just wanted to draw our attention back to that, because there are twenty-one things on the list, and, yes, they're all very exciting, and I would love to do them all, but I don't know that that's realistic, and so just trying to put that out there.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jessica. I think that was very important. I've got Kerry, and then Charlie.

MS. MARHEFKA: To that, Jessica, I'm guessing, just because we don't put it on here, it doesn't mean that we're prohibited from doing something about it. It just means it doesn't go in here, and we're setting ourselves up for the highest rate of success, and, if we are star achievers, which we all are, and we accomplish them all, it doesn't mean these things are off the table, right? Okay.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. I think everybody -- Here we go. Everybody knows the stuff we're doing, the stuff that's priority, and so go ahead, Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and, just so I'm clear, we're going to go -- We're going to look at all of this, and then we're going to go back and prioritize. We're not going to prioritize as we go through. We're going to look at it and then prioritize, because, if we prioritize as we go through, it's, yes, this is important, and, yes, this is important, and, yes, this is important too, and I think we're going to -- It's going to be difficult.

MS. WIEGAND: I think my suggestion would be to, as we're going through, sort of label things as high priority or not high priority, and so we sort of do an initial wash of all of them, and then, if we have, you know, ten things that the council thinks are really high priority, we'll put all those in the list, and then you'll have to decide what you want to work into your workplan right now, and respond with the executive order, and what maybe goes to a medium priority.

MS. MURPHEY: So I'll make this suggestion. Christina, do you want to just -- We can start going through the list, and like the first one is something we're already working on, and so this is something we can go ahead and talk about, prioritize. If we get something that's -- That we're not -- We can just skip it, and does that sound good? Okay, and so I'll let you run it.

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, and so the first one on the list is removing or considering ecosystem component designation for species in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan. I won't go over this one in too much detail, because it's something you guys already know your rationale for, and are already working on, and that's what we've noted here in the implementation plan, is that the council has initiated an amendment that would consider this, and it is scheduled for final action in December of next year, just so you guys know where that is on the timeline.

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

MS. MCCAWLEY: I would put this one as high, and I think this is a good one to be on our letter. We've already started work on it. We kind of already have a game plan. It already has a timeline. It's already factored into the work plan, and so this one I would put as high, and I would like to see it in the letter.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Jessica. I see people agreeing, and thumbs-up, and so it's high.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Moving on. We have shifting management of spiny lobster to the State of Florida. Spiny lobster primarily occurs in waters off the Florida coast, though we have heard from stakeholders about increasing occurrences off of North Carolina.

The council would need to, again, determine if spiny lobster are in need of federal conservation and management. There are those ten criteria that the council has been through before, and, if not, then the council can initiate an amendment to remove spiny lobster. Some notes here are that it would need to be a joint plan with the Gulf Fishery Management Council, and that it's likely to be a controversial action. During the Spiny Lobster AP discussion of the EO, they did not express support for this, feeling that federal oversight should remain.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think this would go in the low, likely never, category. I put it on the list, but, yes, the APs did not like it.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other comments? I think everybody is agreeing. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and it could really drag stuff out, especially if you decide it's not under federal management. Then what are you going to do with landings off of North Carolina and Georgia, and so, yes, I would put it low.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Low.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Continuing on with spiny lobster, there was a recommendation to increase catch levels for commercial and recreational spiny lobster in states north of Florida, and

so North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, the rationale here being that stakeholders, in particular the Spiny Lobster AP, has discussed this at length.

They're seeing an increase in the number of lobster, and allowing fishermen to harvest more spiny lobster would increase recreational trip satisfaction, and would allow commercial fishing businesses to increase trip profits, provided a commercially-viable number of spiny lobster were allowed for harvest. The council would need to start an amendment for this. It would likely require collaboration with the Gulf Council, but it could be done via framework, and so maybe a year or a year-and-a-half to complete.

MS. MURPHEY: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Low. This isn't already underway. I'm not saying that we would never do this, but it's not already underway. I don't think it's a top priority for us right now.

MS. MURPHEY: I was going to speak for North Carolina, and I don't think it's a big priority for us. Charlie. Okay. Georgia is in agreement, and so low.

MS. WIEGAND: Cruising right along then, next up is reinstating the bag limit sales for dolphin and wahoo, which would provide additional income for charter-for-hire operators who are also commercially permitted, and it was noted that this measure was previously supported by dealers, restaurants, and fishermen in south Florida. For this, we estimate it could be done in about six meetings, because it's likely to be a bit controversial.

MS. MURPHEY: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I was here when we eliminated this. It is very controversial, and so I would put this low. I don't think it falls under something that we should say we're ready to work on, and it's not even on the list.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. I see Charlie, then Carolyn.

MR. PHILLIPS: I would agree, and part of the reason I think we decided not to do it is because we didn't want the camel to stick its nose under the tent, and then it would be what else, what else, what else, and so, yes, I would say low.

DR. BELCHER: Yes, and I was just going to piggyback on with thinking about where we are with talking about king mackerel tournaments, that this kind of is -- I think that's just another potential issue that it will stir up along the way, too.

MS. MURPHEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Yes, and I appreciate you bringing that up, Carolyn. That's kind of where my mind was, given the current direction which we're moving, and I do remember the discussions, particularly around dolphin, the last time, and we probably don't need to wade into that muddy water again right now.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, everybody, and so it looks like low.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Next up, we have improving the ability to transfer commercial Atlantic Spanish mackerel quota between zones. This is a suggestion to switch the fishing season from March through the end of February to November through the end -- To have November be the start of the year. That way, Florida would fish first, which might facilitate transfer of quota to North Carolina, or the northern zone, and, again, this would need to be a plan amendment. Seasons aren't framework-able for CMP, and so the Gulf Council would need to be involved. We estimate about six meetings, because it's not likely to be controversial.

MS. MURPHEY: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, we already have a mechanism to transfer, and so I -- Also, we discussed this at the last council meeting, and decided that we were putting this type of discussion on the back burner, and so I wouldn't put it in the list of items to move forward in this letter.

MS. MURPHEY: I've got Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Given that there's already ongoing state transfers, and all that's being -- Is taking place, I don't see this as a priority, since it's already being done, and it seems like we can work out that stuff, and it was helpful for the fishermen in North Carolina, the recent transfer. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Dewey. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: First, just huge thanks for state directors on this year's transfer, right, and I think that was a success, and I agree, right, that there's a mechanism in place. I somewhat also think that this is low-hanging fruit. I don't necessarily think this needs to be the top-three or five priorities, but I think it is something we want to work toward, and I think is a reasonable solution that gives Florida, the southern zone, some certainty, in terms of what they've caught, and then it allows the northern zone a much clearer picture, in terms of what remains and what may be able to be transferred in the future.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I mean, I do agree with Andy that this is a low-hanging fruit, but I also agree with Dewey that we are in a good position right now, that's been really beneficial to our fishermen, and I will remind the council that we will be undertaking a pretty large amendment that is looking at the entire coastal structure of our Spanish mackerel fishery in the future, and this may be the more -- That may be the more appropriate way to look at this as we approach that fishery very holistically.

MS. MURPHEY: So am I basically hearing, around the table, that maybe this is a medium? I mean, it's working right now, what we're doing, but it is low-hanging fruit. It would be simple, and so I was wondering if medium might -- I would ask the council. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Is any joint amendment with the Gulf Council easy? I'm just going to -- Is it really low-hanging fruit? I'm just going to put that out there.

MS. MURPHEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Jessica. I do think -- Like I can see the point for medium, but I'm in the low priority category, simply for the fact is what we have is working now, and, as we look at Spanish mackerel in the future, I think that's the more appropriate time to address this. We put a lot of resources and effort into our port meetings, and everything to do with mackerel up and down the coast, and we're going to -- Our fishermen are ready for that, when we get there.

MS. MURPHEY: All right, and so I'm seeing everybody is voting low for this then, except for me and -- Look, Andy, and we're all on the same page now.

MR. STRELCHECK: I vote medium.

MS. MURPHEY: I'll be honest, and I kind of lean medium, but it looks like the majority here want low, and so we'll go low. All right, and then some more discussion. It's not on the -- You know, we're going through criteria here. It's not on the workplan, and so I guess we will go with low.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Next up is removing the operator card requirement in the rock shrimp fishery. Operators of vessels have noted that this is a little bit of an onerous requirement, and it was recently removed for dolphin wahoo, and so there is some rationale already in place for no longer needing the operator card. This would require an amendment to the shrimp fishery management plan, but we anticipate it could be done in three to four meetings, just given that rationale already exists, and it's not likely to be controversial.

MS. MURPHEY: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: But it's not already underway. I mean, it is low-hanging fruit, but I just -- It wouldn't make my top three, I guess I would say, of everything that's on the list.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I agree. From the 14276 EO, this is a low-hanging fruit, but, on the flip side, when we get down into the deregulatory actions that we could list under the 14192, this could be one that we apply there.

MS. MURPHEY: I think that's a good point, and so thank you, Amy, and so moving along.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Next up would be developing separate regulations for headboats. Again, the logic here being that headboats represent sort of a unique component of the for-hire and recreational sector. They operate differently. They carry more passengers, and thus better tailoring regulations to them would reduce the overall burden. You would need to initiate an amendment to the snapper grouper fishery for this. How you went about it, depending on whether it needed to be a plan amendment or a framework amendment, would change the timing, but probably about six meetings, depending on the actions that were included.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead.

MS. MARHEFKA: I was just taking a second to go back to the workplan from June, to see where it fell. For me, this would be high priority, but I might be alone in that one.

MS. MURPHEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Can I ask -- I probably should know this, but develop separate regulations, and does that mean bag limits, or does that mean limited access? So, you would have it very similar to -- If you chose to do it, similar to what the Mid does for bluefish and blueline tilefish, where you would have recreational, or just say recreational, charter, and headboat. Three different bag limits, that type of analysis?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and it would be something like that. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I was going to try to explain, or you could do something like, if you had vessel limits, you could say the vessel limit applies per every six paying passengers, and so you could do it a different way. It's not sector separation. It's not that. For me, we're sort of already working on it, and I would probably put it in medium for me, just because I don't know that we have every piece figured out, but I think, you know, you're going to hear, from some other folks, that they want it in high, but, just for me, I would put it in medium, because I don't know that we have it figured out exactly how we would do it.

MS. MURPHEY: I've got Jimmy, and then Charlie.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Madam Chair. As Jessica said, we have kind of started talking about this, and doing some research into, you know, basically for the vessel limit for a headboat, as compared to the private recreational limit, and the headboats need some relief on that, because, you know, they have multi-passengers, and so you know, figuring out the way that you can make a headboat vessel limit, for the amount of passengers, comparative to if you stay in the for-hire sector. Anyway, to get into all -- We've been getting into that, and I think it's medium to high priority, in my opinion, since we are already, you know, going to be developing something.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jimmy, and, before Charlie, can I let Christina --

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, and I just wanted to note -- So discussing regulations for headboats is on your workplan. You're scheduled to begin discussing it in March of next year.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Thank you for that. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, and I would definitely put it in medium, and then, maybe when we get through with our whole list, and we see how many we've got, and do we have three, or do we have five, and then, if we want to change some mediums to high, or high back to medium, then we can do that and have a better idea on where we really are.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you. I'm hearing medium around the room. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I'm just going to voice my argument for medium or high. I mean, it's obviously - - This has been an increasing issue for headboats. I mean, we've always heard about this in the past, but I think, given what we've seen with shorter seasons and whatnot, this is becoming an even

more important issue, and I'm leaning high, to be honest with you, but I think that we have to consider that in place with a bigger workplan, and I do think that we don't really know yet how we're going to do it, and, when we have that mechanism of how we're going to pursue that, I think that's maybe when we consider if it's high or medium.

MS. MURPHEY: Kerry, did you --

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and just a procedural question. Like for instance, we're going to have to do a black sea bass assessment response, right, and most likely we're going to need to take some regulatory action, and so, in the case of looking at black sea bass, that's the first species where we say -- Because that's going to be an issue for headboats, right, and, when we're responding to that, and talking about regulations, if, through that amendment, we say, okay, so, for black sea bass, we're going to consider vessel limits for headboats, does that get us part way, partial credit, if you will?

MS. MURPHEY: I think that's a good question. Go ahead. I think it's a good -- I would think so.

MS. WIEGAND: I think that's an excellent question, and I think what the council could note here is that the intent is to develop separate regulations for headboats on an ongoing basis, as amendments come up that would address things like bag limits, et cetera, for the recreational sector.

MS. MURPHEY: I think that is a good point, and that kind of, I think, helps the medium or high discussion, but I've got Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: To that, I was going to say maybe we could also, instead of just the definitive we are developing separate regulations for headboats, you could say that we're considering developing separate regulations for headboats as we look at this, you know, by species, or on an ongoing basis, or something like that, because this -- I mean, I feel like, if it goes on this letter, as our top-three, or top-five, you're definitely doing it, and are we really going to do an amendment that just lists out these, or are we going to do it as we go species-by-species, and so that's why I'm hesitant to put it in high, because it's still a little squishy of exactly how we would do it.

MS. MURPHEY: I think that makes sense, and, actually, it might make life easier in the long run if we do it by amendment-by-amendment, because you'll be having to do like an -- So I was going to say I was starting out high, but I think that argument does make it medium, and we can address it per amendment, or per species, and so I just know headboats are kind of close to my heart, but I think -- Does anybody else have any other thoughts, before we move on, but it looks like we're going to go with medium, and I think you'll reword the "develop separate regulations for headboats", and you'll reword that title to kind of address what we talked about.

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, ma'am.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Okay. Is everybody good with -- I think everybody looks like they're good with medium, and so thanks for that discussion. I think that was very, very helpful for me, too.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so, next up, and you guys have already talked about this a bit today, but allowing commercial vessels on multiday trips to harvest multiple days' worth of trip limits. This was brought up in the snapper grouper context, and so we know that that was a discussion you guys had under Amendment 60. The only thing to note here is that this is actually allowed for for-hire trips in the coastal migratory pelagics fishery.

MS. MURPHEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: This would be low for me. I mean, I think we discussed, this morning, a lot of the reasons why, you know, it may or may not work, and I would also argue, if this one, this EO right now we're specifically talking about, is the making seafood more competitive one or the -- We had a discussion, and I'm just building our rationale this morning, that that actually could lead to, you know, depressed prices, and it wouldn't necessarily mean that it was more competitive.

MS. MURPHEY: I've got Jessica, then Charlie.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So I agree with everything Kerry said. Could we not morph this into what we are doing in Amendment 60, and, you know, kind of broaden it in into what we are working on in that document maybe, and just kind of -- Instead of focusing on this one piece, that we said don't include in the document, maybe we could make this broader, about everything we're doing in 60, because that seems to fall right in line with the executive order.

MS. MURPHEY: Very good point. Charlie, then Amy, and then Andy.

MR. PHILLIPS: I agree with Kerry and Jessica.

MS. DUKES: Then the priority would have to change, if that were the case, because I would not take that as a low priority at this point, since we're so well invested in it.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, and so we would want to make that medium?

MS. MCCAWLEY: High.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. I see it. Okay. I think we want high. Okay. I'm sorry. I just can't -- I can't see. Andy, did you have your hand up? Okay. Anything else on this one, and is everybody good with that direction to staff? All right. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, just I guess I need some clarification. Are we replacing this with our Amendment 60, and so we're going to -- We're just going to say Amendment 60 is high priority, but multiday trips are not high priority in Amendment 60? Is that what we're saying? Okay.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and that got removed. I think that action got removed, right? Yes. All right. Next.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Next up is state-led data collection and management of red snapper. Red snapper has been a management challenge for the council, and so delegating management to state agencies or looking for new innovative ways to manage red snapper and improve data collection, and so just a note, in terms of implementation plan, that the council has begun, or will,

later this week, begin discussing the possibility of state-led management of red snapper, by receiving presentations from a variety of agencies, and it was sort of noted that this can be done a couple of different ways.

State management could be done through an EFP, but there's also the long-term red snapper response amendment that's on the books, that you would be looking at completing in June of 2027, and so there are sort of multiple things going on in terms of red snapper management.

MS. MURPHEY: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It would be high for me. I don't know if the whole council feels that way, but I would put it as high, plus we're going to start discussing it at this meeting, et cetera.

MS. MURPHEY: Jimmy, and then Charlie.

MR. HULL: So just one question, and so delegate management and data collection of red snapper to South Atlantic state agencies. Is that just the recreational sector, or is that the commercial sector, because I would be opposed to the commercial sector being regulated by the state.

MS. MURPHEY: I'll let Jessica speak to that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so the rationale -- It's a little bit better written maybe in the rationale, because it says "recreational" down there. My intent would just be considering the recreational portion of the fishery, but I agree it needs to be clarified if we're going to move this forward.

MS. MURPHEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I would put it as medium, and my rationale would be, if we go down the EFP route, the EFP route is going to lead us into, yes, it's going to work for state management, or these are the issues, and is state management really going to work, and so I would argue for medium, and let's try to get an EFP through, see how it works, and then, if it looks like it's working, then we can move it on up to high, and not try to get ahead of ourselves, so to speak.

MS. MURPHEY: No, and I think that's a very good point, and so I'm going to let Jessica talk about this too then.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and so that is a good point, and so I think that it is the intent of the states to submit EFPs to test the data collection and the, you know, state management of recreational red snapper, and so maybe we morph this, Charlie, into states submit EFP to test, because EFP is in that same executive order as well, and so I throw that out there, but you made a good point that, yes, the EFPs would test it, and then, assuming success, then the council would work on it, but, yes, and so just a thought to turn it into what you said.

MS. MURPHEY: I think that that makes good sense, and I see the other state reps -- I think I have a better comfort level in that as well, as far as all the states working on these EFPs. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and I agree. The conversation was good. I definitely was starting off in the high level. Charlie, you made some really good points about the EFPs, but just continuing this momentum I think is what's really important here, and I just lost my train of thought, but I do think that morphing the two of them is a really good idea. It shows that we have that unity as a council, and as state representatives, kind of moving forward with this.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Amy.

MS. DUKES: Madam Chair, could this be one of the ones that, if we're going to leave -- Are we leaving it as high?

MS. MURPHEY: The EFP part would be -- I think we're going to leave this high, but I think we're rewording it to include that states are working on the EFPs to determine the possibility of being able to collect data by a state and manage by state, and so the EFP is the test, and so does that make sense? Jimmy.

MR. HULL: I think you just answered it, but, so, with the language in there that's highlighted, I would support it as high.

MS. MURPHEY: Is everyone good with that? I'll look at the state reps as well. Okay, and I see thumbs-up, and heads shaking. All right.

MS. WIEGAND: So, right now, and so we've got one more regulatory one to do, but right now it's high, and you have Snapper Grouper FMP species removal amendment, and then you have Snapper Grouper Amendment 60, and then the state management one, and so it would be three.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, guys, for that discussion, and so, Christina, next.

MS. WIEGAND: Then the next one is provide year-round access to fisheries in the South Atlantic region. This is something we heard a lot from different advisory panels, just the importance of year-round access to commercial fishing opportunities, in order to optimize their business efficiency. The council would need to begin an amendment, or amendments, to fisheries management plans. This could be complicated if it ended up being a sort of multiple FMP amendment, and it could probably take ten-plus meetings to do.

MS. MURPHEY: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: This one is hard to comment on, because I feel like we're working on this, I think, in the innovative discussions in snapper grouper, but I don't know that it's fully baked yet. I mean, we're continuing to talk about it at this meeting. It's just kind of like this is an overarching goal, I think, of where we want to be here at this council, is to have some year-round access for recreational and commercial fisheries, but, since we don't have like a vehicle underway to do all this, other than maybe Amendment 60, the commercial amendment, but it's this one just seems not fully baked, I guess. I mean, I love it, but I don't think that it fits in the criteria for the letter.

MS. MURPHEY: Is this on the workplan? Is that in the workplan yet? It's not? Okay. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I agree with Jessica. I also get very nervous about sort of making this sort of blanket decision that this is what we're going to do. There are cases where it's appropriate, and there are cases where, quite frankly, it's not appropriate, and I do think that is the kind of discussion we're trying to have in the innovation plan, and I don't want the cart to get ahead of the horse, and then we're forced into this. You know, we are doing it in Amendment 60. That's part of what Amendment 60 is, and so I feel like, for commercially, it's covered, and that's what we're doing in the innovation plan for the rec, and so, for me, this would be low priority or not on the list.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thanks, Kerry. I've got Carolyn, and then Andy.

DR. BELCHER: I was actually going to make similar comments to Kerry, because there are things that we're doing for biological protection reasons. ESA enters into some of this stuff, and so there just may be things that are beyond our abilities to do it. It's not for lack of trying. It's just that it's out of our control.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Good point. Andy.

MR STRELCHECK: Yes, and that's what I felt like was missing, is sustainable access, right, or sustainable harvest. The other aspect of this is we talk about year-round access, but there's then competing goals, or objectives, here with regard to what does that year-round access provide, and what does it take away, in terms of harvest opportunities as well.

MS. MURPHEY: So I am -- Let me make sure I'm hearing this right. This is something that could come up in discussion in the innovative work, and so it's not off the table, and, as we said earlier, it's something we can work on anyway, but not on the list, but so -- Am I -- Is this going to be low on this list then? Is everybody -- I see heads shaking low. All right.

MS. WIEGAND: Okay, and so those were the last of sort of the regulatory-specific actions, but, given that they came up in public comment, I did want to sort of note a couple of other things that were brought up. There was a discussion about learning more, or understanding better, the history of South Atlantic Council-managed fisheries over the last fifty years, sort of a retrospective analysis to look at the success or failure of different regulations as a critical foundation to making informed and effective decisions moving forward.

This isn't something that would require council action, or would need to be on the workplan, and it would just need to be something that the council would direct staff to work on as it fits in with the workplan, in terms of informing an action you all were working on. This was completed for coastal migratory pelagics a couple of years ago, at least from 1982, the original FMP, through 2005, and so we do have some of that information.

The other one that was brought up by multiple advisory panels was increasing stakeholder engagement with the management process, given that it's such a fundamental component of the council system, and fisheries constituents, and advisory panel members, expressed frustration over a lack of an opportunity to provide input, inconsistent advisory panel meetings, and things like that, and I just noted here, in terms of an implementation plan, we are beginning the Lines of Communication effort, starting in November, and so this is something that council is actively

working on, and so I just wanted to note those two things, even though they're not regulatory actions, and they do fall within the council's purview.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Christina. I've got Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I think, from the standpoint of the fact that we are already on this role, that it's good for us to highlight those things that we're already ahead of the catch card on, as opposed to just starting to put it on there, and I think this is good outreach coming out. I mean, I'm curious to see how it's going to work, and so I really do think we should make that a high priority, and a highlight, but --

MS. MURPHEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will concur with Carolyn, in that outreach is by far the most effective tool that we have in our toolbox, and a very inexpensive tool to have in our toolbox to really make a big change. Cooperative research, to me, falls under outreach, and observers, and citizen science projects. When you say the word "outreach", the opportunities are really endless, and, to me, this is probably one of the highest priorities in what I would like to see be happening within this council's purview. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Amy. Any other comments? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Some of the stuff that I've seen presented here today, it seems like we're getting closer to tell the public about how the management process works, by laying stuff out, because, you know, what does SERO allow us to do, and what's the council policy, and what's the avenue for framework, and all these other things that are templates, that, if they can be shown, it might give the public a better understanding of what's allowed, and the timeline that we're up against, because, to this date, you know, it is frustrating.

I probably should know what are you allowed to do framework-able, and what are you not, and the different things, and so any types of templates that can be shown for the work that we all -- That the council and SERO and staff does to better understand these amendments, and the process, might would help out, and I would also hope that something like that is presented during MREP. I can't think what the name of it is. I hope stuff like this could be given to MREP, to show, and people to better understand. It's not just one or two things.

You've got to have all these three different entities, or four, come together for one thing for it to work, and so that's something I hope that, as I've seen here a little bit in the last, since last council meeting, and now that I think is very helpful. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Dewey. I think that's a great idea to let MREP see this, maybe, and it's something we're already doing, and, Jessica, did I see your hand?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I like all that. I guess I'm just having trouble envisioning how it's going to be worded in the letter, because we're talking about the seafood competitiveness executive order, and deregulation, but we're explaining regulations, and the council process, and the science to stakeholders, is deregulatory, or it gets us towards seafood competitiveness, and I just can't

envision how we're going to write it. I'm not saying don't put it in there. I'm just hoping that staff can kind of figure that out in the process.

MS. MURPHEY: Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: I would say staff can certainly brainstorm, but, off the top of my head, my thought here would be that the council process is inherently participatory, and fishermen understanding the management process allows them to come in and express to the council effectively what they need to make their businesses more efficient, and more productive, allowing the council to make more informed decisions to meet that end goal.

MS. MURPHEY: I think that that sounds good. That was kind of where I was thinking. I had Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, if we've got some wording that works, great. If we don't have wording that works, there's no reason why we can't do this, whether we put it in a letter or not, and so, I mean, I don't know that we need to force it into a letter if we're going to do it anyway, and I think we are. I know we are, and so I guess you all can kind of roll it over between John and staff and figure out -- Or you all can give some more direction, but I wouldn't try to force feed it in the letter.

MS. MURPHEY: I've got Carolyn, and then Amy.

DR. BELCHER: I understand Charlie's point, but I'm just thinking from the standpoint that we've talked about things that are currently in the queue that are meeting this directive, and you're getting credit for that. I mean, the fact that we started it isn't necessarily a bad thing. We were riding the wave ahead of time, is kind of how I look at it, and so I think it's one that at least we're not offering something that kind of falls off of the radar. This is something that's really there, and is going to materialize, and we'll be able to do that, and so I think that's my one thing, is it just helps us with a highlight, as opposed to a wish list.

MR. PHILLIPS: Okay.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, John, and then I'll get Amy.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Well, and to that too, it could help us continue to do it, and show that this is aligning with the priorities, which is something we certainly heard talking about from Andy earlier, just making sure, you know, priorities are aligned from the administration on down to what we do, and so, in that regard, it could be helpful.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and I agree. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and, to build upon what Christina said, cooperative research is a part of this executive order. It's stated in there, and so outreach in the management and science process will gain more relationship-building with our fishermen, so that we can then extend out additional research, cooperative research, with them, so that we can continue to learn more through the process.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Amy. That's good points. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess I would just say, to me, this is kind of a different section, since it's not under here's the ways we're removing regulations, and so I think that there's a way to put this in the letter, but it's not one of the top five deregulatory items, or whatever, or top three.

MS. MURPHEY: Well, I'll let staff work on it, and what you bring back we'll see, and so I kind of think most people here are wanting to see it in, and so anything on this history of South Atlantic Council-managed fisheries? Any comment on that? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: So I'm going to ask the question, because I just was -- I received an email this past week about something that the Science Center is doing with a database in history of management, and is this not something that's potentially redundant with that?

MS. MURPHEY: Clay, you look --

DR. PORCH: Yes, and we definitely have an app that we put together that, you know, has all the history of management, and that's pretty close to being rolled out.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Very cool, and so we'll just call this low, or just -- Is everybody good with just calling this low at this point, or does it even need to be -- Or is this something that should be removed, since NMFS is --

MS. WIEGAND: So I don't think -- For anything that's sort of labeled low, I don't think that's something that would ultimately go into the letter, but I do think it's helpful that the council has discussed it, and now we know that, you know, the Science Center is developing this app, that should be released soon, so we can respond to stakeholders, and so this wouldn't necessarily be included in the letter.

MS. MURPHEY: That sounds good. I wasn't thinking. All right. I guess moving on.

MS. WIEGAND: So that is everything that falls within the council's purview, and so that leaves sort of the three recommendations that are going to go into the letter with a workplan, would be the Snapper Grouper FMP amendment that's looking at considering removal, or ecosystem component designation, for those seventeen species, Snapper Grouper Amendment 60, the commercial amendment, and then the red snapper EFP, would be your three actions, and then we'll include language in there about how the council is working on Lines, and how that sort of feeds in to meet some of the goals and objectives of the EO.

MS. MURPHEY: Sounds good. Anybody have any other questions, thoughts or --

MS. WIEGAND: So one of the things we can do -- So there's a whole other list in here of things that would be sort of NOAA Fisheries' authority, and not something that the council could take action on alone. I didn't know if you wanted to go through and sort of note which of these things you want to sort of recommend that the agency do in response to the EO.

MS. MURPHEY: Any thoughts? I think we've got time, I think, if you want to go through it and -- Well, let's just go ahead and go through it.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so I guess, at this point, we would be sort of looking for a, yes, include this as something that NMFS should prioritize in their response to the EO, and so the first thing on the list would be prioritizing funding of citizen science and cooperative research initiatives.

Of course, we know that existing data collection programs don't always provide all of the necessary data to make informed management decisions, and citizen science, and other methods, can really help fill those data gaps efficiently, and at a lower cost, and it also provides a mechanism for building trust with fishing communities.

As you all know, the council has a citizen science program that it self-supports, but limited grant -- Because limited grant programs are available to the council, and so it is helpful for NMFS and other agencies to prioritize funding opportunities for these type of citizen science and collaborative research programs, and so I guess, yes, include in the letter as a recommendation to NMFS, or no.

MS. MURPHEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: So I struggle a little bit, because I think, in terms of messaging and sending relative to funding, there's some other things of priority that I would like to see them focus on, like the fact that observers have been cut, port sampling is down, and, you know, the basic functions of our data stuff is really -- It's not saying this isn't important, but I'm just thinking, if we were going back and looking at our research needs that we were prioritizing for Chip recently, there's other things -- Like this is one that I would have to see what the list of things are to say whether this is a high priority or a low priority. If this is the only one we're putting forward, it may be higher than if data collection is in there, because I would put that at a very high priority.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Yes, just go and run through them.

MS. WIEGAND: Okay, and so we also have determine economic effects of fishing communities from the Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act. I know you guys have heard, in public comment, frustrations about this act causing undue burden on the domestic shark fishery, and so the request would be for NMFS to develop a report that would evaluate and quantify the impact of the act and shark depredation.

Also on the list, we have removed the requirement to report discards in the commercial fishery. This could be done -- The council could initiate a comprehensive amendment to do this, but it could also be done by having the Science Center director refrain from selecting anyone to report discard information, or the council could request that the Science Center develop, and NMFS fund, a discard reporting program that would meet the best scientific information available standards.

We also have avoid regional-based duplicative reporting for commercial and for-hire logbooks. A note here that NMFS has indicated that the needed branches are sort of coordinating efforts to try to eliminate requirements that lead to fishermen having to report in multiple logbooks, and so that is something already in the works.

We have incorporate innovative sampling methodologies to estimate fishing effort innovative methods, and like aerial surveys are now increasingly feasible, through technological

advancements, and so prioritize funding for testing and validation of possible new sampling methodologies.

We have support programs consistent with the Young Fishermen's Development Grant Program of 2021. This was brought up a lot that, there's graying of the fleet, and we're not seeing young fishermen get into the commercial fishing industry, and so supporting and funding Sea Grant, and their associated Young Fishermen's Development Program, to recruit, train, and mentor, to bolster long-term domestic seafood production, and then explore improvements to habitat for managed species in the Southeast Region.

This is one that was recommended by the council in June, and so supporting research on things like the effectiveness of current habitat designations, like spawning special management zones, EFH, HAPCs, et cetera, and so that's a very quick and dirty list of the things that came out of public comment and advisory panel input that would fall sort of within NOAA Fisheries authority.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Christina, and so what is the pleasure of -- Okay. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: With the caveat that you're submitting this to my agency, and so I'm not going to be, you know, putting a position out there, but just two things. One is, the logbook, we are close to rolling out a coastwide logbook that would integrate logbook programs for for-hire commercial up and down the east coast, and so that's already well in the works.

Then, for the shark prohibition, or the fin restrictions, the way it was worded seemed to be very specific to like developing a report. What I've heard, from the other councils, is really just eliminating the prohibition altogether, right, and so, if you consider that one, the other councils have at least discussed it more in the vein of the restriction, you know, impacting shark fishermen, but ultimately wanting to eliminate the restriction altogether.

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

MR. HULL: Thank you, and so, on the economic effects of fishing communities with the Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act, I like changing that to what Andy says, to just eliminate the prohibition on the sale of shark fins, which would help a lot of things, but the -- There's already been an economic analysis done on the effects of the -- It was done by the State of Florida and so, I mean, we do have that information, but I like changing the wording of it, and then including it in there.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks Jimmy. I've got Kerry, and then Charlie.

MS. MARHEFKA: Before I make my comment, I just want to make it clear, and so these items are going in our letter to the administration, or these items are going in a different letter to Andy, or, well, not Andy, but the Southeast Region?

MS. MURPHEY: So I think you can do it either way. There were -- So the executive order also asks things of the National Marine Fisheries Service, and so we sort of see these things that don't fall within the council purview, but do fall within NMFS' purview, and so the council is saying we know NMFS is going to respond, and we think these things should be their priority.

MS. MARHEFKA: For me then, it would -- It would be a high priority to have this discussion about -- Not necessarily to remove the requirement to report discards, but to set up a robust process where the discard information that is being collected is actually used, because, right now, we're collecting information that is -- We're told time and time again it's not good enough to use for anything, and so that would be a high priority for me.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you. I've got Amy, and then Charlie.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I'm going to piggyback on Kerry's comments with regards to the discard logbooks. I do think there's some value in there, and so having them really take a good look into what can be utilized there, and/or, if they're not going to utilize it, then get rid of it, because it is, again, an unnecessary burden on fishermen, but, I mean, there's some really good data in the discard logbook now, for certain species and for certain areas within the region, but I would then also say thank you to Andy for your group for continuing to work on the regional based reporting initiative, so that the duplicative reporting for our commercial and our for-hire logbooks is starting to come to a close.

That one-stop conversation has been happening for a couple years, and I'm glad to see that, and, as state partners that are also building applications to be able to collect those, working with staff to get that done within your agency, as in other agencies, has been a fruitful event, and I'm glad we're kind of coming to a close, but I'm still going to advocate, from a funding standpoint, to go back to the to the first bullet for the funding for citizen science and cooperative research initiatives.

We're hearing about the loss of staff within NMFS, and we're hearing that some of these operations within your agency, and your purview, still need to continue, and so building upon cooperative research initiatives with the general public, with your state agencies, is huge.

Building capacity within the citizen science is also really big. We have seen that the activities that we have already done through citizen science is a proven positive initiation for collecting data, and then I would also just simply say that, you know, in the executive order, it specifically says that citizen science -- I'm sorry. That cooperative research is a priority, and so for us to ignore this one, as one of the ones we put forward to NMFS from a funding capacity, is just a missed opportunity.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Amy, and I think we have -- We've written it down to include, and so I've got Charlie and Dewey.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I guess I'll tackle two things, since I have the mic, but I'll make them short. I agree with Amy. We do need these cooperative research initiatives, and I don't know, and I guess it depends on what you're working on, but what is the bang for the buck for the science? You spend X on cooperative research, and can it give you the data that you may collect if Andy's office had X amount of money to put in his data collection for putting people on the, you know, collecting stuff?

So I don't know if one or the other is more efficient, or if it just depends on the program. I suspect it depends on the program, but the cooperative research is important, and back to Jimmy talking about the shark fins. Not only does it cost the fishermen, but it also costs the recreational sector, and everybody else, you know, with higher predation rates on the stuff we're trying to catch, and so we lose the sale, and we turn around and lose the fish, because the sharks ate them, and so that

would be really high, if they could figure out a way to eliminate that prohibition, and so those are my two thoughts. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Charlie . I've got Dewey, then Jessica, then Andy.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I think number one, to nobody's surprise, would be to eliminate the prohibition on shark fin sales. It's probably, in some of the commercial fisheries, one of the most devastating things that's happened, that we see so much effect on with shark depredation, and no way to account for that. That would go a long way into maybe helping some of the commercial fishing industry, where vessels have to do multiple fisheries to sustain yourself, and I think it would be a help.

My next one would be on the duplicative reporting. I hope that what Andy's saying that's being worked on -- It can't come fast enough for me, and I hope that the GARFO region is included in that, to where we don't have to fill out one logbook, or one electronic logbook, when we're fishing in the South Atlantic, and then we have to go report to GARFO, just because we possess their permit. They don't manage that fish, and we're not fishing off their annual catch limit, but, just because we possess that piece of paper to fish for other species, we have to go back and do double reporting.

Can you scroll down to citizen science and the regional cooperative research? I was wondering, and is the funding of citizen science here and cooperative research two different things, because I'm thinking of cooperative research like you're working with a fisherman, or something like that, and the citizen science part is when you're getting citizens to engage in a science project that could help. You know, I tend to be short in my thinking of how does it work to get more fish, and how does it help to do a stock assessment, and what's been used to date, and how efficient is it, and things like that, and so I'm just wondering the difference in the two as it's put here.

MS. WIEGAND: So I'm sure Julia can provide more detail than I can. I do see sort of cooperative research with fishermen as being a little bit different than citizen science, but I do think it's worth noting that the council's citizen science program is designed specifically to fill data gaps that will help improve things like stock assessments. It's why it was developed the way it was.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I can ask offline, but I'm wondering, you know, and I'll ask her about it, because I want the bang for the buck, and not may, but will fill gaps. That's something that, you know, as you're developing something, and maybe it's not developed far enough along, and it's still in the may category, and I want the will category, and so that's where I'm looking for the bang for the buck of how that's efficiently done, and I can ask her offline. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Well, and I'll say, just sort of as an example, that, recently, citizen science data was included in this upcoming red snapper assessment for consideration, and so it is active. That work is actively being incorporated into the stock assessment process.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: So that would be the first time that it's been used to date on a program, and it's been in it's been ongoing for, what, six years, or seven? Well, good. All right. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: I've got Jessica, then Andy, then Clay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I had two things. One, do we not want to include something in the letter, under this category of things for NMFS, about not wanting to lose capacity for assessments, like the data needed for assessments, but also conducting assessments, however we want to word that, because it sounds like we've lost some of those analysts here in the South Atlantic, and they haven't lost quite as many in the Gulf, but I just didn't want to lose that capacity, and so I would love that to be on there.

Also, when we're talking about this whole shark fin elimination, I mean, I agree, and I think that our the shark issues that are being brought up are twofold though, and it's not just the fact that we can't sell the fins anymore, and you've also got the predation by sharks on the recreational sector, and so, if you're going to start bringing up stuff about sharks, maybe we're bringing up both of those pieces, because it was technically Congress that made the decision to eliminate the sale of shark fins, and not NMFS.

It wasn't NMFS that did it, and so that's why I think you could talk about how this nationwide prohibition, you know, hurts folks fishing in the South Atlantic, but also get into the predation issues for the recreational sector, et cetera, but, ultimately, it's not like this letter's going to Congress, and so they're the ones that put this in place.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Good point, Jessica. I've got Andy, then Clay.

MR. STRELCHECK: So Jessica touched upon what I was going to recommend, and so, with the citizen science recommendation, it's fairly narrow in scope. You know, for seafood competitiveness, obviously, in order to inform management, you need a robust science enterprise, right, and so, Jessica, Clay has talked about the losses in some of our capacity, and so, to the extent that you wanted to kind of touch upon more broadly the importance of, obviously, maintaining that capacity, including citizen science, I would recommend that. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. Clay.

DR. PORCH: Just circling back to Dewey's comment about bang for the buck, I mean, one example where we have huge bang for the buck was the South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey, which is a cooperative research survey, which, of course, Dewey knows well, but that's really a game changer, because we have now data for species that we really didn't have data on, and, when we start thinking about how, at least with the pool of money that I have control over, how we're going to spend that, that's exactly what we're looking for, is what's the what's the most bang for the buck we'll get with the limited funding we have.

We used to run an RFP, where people could apply for that, and do various types of research projects, and what we found is, most of the time, they weren't really getting used in the stock assessments, for one reason or another, and so we opted to fund, in line with some direction we got from Congress, longer-term surveys, you know, time series that would inform the stock assessment, and so that's the direction we've moved in. That doesn't mean we couldn't consider funding, out of the pool that that we administer, other types of citizen science initiatives, but we would definitely be considering carefully what the bang for the buck is on that.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Clay, and so am I hearing -- So do we want to split out citizen science from cooperative, or do cooperative and maybe, similar, including citizen science, just to throw this discussion out? Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would prefer that they stay together, because the EO specifically references cooperative research, and citizen science is cooperative research, and, to me, they should stay together and be one unit.

MS. MURPHEY: All right, and so we'll leave it together then, unless anybody else has any thoughts, and I just was throwing out some ideas.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and, for the shark conversation, I think it would also be advantageous for some additional marketing, and maybe some branding specific to sharks, as shark meat itself is extremely yummy, and a great protein source, and certain people around this table have done a really good job of being able to target sharks, and market them, and I would hope that some of that campaign could continue further up the coast, and then we could have some of our shark fishermen be able to land and sell, through a market, shark. I know it's not our species, but --

MS. MURPHEY: Very good, Amy. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: To the marketing of sharks and stuff, I think fishermen who have been in this before, and if there was an opportunity, and they thought there was a way that was conducive to catching the sharks, and doing this for marketing, they would be doing this and branding now. Some people are located where the sharks are closer, and the species, or different ones, are there, and so they're doing a great job and all that, but the overall arching thing is the killing of the shark fin market, that a sustainable shark fin market that Congress chose -- Special interests in Congress chose to do away with, and the effects of that, also, is the depredation of a lot of recreational fish, and commercial fish getting eaten, that's never recorded.

We're watching people who can't even go fishing, recreational and commercial, in areas where they used to, because of the shark depredation, that is not getting recorded, and so it's more than just the marketing and branding. Fishermen are resourceful enough that they would be doing that now, if it was all conducive to the economics of catching the sharks and all that, and which species are available to you, and some people have it better than others, just because of the location that they're in. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Dewey. Anybody have any other questions? Christina, are you getting stuff?

MS. WIEGAND: I was just to make sure everyone is sort of on the same page that what we would be including as a recommendation to say, you know, NMFS should prioritize these things, would be the funding of citizen science and cooperative research initiatives, including a request for them to also prioritize maintaining capacity for conducting stock assessments in the South Atlantic region, eliminating the prohibition on shark fin sales, sort of noting, in addition to the economic concerns, issues with shark depredation in the Southeast Region, and then removing the requirement to report discards in the commercial fishery, either removing the requirement entirely or developing and funding something that would meet BSIA standards.

Then just a note that we would not be including the avoid regional based duplicative reporting, because NMFS is already working on that, and getting ready to address that issue, and so that's what would be included in the letter as a recommendation to the National Marine Fisheries Service for their priorities in response to the EO.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you for going through that. Tom, and then Carolyn.

MR. ROLLER: Could we go back to the shark slide again? I mean, I know this probably isn't the most time to put this, but, if we're going to mention the need for marketing and branding of shark meat, you know, one thing we see in the recreational for-hire community is we have ample limits to harvest sharks, and people don't do it, and so that's one of the other things, is not just the need for marketing and branding, but we should be doing more to say, hey, these are an available and abundant fish that can be caught and retained recreationally, and this is what you do with it.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Tom. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I just wanted to go back up to where we're talking about the capacity for stock assessments, and I think we also need to talk about, again, helping get that data capacity where it needs to be. If we're losing our ability to do dockside sampling, and those kinds of things, we're also being deficient. If we can do stock assessments great, but, if we've got no data, it doesn't help the situation, and so just to make sure that was captured.

MS. MURPHEY: That's a good point. Anything else? Christina had gone through what was in there, and everybody is good. I see thumbs-up. Any other comments? Everybody is happy with this product? All right. Well, I guess that's it. We'll let you --

MS. WIEGAND: I did just want to note a couple of other things. These would be outside of NOAA Fisheries authority, as well as the council authority, and so nothing that needs to go into the letter, but, because they came up with such prevalence during public comment, I did want to sort of formally acknowledge them.

One would be implementing policies that would help domestic seafood compete against foreign imports. We received an extensive number of comments noting the substantial negative economic effects that imported seafood is having on the domestic seafood industry, and a request to see funding and reform of the Seafood Import Monitoring Program, curtailing of illegal advertising of imported seafood as local, better labeling of seafood as domestic versus imported, and just creating a program overall to assist with marketing of domestic seafood and consumer education.

We also received many comments wanting a federal program to aid in the protection and maintenance of working waterfronts. This is especially an issue in the Southeast, with lots of working waterfronts and increasing pressures from other industries, like real estate, that are resulting in increased costs for fishermen and fishing-related businesses, and so I wanted to acknowledge those two things.

Then a note that, in the appendix here, there is the update on actions that were submitted back in 2020, in response to Executive Order 13921, which was similar to this, and it just sort of notes whether things are in progress, or complete, and this is where you will find stuff, for example, like

the shrimp and coral amendments that you all are working on, and that was something that was included in the previous 2020 executive order, and it is noted here that the council is continuing to work on that, and intending to take final action in December, and so I just wanted to call your attention to that, but, otherwise, if the council is comfortable with what we are including in the EO letter, then staff can start drafting.

MS. MURPHEY: Is everybody comfortable with also like the infrastructure, or the foreign imports, to stay in the document?

MS. WIEGAND: So those two things sort of fall outside of what the council can take action on, and what NOAA Fisheries can take action on, and they would involve other U.S. government agencies, and so it's up to the council how you want them handled. We just wanted to acknowledge them here, formally on the record, because they came up so significantly in public comment, even though it's sort of outside of the council's purview to address.

MS. MURPHEY: Right, and I understand that. I just -- You know, acknowledging it all the way to the top was kind of was my thought, but I've got Carolyn, and then Charlie.

DR. BELCHER: Well, maybe one way that you can kind of accentuate the infrastructure part of it, and, I mean, it's not the full infrastructure generically across fisheries, but the fact that Shrimp Futures -- You know, again, we've asked them to integrate with the states as they work forward on that, but that is something that the Southeast Regional Office and the Science Center has been involved in, and so maybe that at least comes out of the -- To other agencies, because it is something that's been highlighted within our region, at least for that fishery, but I think at least it kind of brings it in to more of our realm than putting it to outside.

MS. MURPHEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and, as far as trying to promote domestic sales of our seafood, that's what the S-K grants were doing, and I was on that committee, and it expired. I'm not sure where they're at now, but I don't think they had any funding for the last round to give grants out to, you know, help with domestic sales, and research, and stuff like that, and so I would definitely support -- You know, figure out a way to say we need to support S-K grant funding.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Charlie. I think she is capturing that.

DR. BELCHER: So, for clarification, and I'm going to look to Andy and Clay, and S-K is under NOAA, and is right? It's under NOAA Fisheries or does that go -- We're considering, if it goes up to Congress, that it's outside of NOAA Fisheries' authority, and how does S-K fold into the levels there?

MR. STRELCHECK: We're going to phone a friend, and we'll get back to you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. Christina, do you need anything else? Okay. Is everybody good with what we've put together, or what Christina has put together, Christina and staff? All right, and I guess we will turn you loose, Christina. Thank you, guys, for all the work, because I know this has been a big lift, in a short amount of time, and so thanks. We'll go ahead and take a

break. We'll just do a fifteen-minute break, and how about that? We'll come back at 3:15. Come back at 3:15.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MURPHEY: All right, everyone. I think we'll go ahead and get going again. I need to apologize to everybody. In my agenda, I forgot to turn the page, and I didn't realize we had so much more left, and so hence the time that we spent on the EO, and so we probably need to just sort of speed things up a little bit for the rest of the meeting, if that's okay with everyone, and so I'll go ahead and turn it over to Chip and his research.

DR. COLLIER: All right. Sorry for the delay, and I will try to speed us along, and so I wanted to say thank you to the committee chairs that provided feedback on the research and monitoring plan. I think that's going to greatly improve the discussions today, but, if you're not comfortable with it, we can get things finalized by Friday and make sure every everybody is comfortable with the priorities that are listed in this.

Why are we talking about a research and monitoring plan? It is a requirement of the Magnuson-Stevens Act that the council develops a multi-year research priorities list to be provided to NOAA Fisheries to aid in the development of the research budget for the region, and so this is very important, especially when you hear some of the discussions at the table where we're having to cut things and, you know, maybe reduce funding here, and reduce funding there, and it's important to get the council priorities in there.

This research and monitoring plan, and you'll see it abbreviated throughout this presentation likely as RPM, and this one is very different from our previous ones. Our previous ones were short lists. They probably were multiple pages long, but they were still fairly short lists of targeted items that could be accomplished over the basically near-term, and maybe ten years, in order to get pieces -- Or to get research focused, and a lot of it focused on upcoming stock assessments, trying to make sure we had the data ready for the stock assessments that were coming up, and maybe some new information that was needed for an upcoming stock assessment, making sure an analysis was completed.

It also provided focused research on monitoring topics for the different FMPs, as well as some habitat-focused priorities. This council is often focused on habitat as a key piece of managing for the region, and I think that's very important to continue. The revised version is expanded to help develop a plan for the FMP and support management, stock assessments, and ecosystem-based fisheries management, and you'll see, in these recommendations, you're going to have some biological recommendations, some social and economic recommendations, as well as some habitat, and trying to make everything more available for more resilient management.

A quick outline of what we're going to be talking today. I'm going to go over some general research and monitoring priorities. We're also going to get into just a brief description of stock assessment research recommendations, and then we'll go into monitoring and data collection, and then FMP priorities, and I do want to point out that the council is going to be requested to discuss high priorities in the document, and that's going to be Section 1.1.3 in Attachment 3b.

Some general research and monitoring priorities, we need our fishery-dependent data, and so looking at data that's collected from the fishery, and this could be landings information, or this could be size information, but we do need to -- Most importantly, we need to know the landings that's going on, and we also need some fishery-independent data streams. These can provide key information for stock assessments, but it's also important for things like SAFE reports, to maybe get you all some information in between stock assessments to know what's going on with the populations that you manage.

We need to collect biological data. Important in that is age, growth, and reproduction. A lot of the stock assessments rely on those key factors there, but there could be some additional information that's key for certain stocks as well.

We need to strengthen social and economic data, as well as community well-being indicators. Indicators are a big discussion lately, trying to figure out, you know, what is indicating how a community is doing. It can be a variety of things. Then, finally, we need to monitor the habitat and ecosystem changes, figure out what some of the ecosystem drivers are, and some of the impacts that they're having on the stocks that are managed by the council.

Our stock assessment research, if you notice this, is for a very near-term, and we have species that are currently on the SEDAR assessment list. Starting off with black grouper, that's going through an FWC management strategy evaluation. That's not necessarily done through here, but these research recommendations, as I said before, go beyond what our council just does, and what NOAA Fisheries does, and some of these research recommendations can be very important when you're thinking about developing an RFP, or let's say a state agency wants to do some research, and they can dig into these research priorities, and put it into their grant application, and potentially get funding.

We also have hogfish on there, gag grouper, snowy grouper, king mackerel, and red grouper, and, under each of these species, we have a list of research recommendations identified, either during a stock assessment development or during SSC review, and so those are -- They can be fairly comprehensive, or they can be fairly short. These are just information that was requested by the SSC for the next stock assessment.

Going into the monitoring and data collection, you know, it's going to be important to leverage some of the NOAA portals that are out there, some of the logbooks you guys are talking about, trying to get these logbooks integrated into maybe a single logbook for the Atlantic coast, making it a little bit easier.

We also need good observer programs. Then I have a variety of abbreviations here. We have the Marine Recreational Information Program. We have the Southeast Region Headboat Survey, as well as the Southeast Fishery-Independent Survey, and then we also need dealer data. That's important to get us some of the economic information.

We need to enhance real-time social and economic data, and also ethnographic studies. We need to establish feedback loops with the fishers. You guys were talking about this quite a bit, where you were talking about citizen science, and that's an important feedback loop, potentially, as well as working with some of the advisory panels, and then, finally, we need to improve our data interoperability, as well as documentation for reuse.

Continuing on with data collection, and going into some different components of it, looking at the social and economic as well as enforcement and compliance, and so we have a continued integration of human dimension data and management decisions looking at community resilience. That's been talked about a lot with our fishery resilient programs, and we need to understand the effects of regulatory changes, closures, and disasters. Trying to figure out, when you guys are talking about do we need year-round access or different things like that, when you have a closure, what kind of impact does that have? I think that would benefit some of these discussions.

Once again, stakeholder engagement and citizen science pathways, and I think we need to make sure we have those, make sure the stakeholders are engaged in our processes. We need to monitor compliance with fishing regulations, and provide regular updates at council meetings, and I think this is really good. The updates that law enforcement has been providing are very informative, and it should be continued that those occur.

Then a new one that was added on there was the issue of Caribbean and American red snapper mixing in imported catches. This can be a challenge for law enforcement, as they get fish coming in from other countries, whether or not that's going to be a legal fish or not.

All right. Going into our FMP priorities, and so what I've done is I've taken the priorities listed in 1.1.3, and the other attachment, and I've just copied them over here. "CMP" stands for coastal migratory pelagics, and so we start off with develop an adaptive management approach for Spanish and king mackerel, thinking along the lines of maybe not doing the traditional stock assessment that we've done for Spanish and king mackerel, and maybe going with an approach like management strategy evaluation and trying to use a simpler model in there, if it's appropriate.

We need to evaluate indices of abundance for adult coastal migratory pelagics. One of the reasons that we're pointing this out is a couple of the indices of abundance are based on some fishery-dependent data, which can have some issues, especially for schooling fish for like Spanish mackerel, trying to make sure you're not going to get hyperstability when potentially a population is going down.

One of the species that is potentially moving northward a little bit is Spanish mackerel, and so I think it's going to be important to understand the data collections north and south of Cape Hatteras, and so those two of those data collections are the NEAMAP and SEAMAP programs, and looking for ways to calibrate these data collected through these two fishery-independent data sources.

We need to improve estimates of shore-based catches of Atlantic Spanish mackerel. That's an ongoing process, potentially through the FES changes, and potentially also conduct surveys to understand the economic and cultural values of the commercial and recreational fishery. We need to conduct research to better understand tradeoffs between different management options, commercial, for-hire, and recreational fisheries, and, once again, that potentially could be addressed under an MSE, management strategy evaluation, framework. Then describe how infrastructure availability for the fishery has changed and could affect for-hire and commercial fisheries.

Moving on from the coastal migratory pelagics, and moving in a little bit further offshore, going to the dolphin and wahoo, there's potential for distinct population segments of dolphin, and so it's

going to be important to investigate that. If you look at the southern stock of dolphin, and, when I'm referring to the southern stock, I'm meaning down around Brazil, there is indication that it is a separate stock, and there could potentially be a separate -- A different stock north of the Caribbean, essentially.

Use advanced modeling techniques to evaluate trends in population abundance or fishing mortality, and what I'm talking about, with the advanced modeling techniques, is maybe this is going to be, once again, using a management strategy evaluation, where you're going to be incorporating not only the biological information into the modeling, but you're also going to be incorporating economics and social information into that modeling, and then conduct a social and ecological system studies to improve understanding of interactions and connections between the fishery and marine ecosystems.

That one has been addressed somewhat by the National Marine Fisheries Service for dolphin, but it's also going to be important to continue work like this, to make sure we're understanding how this population could be changing over time and how the social and economic systems are changing.

For shrimp, and I know it was mentioned that there was some gear testing that was being either reduced, or potentially stopped, and it doesn't mean the states can't do potential gear testing, and so one of the important ones here is to reduce the impacts of shark impacts to gear. If you've ever talked to a shrimper, they will tell you readily that the sharks are very aggressive on their on their trawl gear, and that stuff needs to be investigated.

It would be important to update community profiles for the shrimp fishery, assess regulatory and environmental risks to the fleet and shore-based infrastructure, mainly looking at some of the environmental risks that are associated with that. Conduct cost and earnings surveys for the fishery. This fishery has definitely had some challenging times, due to economic impacts, or import impacts, and so understanding the cost and earnings will be important for this.

Quantify the economic resilience and adaptation strategies in the coastal communities, seeing how they're changing, due to whether it's sea level rise changes or infrastructure changes. Track market trends, export dependencies, and fleet profitability. Evaluate the requirement for the limited access permit, and so the rock shrimp and limited access in the South Atlantic region when you're fishing south of -- I believe, in Georgia, you have to have a limited access permit, and so is limited access necessarily needed? I believe the permit is limited to 100 people. However, it's usually much less than that are harvesting, and so is that limited access needed?

Also, evaluate the requirement for operator cards in the South Atlantic rock shrimp fishery. That is a requirement for that fishery. Is that necessarily needed, and then, as mentioned earlier by some of the council members, to continue support for the NOAA Fisheries Shrimp Futures project.

Moving on to the snapper grouper fishery, this one starts off with improved discard monitoring for high release mortality species, and some of these species with high release mortality include red snapper and some of the deepwater groupers, and even the tilefishes, and using observer programs, or other methods, to help estimate it.

Update estimates of discard mortality based on adoption of regulations designed to reduce discard mortality, and so, if you're looking at some of the values of discard mortality out there, some species haven't changed since the implementation of circle hooks, dehooking devices, and descending devices, and all of those can have an impact on survivability of released fish.

Cooperate with state partners to secure funding for programs to support long-term multiyear standard monitoring of artificial reefs and their communities. This is kind of -- Artificial reef monitoring has kind of been up to the individual states that put it out there. Maybe investigate different ways that this could be standardized, and we could get additional information that are collected by each of the states.

Investigate states-based models or non-stationarity models, as shifting stocks or changing distribution could impact estimates of productivity, catchability, and selectivity. Enhance survey coverage in south Florida and north of Cape Hatteras and offshore deep habitats, as appropriate. It was talked about already about the South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey, but there's also been discussion about expanding the trap survey, or a modification to the trap survey, south of Cape Canaveral, and also potentially north of Cape Hatteras.

All right, and we also got feedback not only from the SSC, but we also took this to the Social and Economic Panel of the SSC, and they provided us a list of items to include, and one of them was to work with NMFS to update community snapshots, study social science use in fisheries management decision-making, so that can help us figure out what motivates stakeholders to participate. Assess stakeholder perceptions of management measures, enforcement, equity, and trust. These are important when you think about compliance in some of the regulations. If you don't have trust, you might not have high compliance.

Develop social dimensions of the South Atlantic shrimp fishery. Identify communities vulnerable to climate change, habitat loss, species distribution changes, and regulatory shifts. Develop methods to understand social impact and cultural value of managed areas. Collect information on the seafood supply chain. Collect and update economic information on how the recreational sector values catching or harvesting South-Atlantic-managed species. Monitor the social and economic effects of closures, assess changes and natural disasters, and then, finally, evaluate the community economic effects of regulations and environmental events.

Then we got a list of recommendations from the Habitat & Ecosystem Advisory Panel, and we worked on incorporating some of the recommendations from that, and so, starting off with habitat research, the Habitat & Ecosystem Advisory Panel has been talking a lot about thin layer placement as a beneficial use, and I would have to have Kathleen talk about that more, as she's been the one leading it, if you have any questions on that one. We also need to gather information related to space infrastructure and the frequency of launches, the potential hazards associated with that.

Moving on to shallow-water coral research, increase spatial coverage using diver surveys, autonomous underwater vehicles, citizen science, and aerial, and then track the prevalence of stony coral tissue loss disease and other bleaching events. For the deepwater coral, use multibeam sonar, ROVs, and drop cameras to understand and define coral mound structures and habitat extent. Investigate vulnerability to acidification and temperature changes.

Going into the pelagic sargassum, conduct species-specific central fish habitat dependency analysis, look to forecast climate related changes in sargassum blooms, assess cumulative impacts from frequent of inundation of sargassum on coral resilience.

Then, going into habitat and ecosystem, compile the impacts of sand and sediment dredgings and beneficial use, characterize juvenile reef fish use of habitat, identify shallow-water habitat for coastal migratory pelagic species, develop models that better incorporate habitat changes and environmental variability in the stock assessments, something like a habitat suitability, and develop and prioritize environmental indicators, and define triggers for management actions, and determine if warmer winters are disrupting natural recruitment mechanisms of larval and post-larval brown shrimp. Determine how changes in the Gulf Stream dynamics and shelf stratification are affecting recruitment dynamics, and I promise I'm getting close to the end.

So other FMPs that have some priorities listed, but not necessarily included in that high priority section, are coral and discussion of some of the restoration efforts, the stony coral tissue loss disease, and interactions with fishing gear. Golden crab, develop a catch per unit effort to better describe trends, and collect social and economic data to better understand changes in the fishery.

For sargassum, the ecological role, and monitoring options for that, and then, for spiny lobster, cross-jurisdictional economics, and then community reliance on the species, and so, with that, I'll take any questions, and then I would like to get some input on the high priority items that I went over there. Should we incorporate any other ones, or are you guys happy with the list, and so let's start off with questions, and then we'll go to the document, with Section 1.1.3.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Does anybody have any questions, or comments, for Chip? It looks like you did a perfect job, Chip, and so I guess we'll just -- We can go to 1.1.3 in the document, and go through that.

DR. COLLIER: So my plan isn't necessarily to go through all that again, and that would be painful. If there's any recommendations, or sections, that you all would like me to go to, we can go to it real quickly, and we can add or remove different priorities that were listed.

MS. MURPHEY: Anybody got any input on any of these so far? Clay.

DR. PORCH: Yes, and I just kind of wanted to look at this in the context of the environment that we're in now. I think -- I mean, I really like the list of priorities. I think it's very comprehensive, impressive even, and many of them I agree with, but -- Well, let me say and. We will consider them as we're developing our activity plans.

The challenge we have now is we're, in many ways, in a more austere environment, and so there's, for us, not a lot of room for new investments, and, instead, at least in the near-term, at least for the center, and I can't speak for the states, but we'll be focused on maintaining our key datasets, trying to use advanced technology to process and collect the data more efficiently, and so a lot of our efforts are going to be focused on that, and the general goal we're actually going for is towards simplification.

You remember I mentioned earlier moving away from trying to make a Rolls Royce out of everything, and instead using a pickup truck, so we can get more accomplished. That means, for

us, we would be using -- We would be striving for fewer and better data, managed more efficiently, and rather than more pieces of new information.

I mean, there's certainly an advantage in learning things new, but what ends up happening is you're sewing together a whole bunch of little new pieces of dataset, and you don't necessarily actually get better management advice. Sometimes it's better to be more consistent, and that's where MSE comes in. You might have a simpler harvest control system, and you vet it through management strategy evaluation, and so we see going down that path.

Then there's a lot of analytical capabilities that will go into that, but we see that more, using fewer, simpler data, and harvest control rules that hinge on those data, which sometimes will involve the stock assessments like we've seen them, but, in many cases, kind of reduced, in terms of complexity, and not chasing every little piece of new information that's out there.

So, again, we're going for probably consistency more than, you know, ingenuity and upheaval, and I think, when we think about these priorities here, let's think about it as, you know, in the near-term, we're not seeing lots of new resources come into the system, and let's think about how we simplify the models, how we simplify the management, take advantage of the best data that we have, rather than find ways to collect new data, and that's where our efforts, honestly, are going to be. In my internal planning, we're looking very hard at, again, how do we collect the types of data that we really need most, most efficiently, rather than let's fund a lot of different studies.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Clay. I've got Carolyn, and then Jimmy.

DR. BELCHER: Yes, and I don't -- This may not be the best place to talk about it, but I kind of wanted to offer out -- I've always kind of had my head swimming around with sargassum, because of the fact that we -- It's a fishery management plan, and we no longer have harvest or sargassum, and, based on the priorities, it's kind of studying it more as an offshoot of EFH, or habitat, and is it something down the road, and, again, I'm not proffering it for now, knowing we've got a lot of things going on, but is that something that we can investigate down the road, that maybe that needs to be revisited, because, if you think about what we would try to do to manage that, it wouldn't fit under a fishery management plan, and it would be more of a habitat management plan.

MS. MURPHEY: No, and that makes sense. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and that's a good point, and, generally, when we think about the sargassum plan, it is more thought of as a habitat plan than a fishery management plan.

MS. MURPHEY: Jimmy.

MR HULL: Thank you. This is kind of directed towards the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. I mean, I have in my mind what I think are the really important data streams that you're going to need in the future, but I would be nice to hear from you, to prioritize for us the most important surveys, and data streams, that you have, that you envision using in this new reset. Is there any way we can get that from you?

MS. MURPHEY: Andy. Go ahead, Clay.

DR. PORCH: Sure, and, I mean, I can say, right off the top of my head, catch monitoring obviously is huge, and how can we improve that, and in particular recreational catch monitoring, but also even for the commercial discard monitoring, whether it's observers or electronic monitoring programs, and then, of course, the fishery-independent surveys, and getting the key species that we need, so that we have stock trends, so you know what's going on trend-wise in the water, and you know what's coming out of the water. Those are the most key information.

Then, after that, comes things like, for the species that we really want to invest in age composition, getting the biological sampling done, and then ageing the animals, but, in our case, because it is expensive for people to count rings and mill the otoliths and all that, we're looking at more advanced technology solutions, like near-infrared spectroscopy and epigenetic ageing, but, in the meantime, certainly states could provide a bridge there, but I don't want to -- We want to be careful that we're very judicious in which species that we would actually use these sort of advanced, complex models that incorporate age composition, because we're at a point now we're not going to be able to do everything that we imagined we could do once upon a time, if that helps, but, again, catch monitoring, fishery-independent surveys, number one, and age and size samples, number two, for select species.

MS. MURPHEY: Charlie. Hang on, Charlie. I'll get -- I think Chip wanted to -- To that, Chip?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and I just want to point out the importance of what Clay was talking about. That on the stock assessment side of things. We also need to know the social and economic impacts, and so monitoring what's going on on the social side, and on the economics of the fisheries, is extremely important as well, and so that's getting more on the management side, trying to figure out, all right, Clay and his group has developed an annual catch limit, or an overfishing limit, that you all have to manage through, and having the social and economic data to figure out, all right, this is going to be the best option to get you there, based on the comments and economics of the fishery, and I think that's going to be an important component, too.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and, Clay, you talked about our pickup truck assessments. Could you give us -- I'm guessing those might be like production model assessments, or something like that, and some of the Cadillac assessments are going to be age-based assessments. Could you give us some examples of what we might be expecting assessment -- What level of assessment we're going to have for our species coming down the road?

DR. PORCH: Sure. I appreciate the question. In some cases, it could be -- Considering the biology of the animals, we might use production models again, and the key point there is you're not necessarily going for accuracy, in the sense that you think you're going to get a perfect estimate of the absolute abundance, but, because you're applying it consistently in time, you still can get effective management, and so you're not pretending to say this is the actual abundance of the animals, but, if you apply that same approach consistently, you'll still get where you want to go for management, and we can vet that with management strategy evaluations.

There are other things where we may not even have that level of information, but we can come up with index-based management approaches, which we've used. For instance, lane snapper in the Gulf of Mexico is an index-based management procedure, and we can vet those through

management strategy evaluations, basically simulation tests, like training to fly an airplane, right? If it works in a simulator environment, it probably will work in the real environment.

For stock assessments that are more complex, say your age-based assessments, in some cases, that may mean just not necessarily chasing every little new piece of data that goes in there, and you're just using your core, most informative data, and so it's a simpler assessment, even though it's age structured, but you don't have one little piece of data from this area here, and one little piece there, and so it's a whole range of ways to simplify.

The key is let's focus on our best, most informative data, instead of really trying to chase down every little piece of new information that are out there, and being consistent year in and year out, and then the last thing I would add, because this is rich, and I could talk about this forever, is one of the things we talked about is update lite, and an update lite would happen much more frequently, and so we're not waiting five years, and maybe we do it every two years, or every three years, and it's an update with the data that's actually available now.

In some cases, it may only be your catch and an index, say the South Atlantic Video Survey, and, if that's ready to go, just go ahead and update it, and you're still better off than you were before, because you have the most recent and your best data in it. If you don't have the age composition yet, because you're shorthanded, or you didn't collect it, you can still update the assessment, and we just have to be prepared to draw that line and say, look, we need the information, and let's go ahead and update it with the information we do have and not wait forever trying to get the information that we don't.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. I'm going to turn to Andy, and then I'll go ahead and wrap this up, because what we need to get to is are these research priorities good, and does anything we need to removed, and, hearing that Clay said you're not going to be able to do it all, and I think we all understand that around the table, and so, Andy, and then we'll go back to finalizing this report, and so thanks.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and so, just to comment that Clay's comments, and so I think he said it well. I will say maybe we need a new analogy than a pickup truck, because a lot of pickup trucks are far more expensive than the car I drive, but, with that said, great job, Chip and team. I think this is a comprehensive view of management priorities.

Where I'm struggling is I think the list that's been identified outstrips what the Fisheries Service could do under normal funded staffing levels, right, and I think it's a lengthy list of priorities, that goes well beyond even our capacity a few years ago, and, thinking about this then across three fishery management councils, and HMS research priorities, and I recognize this doesn't all fall on the Science Center, and some falls on my office, and some falls on Science and Technology, but it would be, I think, beneficial to try to narrow this list down a little bit.

I guess I was thinking about it from the standpoint of our discussion of the executive orders just a few minutes ago, right, and we just spent a long, you know, time going through all these different things, and determining are they low, medium, or high priority, and then deciding, okay, well, three to five of them are going to go into a workplan. I'm not saying to narrow the scope to three or five priorities, but I think the list could benefit from kind of a high, medium, low prioritization discussion, either directly from the council members or with a feedback loop coming from the

Fisheries Service back to the council before this is finalized, and so I just suggest that, because I think it's okay to include all these, and I'm just questioning whether or not four or five pages of high priorities is really reasonable, especially given the current climate we're in with budget and resources. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: So, Chip, is there a deadline to have this in?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and we need to get it in this year, and so we could do it in December, or you guys could just go through it, and we could re-look at it on Friday, and just provide me a list of things to remove. I think that would be fine.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Chip. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I get Andy's points, but I hesitate to remove -- We're not -- The hardest part with this is, if we don't put what are some of our needs, and we whittle it down, and funds don't allow, but something that we took off of the list could be accounted for, and we've now kind of shortened, or done some forced prioritization, that may not benefit. I mean, I think it's the Christmas list, for a lack of a better term.

I mean, these are the hopes. These are the things we recognize we need, but I think it's more to keep the focus on those things. I agree that we don't need twenty-five in each one, but, you know, ten or fewer probably isn't a bad thing, with the idea that the monitoring is going to be what it is, and I think we need to be prescriptive with that, because we know what we're missing, and we need to keep highlights on it.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Carolyn. Any other comments? I'm thinking -- I'm kind of with Carolyn. This is a Christmas list, and I think, in the interest of time, plus I think the Science Center and the Regional Office -- This gives them a list to choose from, and, you know, based off what your priorities are going to be, what our priority is going to be, I think you're going to -- You know, it's a pretty just comprehensive list for you to pick out of, but I've got John to add.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think that's an important point. You know, you're told to provide what the needs are, and not what needs you think can actually be met. It's what the needs are, and I think we go into it recognizing that there's always more needed than what the agency is going to be able to do. That's been the case since day-one.

You know, we've gone through this from a long document that tried to cover all the needs to, you know, recommended to really pare it back, and focus just on the essentials, and thinking that that would get some more, and I feel like the council saw that that didn't really happen. If anything, it began to, you know, downplay the many things that weren't being accomplished, and it made it look like more progress was perhaps being made than really was, and some of, you know, other things that the council thought were important were falling by the wayside, and so that's why the version this year kind of went back to saying like here's sort of a full accounting, and I think we do know not everything is going to make it.

We've never expected that, but, when people start asking, at higher levels, what is you need, and what should the agency be doing, it's like, well, here's a lot. If you want to see just, you know, how far behind our region has been, and our, you know, Science Center and such not having the

resources they need, and here's a good look at it. I don't think it's a bad reflection on the agency in our region that they haven't been given the resources to do these things that we've needed for years.

MS. MURPHEY: Just a thought. I mean, I know this -- I guess this -- NMFS is the audience for this, but I think other academia and all this -- This gives academia things to go to. You know, if I want to go get my PhD or something, I can go to this list and come up with something, and so I just kind of feel -- I'm going to ask the rest of this council how they feel about the current list, whether to move forward, or if we do want to whittle it down anymore. Just in the interest of time, if we could get an answer there. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I'll be quick, Madam Chair. It might be prudent for us to at least put some high priority on a few things, because, if we send it like it is, and they know they can't do it all, then they're going to just pick and choose what works for them, and it may not -- It may miss something that we really feel is a high priority, and so I think, at the very least, we need to put our highest priority down, and, that way, it's just -- It will have some meaning.

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

MR. STRELCHECK: Just to be clear, I wasn't suggesting necessarily removing things from this, but, you know, having more of a prioritization structure I think benefits the process. With that said, you know, there may be some things that Clay and I can talk about between now and Full Council, in terms of just things that are likely going to be off the table with capacity at the Science Center, or within the Fisheries Service, because we've lost those resources and staffing, right, and I think it's just important that we set expectations.

It's not an excuse, and I would hate to get back to this, you know, three, four, five years in, and, you know, show we've made considerable progress on some of these high-priority issues, but then didn't accomplish anything on others, but that may be the reality, and I hear what you're saying, John, in terms of including more rather than less, because of some of the resource losses that we've experienced.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Thank you, Andy. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I was going to say though -- But some of what we talked about relative to the letter kind of highlights what our priorities are right now too, and so I think there's kind of a little bit of two things that kind of complement each other in that situation. I mean, if you were to ask me about this particular section, I mean, I'm going to highlight and circle, forty-five times, monitoring. I mean, this is the thing, is, without all of that stuff that's outlined under monitoring, we're struggling in everything else, and so, you know, I don't know how else to bring monitoring down without spelling it out.

I mean, I think about -- Not that it's within anybody's control, but look what happened with Pamlico Sound. We've lost a big chunk of the fishery-independent survey in Pamlico, and North Carolina is ending up shuttering the project. I mean, that's concerning, and I don't know how else to get people to garner into recognizing that these monitoring things can't necessarily be done on a shoestring budget anymore, and we've got to keep hold of it, or we can't follow the fisheries at all.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Carolyn. So, Chip -- Well, so we need to have this in at the end of the year, and so we do have one more meeting. Do we want to try to pick high, high priorities in this list, and come back in December, but whatever your workload is, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: No, and it's whatever your preference is. We can get -- We can get whatever you want done, and so let us know what you want, but it's going to be up to you all to select the high priorities. We provided a list, and now it's going to be your opportunity to select them. The committee chairs already went through this and identified high priorities for each of the FMPs. Each FMP has its own needs, and so, yes, maybe we're getting into a list that's a couple pages long, but that makes sense. You're managing well over a billion dollars' worth of fisheries, and so it takes more than one page to manage that.

MS. MURPHEY: I agree, and so what do you all -- What is the wish of this council, just approve it as-is, or see about picking high highs? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I would pick the high highs, even if we had to wait until December to do it, according to our time and things like that.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Charlie. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would rather have the Christmas list. I'm just going to put it out there, because, as soon as we start to do -- Even if we start to prioritize, or heaven forbid we remove an item off this list, it is gone forever, and there are great things on this list, that maybe one day will come to fruition, but I'm with Carolyn.

All of this is essential for the success of all of these fisheries management plans, and for us to sort of whittle it down scares me. I'm not necessarily opposed to having sort of a high high, like label the ones that we really want, but I think we're going to end up in the same boat that we're in right now. The list is going to be exhaustive. It's going to be huge. I'm just struggling here with all of this.

MS. MURPHEY: No, and I understand. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I kind of like the Christmas list as well, and so I guess, to me, if we're going to try to prioritize it further, I feel like maybe it needs to come back to December, but I struggle with how to prioritize it. I'm just -- It's just an interesting discussion here, and part of me says, based on what we've discussed around the table today, I just feel like the Christmas list is better, but --

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

MR. PHILLIPS: I understand the Christmas list, and, if we picked a high highs, all the ideas -- It would be the same stuff that Andy and Clay are going to pick anyway, and so it may not matter, and we may be able to send it just like it is, because they're going to -- They know the same stuff that we know, and maybe even more so. I don't -- We may just be doing something to do it, and so I'm satisfied if you want to just send the Christmas list.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Charlie. Me personally, I think I would like to send the Christmas list, just partly because of staff time, and our time that has been spent on it. It is a Christmas list. NMFS can pick what they can do, you know, if they can do it. It also gives information to other people, if they want to do research projects, and so I'm personally for the Christmas list, and so the Christmas list it is, and so is every -- Do we need a motion? Okay. Is everyone good with the list as is, and with the understanding of the caveats? I think Andy and Clay explained that very well, so I think we're all aware. All right. Then we'll call it approved. Okay. Amy.

MS. DUKES: No, and I'm approving it. I think it's awesome, but I do have a forward thought for when we do this exercise next year, selfishly. Sorry. Two years. Thank you, Chip. For me, I just going to say it's odd that the citizen science research priorities is an appendix. Why is that? I understand that these are fishers' management research and monitoring priorities. I'm just wondering, and can we make it a Number 13 under Best Fishing Practices, and make it its own little thing, especially with the fact that the Citizen Science AP are going to be working on their list of priorities at their next AP meetings, and it's going to come back to this council in December? It's just something forward thinking in two years, plus with all of the executive orders.

DR. COLLIER: No, and you're absolutely right, and that's something that we have talked about as staff, is to bring all these research and monitoring things to you at once, and so that's how it's going to come in the future. It's just, right now, it did not work out, as far as timing for all of this to come together as one piece.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. We will consider this approved. Thank you. Thank you, Chip. Thank you, everyone. It was a good conversation, and so now we'll move on to the surveys and Tracey Smart, from South Carolina. Tracey will be doing the update on the South Atlantic fishery-independent surveys. All right, everybody, and we're good to go, and so I'm going to turn it over to Tracey Smart with South Carolina.

DR. SMART: Thank you, all. Does everybody have snacks, drinks, cookies? That's all we were going for. I just figure I want you in a good mood, and I want you with a little bit of sugar and coffee. I want to thank you all for having us here today. I also want to thank the folks that worked on this presentation, Julie, Margaret, Wally, Amy, and Nate Bacheler with the Science Center. It takes a whole lot of folks to get all this together. It's a lot of work to collect the data, as well as a lot of work to put it all together, and so here we go.

I want to talk about two of our fishery-independent surveys in the region today, our Southeast Reef Fish Survey and our Coastal Trawl Survey. I'm going to very briefly touch on our survey design, our activities from 2024, and I realize it's almost towards the end of 2025, but we are still working on 2025, and, for a select number of species that we encounter infrequently for the surveys, I'll talk about the abundance, the length, when we have the data, and distributions for those species, on terms of our regional coverage for both of the surveys.

I do want to start off with some caveats of kind of what to take home from this presentation. What I'm going to present today, in terms of the abundance, is this is a relative abundance overview, and so in no way, shape, or form is this an update of stock status. This is really, for the most part, one input that we often see in a stock assessment. These are indices of abundance from either the Southeast Reef Fish Survey, or the Coastal Trawl Survey, that would be one of many other things,

including fishery-dependent data, other fishery-independent data sources, those life history inputs, length compositions, age compositions, et cetera, and so it would take a whole lot more, but it does give you sort of an idea of where we are and where the surveys kind of are seen relative to where we've been.

Also, sort of how we've treated the data for this presentation may not be exactly how the data have been treated in stock assessments, and that might be because we're just not using them in the same way here, or there are species in here that may have never gone through an assessment, such as white grunt, everybody's sort of favorite poster child for that, and so, getting into the details of the Southeast Reef Fish Survey or SERFS, currently, it's a large regional collaborative effort, with funding through the MARMAP, SEAMAP South Atlantic, and SEFIS programs.

MARMAP and SEAMAP are run through the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. SEFIS is housed at the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, up in Beaufort. Historically, this survey, the chevron trap survey, was conducted solely through MARMAP funding, and, when SEAMAP and SEFIS were brought online in 2009 and 2010, it really upped our game, in terms of the regional coverage, the amount of sampling effort that could be done, as well as adding things that could be done with the survey, and so it's been a huge help in sort of increasing the quality of the data and the things that came along with the survey.

It's also -- Historically, it was known as the MARMAP Survey. We've rebranded, because it is this collaborative effort, and so you might see both in the literature, and some folks certainly still refer it to as MARMAP, but you'll hear all three of those programs mentioned.

We work off of four different boats currently that have been involved in the survey. There have been others in the past. These are some photos of them here, and the SERFS group samples with the chevron video trap, and it targets low to medium-relief hardbottom habitats, and it's very specific, in terms of we don't sample everywhere all the time. It's really meant to look at these types of habitats. It's appropriate for this sort of trap gear.

We look at depths from fifteen to about 110 meters, and so this is anywhere from inner shelf right to the shelf break, and our sampling occurs between April 15 and about October 14, and that's mostly to avoid any sort of risk of entanglement or interactions with right whales, and the traps have been used consistently and standardized since 1990, and that was through the MARMAP program.

They're baited with menhaden, and they're soaked for about an hour-and-a-half, and so it's a very short soak time, compared to something like a commercial pot. and then, since 2011, with the aid of the SEFIS program in particular, all traps have at least two video cameras, that face in opposite directions, and this has allowed us to get estimates of the abundance of fish that don't enter traps as readily, or fish that don't have a chance to enter traps, as well as the habitats that the traps are deployed on.

The universe more or less looks like this right now. We've added a few more stations since this map was produced a couple years ago, but it's about 4,300 trap sampling stations between North Carolina and Florida, a little bit south of Cape Canaveral, and just up to Cape Hatteras.

Our approach is a simple random selection, but I like to refer to our design as random selection with common sense. We try very hard to spread out our sampling throughout that full range and make sure we're getting as broad a coverage as we possibly can in all of our different cruises and legs. We target to hit at least 1,500 stations, which we accomplished in 2024, and, once we come off of the boat, our sample -- Our life history samples and data processing analysis go to different places, with South Carolina DNR kind of heading up our catch indices, as well as working up our life history samples, and SEFIS taking charge of our video indices and video reading and habitat quantification, and, if you're ever interested in looking at the data, you can check out [seamap.org](http://seamap.org), and I will have some more details, as well as data access.

All right, and so our core activities in 2024 included seventy-nine days at-sea, plus some mapping days that SEFIS took on during some of their cruises. I may have lied a little bit. 1,503 chevron video traps were deployed, and so three above our target, and we also deploy conductivity, temperature, and depth profilers for water column information, and that included surface and bottom temperature and salinity that were paired with those CDTs, and, from these, we got a little over 25,000 fish, just over eighty species collected, measured, and weighed, and then just shy of 6,000 fish, representing around thirty species, we had retained for life history samples of some sort, primarily age and reproduction, and also some DNA fin clips.

We also had some supplemental activities that we took on in 2024, and that included our northern expansion that was funded through a collaboration with the Science Center to direct our boats to go up north of Hatteras, investigate whether or not there was some appropriate hardbottom up in that area, deploy traps and cameras, and see if there would be useful areas to deploy traps on in the future.

Then, also, we finished up a MARFIN-funded study using stereo cameras to investigate selectivity of the traps relative to video, to get a better idea for inputs for stock assessments, and that data was used for the first time in the SEDAR 90 red snapper assessment.

All right, and so I'm going to present sort of three primary outputs from our survey for SERFS. We're going to do a distribution based on our catch from the chevron video traps, and this is presented in quintiles, or five bins, and it's basically anywhere in blue is really low abundance from the trap catch. Anywhere in red is really high abundance, or hotspots, and anywhere in between is, you know, sort of following that hotspot pattern.

This is from just on average from our five most recent years, to just kind of give you an overall idea of who is, you know, more abundant or less abundant and where. Anywhere it's white is sort of no sampling. It is blown up a little bit, because it's kind of hard to see the footprint of an individual trap.

The other thing that we'll present is the relative abundance indices, and we'll present both the catch index from 1990 through 2024 and the video index from 2011, which was the first year that we had video cameras attached to all of our traps, through 2023. The catch indices are available a lot faster, because literally we have the fish in hand onboard the boat. We are measuring, and we're counting them immediately, and that means that data is available as soon as we walk off the boat and can be compiled well before the end of an individual sampling year.

However, the videos have to come home, get archived, and then we actually have video readers currently that are physically looking at those videos, and having to count them, and, if you've never seen this video before, we call this Wall of Vermilion. It is a lovely mix of red porgy, vermilion snapper, tomtate, and I'm pretty sure there's some stuff in there, and who knows what else, and so, if you are an individual video reader, this is going to take you some time, and so it does take probably six to eight months for videos to be read, and, therefore, there's about a one-year lag in when video data becomes fully available.

A reminder that we didn't have any sampling in 2020, because of COVID-19, and so we standardized our trap indices through zero-inflated negative binomial models, and we've used these in the last few assessments, and so our catch is the number of fish per trap soak time, which again is that 90 minutes, and our video is done through a sum count method, where we wait about ten minutes after the trap lands on bottom, so things start acting normally, and any sort of sediment that is disturbed settles out, and then they look at one frame every thirty seconds for twenty minutes.

All right, and so what these should look like is catch will be on top, and the video will be on bottom, and so you'll see that difference in those time series between the two. The red line will be the average abundance across the time series. The gray shading is the error around that estimate, and the black dots are the nominal values, as in the raw averages, and it's a little bit of a skewed - - You know, the average is that one line, that dashed line between the two graphs, and so two is twice the long-term average, and one half is half the long-term average, or 0.5.

The other thing we'll show is length compositions from the catch, because those are the fish we physically have in hand, and these are the maximum, or pinched, total length, in inches, and they're summarized in one-inch length bins, and the bubble size is the number of fish per length in each length bin, divided by the number of fish measured in a given year, and the red line is that average total length, so you can see if it's increasing or decreasing over time.

Just to give you a kind of an idea on how that looks relative to kind of the overall population, the green arrow is the commercial minimum size limit, if there is one for a species, and the pink arrow is the total length at 50 percent maturity for females, if there's an estimate for that species, either from our own data or from a stock assessment. Sometimes you'll see these sort of gaps in that size distribution, and that's really just from rounding, if we can have to convert between fork length and total length and rounding into a whole inch, and so it's not really missing data.

I'll show you some of our select species. We'll talk about some ecosystem sort of species, or some of our common prey, like tomtate and stenotomus, and some of our more economically-important species, including snappers, sea basses, groupers, and jacks, and white grunt, because everyone loves them. I love them.

First, let's start with tomtate. Tomtate is one of our really broadly distributed species, and you can tell that by the distribution of those red high-abundance hotspot areas throughout. The blue, along the shelf edge, is where they become less common. Their catch has decreased starting about the mid-2000s, and then an increase starting about the mid-2010s, and they've been hovering right around their long-term average in the last eight to ten years, with a little bit of a decrease in the last year, and there is currently no video index for tomtate, just because of how difficult they are to count, and because we don't expect an assessment anytime soon on tomtate.

I always make the joke that tomtate is an excellent unit of measurement, because of how consistent their lengths are. I'm going to continue to make that joke, because I think there's value in it, as a member of the video community, and our tomtate that we catch in the trap are well above their size at maturity, typically.

Vermilion snapper is another really broadly-distributed species, mostly mid-shelf, a little bit less abundant, and very, very inner shelf, a little bit of a decrease in abundance to the very southern part of the survey and the very northern part of the survey, but not much, and then our catch and our video indices are actually very, very consistent, where they have overlapping time periods, with peaks occurring at about the same time, as well as decreases occurring about the same time, with sort of a bouncing between right around the long-term average in the most recent four to eight years.

The average length of vermilion snapper increased from the 1990s into the 2000s. It's been pretty stable since then, with a wide variety of sizes encountered, and it's been pretty stable around that minimum size limit for commercial fish, and well above the size at maturity.

For black sea bass, they are mostly a shallow-water species in the region. Our hotspots, in the last five years, have really been centered off of Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina, versus the full region. I think that's probably consistent with what a lot of folks are seeing on the water as well, and then our catch and video indices are both consistent in seeing that big drop in abundance since about 2012, with the lowest abundances in the traps and in the videos that we've ever seen. Our sizes have increased since the 1990s, although not a whole lot. They've been hovering right around that minimum size limit. Typically, we only catch adult black sea bass in the traps, and so they do tend to average above the size at maturity.

Red snapper is our southernmost sort of distributed species for the chevron video trap survey. You can see that in their hotspots, although there are a few hotspots on that inner mid-shelf up off of North Carolina now, compared to where they used to be when they first started showing back up in the survey, and, again, are very consistent trends between the two gears, where they overlap in time, with peaks in abundance right around 2021 and 2022. There's a little bit of a dip, but not much, in the most recent year.

The very early part of the time series is very messy, in terms of the size distributions, and that's because they were so rarely encountered, but that size distribution has really filled out in the most recent years, and this is actually one that I think is really fun, because you can see those size classes moving in, and this increase in size over time, and I think that's just such a pretty picture for a size distribution, if you're into graphs and you think graphs make pretty pictures, and I do, and so --

Currently, our average size of red snapper in our catches is above the size at 50 percent maturity for females, and I would also like to note that we do regularly encounter red snapper above thirty inches in the traps as well, and so we can get relatively large ones.

Gray triggerfish is a pretty abundant species within the survey, very widely distributed across the entire range, as well as inner, mid, and outer shelf, and they have been hovering around the long-term average since about 2010, although the last four years have been below average. Their

average size over time has been pretty consistent. It has been above the minimum size limit, and well above size at maturity.

Stenotomus is another species that we only -- Is a little bit more limited in terms of its distribution, mostly inner shelf, and a little bit more limited in terms of being more Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, compared to full range, and we also only have a catch index, because they're a little bit more challenging to read from the videos, compared to what we expect to use the data for, but they have -- We have seen a pretty significant decrease in the abundance of stenotomus in the region over the last fifteen years. Their size has, you know, seen a bit of an uptick in the last ten years, with our highest average size, and it is above the size of maturity. We mostly see adults in the traps.

Red porgy tends to be more of a Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina species, again, although they don't tend to get all the way -- We don't tend to see them all the way in the northern part of the survey. They tend to be a little bit more mid to outer shelf, and we have seen a decrease in abundance, although it's been kind of stable in the last couple of years, but stable low, and so not too, too optimistic there, and their size has increased over time, sitting, in the last couple of years, or last year, sitting right around that minimum size limit, and above the size of female maturity. We do get a mix of immature and mature fish, and a few juveniles in this survey as well, and so, you know, unfortunately, in the last year, we really did not get many immature or juvenile red porgy at all.

White grunt is our rare northerly species only. You know, very few encounters anywhere south of Charleston, and primarily off in North Carolina, and, in the last ten years, they've been hovering around their long-term mean, although kind of low the last couple of years, and then they average well above their size of maturity, and so primarily adult fish in the survey.

Gag grouper has historically been one of our more common grouper. They tend to be a little bit isolated hotspots off of Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina. In the last five years -- Their catch has actually gone up in the last couple of years, relative to where it had been starting around 2012, and so a little bit of a positive change, although it's not been as good as it has been in the past, in particular in that sort of 2012 and 2011 range, but I do want to note here that this is another one where you can kind of see a really broad distribution of sizes, anywhere from ten inches all the way to well over forty inches.

We've seen actually a fair number of small gag grouper, and their sizes have increased over time in this, in these last four or five years of the survey, and so we do love seeing small young gag grouper come into the survey, but I should also note that our average size of the gag grouper that we've caught in the last three years have been below both the minimum size limit and their size at female maturity.

Red grouper tends to be more southerly, and, actually, a funny little split distribution, with hotspots off of Florida and then again off of North Carolina, and their abundance in the survey, and especially in the catch, has been very, very low. In the video, it's been hovering around the long-term average, but I think that's really because of sort of lacking that time period in the 2000s, when they were much more abundant, and so you don't quite have that contrast in that shorter time series of the video index, but, again, there's a little bit of an uptick in these last couple of years, with both the catch and the video, that might be some cause for some optimism.

Then, similar to what I mentioned with the gag in the last couple of years, we do see a little bit of some smaller size classes in the catches for red grouper, with a little bit of indication of those fish getting a little bit larger in the last year or so, and averaging right around that minimum size limit and the size of female maturity.

Almaco jack, they've actually become more increasingly abundant in the survey, and so the last couple of years is the first time that we've been able to create an index of abundance for them for the trap catch. They tend to be more outer shelf and mid-shelf, and sort of center in the survey region, and so you can see that increase in abundance in both the video and the catch in the most recent ten years, and so it's been something that's a little bit different for us, and learning to dissect them has been a fun new challenge, if you've ever dissected an otolith out of a jack, and you can also see that in the filling out of that size distribution, how many more jacks we've been encountering in the most recent ten or fifteen years.

Then our last grouper we'll talk about today is scamp, another one that's a little bit isolated, and fewer hotspots, although they're pretty widely distributed throughout the region, and our catches - - Sort of long-term time series from the catch has been low, but, from the video, with that shorter time series, without that long-term contrast, it has been hovering right around the long-term mean, and so, from a catch standpoint, it's been stable, but low. The video, it's been stable. We have seen some small scamp in the most recent couple of years, and so small groupers might be consistent, and might be optimistic. We'll see in a couple of years.

I do want to mention a couple of video-only species, greater amberjack and mutton snapper. These are species that don't enter the traps very frequently, but we do see them on video, and so I wanted to note the video indices for greater amberjack. They have been increasing in the last several years. We don't currently have length compositions from videos, at least not enough to present at this point, and then the same for mutton snapper. We currently don't have enough for length compositions for mutton snapper, but those have been increasing as well.

All right, and so I just want to note a couple other things, because I think Amy mentioned it, and we might have some questions at some point. One of the things that we did, this past year, was work with other surveys to collect fin clips from black sea bass for an east-coast-wide genetic structure analysis, and so we worked with CHESMMAP, NEAMAP, the NMFS bottom trawl survey, the SEAMAP coastal trawl survey, and our genetics group at SC DNR has worked up those samples, and they actually sent Chip the final report, and some updates, the other day, and they will be presenting those results at the October SSC meeting.

2025, it's going. This year, we have been using the Palmetto, the Savannah, and the Lady Lillian. I think Amy mentioned that SEFIS has been joining us on a lot of our trips at DNR, and that's because the new Science Center vessel wasn't ready, and so we were able to provide time on the Lillian and the Palmetto, to sort of fill that gap, and then we've also been working with Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute for the southern expansion. We weren't able to get out in the field this year, because we didn't quite get the permits, the vessel, and the personnel all lined up at the same time, and so we'll try to tackle that early next year.

Coastal trawl survey for a couple of other species, before I wrap up, and this is, again, funded through the SEAMAP South Atlantic Program. It's a stratified random sampling design, with

latitude-based strata. These are fixed stations, and they're pulled randomly each year. Currently, we're targeting 102 stations per season, with two seasons, sort of a spring and a fall, and our big thing was, in 2024, we changed vessels and gears, and so we've calibrated for that change, and so, if you're interested in more of that, there are some details here, but, effectively, we've kind of created this thing that we're calling a Webster trawl.

It's a high-rise flat net, with the same mesh sizes as before, to create, you know, basically what we were doing with the mongoose trawl, and so we're correcting that with net geometry, and we're also doing a zero-inflated negative binomial standardization, similar to the SERFS indices.

In 2024, the vessel was a little bit delayed getting in, and so we had a reduced sampling effort in our spring season. We had a full sampling effort in our fall season, but we did get a pretty good coverage of stations in the spring, and so we went ahead and ran it as normal for analyses, and so, first, I'll start with our two mackerel species, king and Spanish. This is king. We tend to get age-zero and age-one king more than anything, and so this is a really good recruitment index, and that's how we've used it in stock assessments.

We typically see the biggest hotspots for king mackerel off of Florida, and then again in North Carolina, and then, because this is a recruitment index, it tends to be pretty noisy, with lots of peaks and valleys, and, in 2024, we saw a bit of a peak in king mackerel abundance relative to the last couple of years.

Spanish mackerel, they tend to be a lot more abundant overall in the survey, compared to king mackerel, and, again, it tends to be primarily age-zero and age-one, and they're a lot more broadly distributed, all the way up through Cape Lookout, and we had a really abundant year for Spanish mackerel last year, in 2024, relative to about the last ten years.

Then, moving on to our penaeid shrimp, our most common penaeid shrimp is white shrimp, again very broadly distributed, similar to Spanish mackerel, with hotspots throughout the region. We also get a really broad distribution of sizes, and our white shrimp catches have been increasing in about the last ten years, although pretty variable, probably because of things like temperature and storms and runoff, and things like that.

Brown shrimp are our second most common species. Primarily our hotspots are off of North Carolina and Florida, and mostly North Carolina, and our abundance was a little bit lower last year compared to the most -- To the last couple of years, compared to about eight years prior to that, and then our last penaeid shrimp that we encounter is pink.

This one is a lot more sporadic, a lot more isolated to North Carolina, and specifically off of Pamlico Sound. It's a little iffy about whether or not to use this data for assessments. It typically has not been used for assessments, because of how sporadic our catches of pinks are, really variable, and we tend to don't -- We don't encounter them very frequently, or consistently, but our catches last year were a little bit up, but also a lot of variability in that catch. All right, and that's what I have for you all, and I'm just going to play some videos while you think.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tracey. That's great.

DR. SMART: I'm happy to answer questions.

MS. MURPHEY: Anybody have questions? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, first a comment. This is one of the things I look forward to most every year, and I know it's not an official index of abundance, but I can pretty much track what's going to come out of a stock assessment based on what we see here from you all. It's almost always reflective of that, but I also understand the nuance, and why it isn't, but so I really appreciate it.

This is more of a general question for everyone, but sort of the red porgy slide really -- You know, we're just in this place with red porgy that's so frustrating, and I wanted to remind everyone that, at the Mid-Atlantic Council meeting in, I don't know, June or May, or something like that, they had a presentation on unmanaged species that were showing up in their landings, and red porgy was like the number -- The second-most abundant species showing up in their landings, all of a sudden, and I think that's a big change.

I don't know how, in the future, there's a way to sort of figure out what they're seeing in their surveys north of Hatteras, and if they're seeing more, so we can start getting an idea of whether or not it's a shift in the species or we're still in trouble down here, but I think it's just worth noting.

DR. SMART: Yes, and, I mean, we can certainly talk with the NEAMAP group. We definitely are connected to them, and talking with them more and more. I don't know how much red porgy show up in the trawl. That's always the problem, and then there's the problem of combining across the traps versus trawl, because we don't necessarily know the effective area sampled by the traps to combine across those two. We can certainly do relative.

Then, for triggerfish and red snapper now, there's an estimate of what that sort of -- You know, that space is drawn from, from the work that Nate Bacheler has done and the work that Jeff Buckel has done, to estimate that, and so, you know, if we can pull that for other species, or repeat that sort of thing, it gives more power to combining across. I think that is one problem, and I know there have been discussions about traps as an option, or video as an option, for other regions, in order to sort of bridge that gap.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I understand. Like I think the sort of science of it is very complicated, but, if you all are in communication anyway, maybe what might be interesting, like when you come back next year, and I don't want to put more on your plate, but like, hey, I, you know, in this year that we've been doing this, I also heard from my colleagues, you know, north of us, and they're seeing more of -- Like you all are in communication of maybe things -- Maybe some things are moving south, and I don't think so, but like it doesn't necessarily have to be something we can put into an assessment, or anything like that, but just sort of anecdotal information that's shared, so then we can -- When we're looking at research priorities, or things like that, it helps us understand what's happening.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Kerry. Other questions for Tracey? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Two questions. For species like gag, where you don't sample a lot of larger fish, do you do any measurements of the size of fish using video? Is it a selectivity issue, or are they just not present, I guess, is the question.

DR. SMART: So we have had four-foot nurse sharks get into the traps. We have had six-foot warthog grouper get into the traps, and literally have to be cut out of the traps, and so they can certainly -- Animals can get in, and what was it? A forty-two-pound red snapper basically went up to the funnel, turned sideways, and basically shoved their way in and around, and looped in. There's a great video of it somewhere. I should have just brought it.

There are certainly big things that can get in, if they want to, but, at the same time, I don't know how many things are interested in coming out of their rock and going into a trap for a menhaden. I don't know what I -- I should not anthropomorphize fish, but so there -- We did in, and I'm trying to remember, 2019 and 2020, and a little bit in 2021, but SEFIS put stereo cameras on a select number of traps, to test them out and try to get some measurements.

We've never had funding for anybody to actually process those fish, or those videos, because it is labor-intensive. We had MARFIN funding to do that in 2022 and 2023, and then a little bit in 2024, just to wrap that up, and, again, it was very labor-intensive. I don't know how many gag we managed to get measurements from, because it requires seeing them on the video, and then also having them in the correct orientation to get the measurements, and, especially for something that hangs out in a crevice in a rock, it's a lot harder to get them in the correct orientation.

At least with red snapper, black sea bass, vermilion, and even scamp, they usually are out and about a little bit more, to give you more opportunities, and so I think, for gag, it's going to be a little bit harder, and we're really going to have to put a lot of effort to getting more stereo cameras in the water in order to get that.

MR. STRELCHECK: Then the second question is, for species like sea bass or red snapper, that are trending either down or trending up, you're using a heat map for a five-year average. Have you looked at it over like a longer time series and seen, for instance, shifts in the distribution and abundance of species based on the same scale?

DR. SMART: Yes, and so Vecchio et al. 2025 published a black sea bass distribution paper, or a paper that included black sea bass distribution, and it was effectively that they had shifted out of Florida. Whether that was a constriction just out of Florida, versus, you know, going beyond that was another matter, but that's one of them, and we can certainly do that.

We can do five-year blocks. We could do something more. You know, I know some of those indices, like bass indices, can output those things. They're just time-consuming to do, and so it's an output versus product thing. I think, if we got it up and running fast enough, we could certainly do those as part of a standard, and then Nate Bachelier published a red snapper paper, but I don't think he looked at it over time.

It was more of a general red snapper distribution, and so red snapper has -- Just eyeballing it, they've definitely spread out, compared to where they started in like 2010, where it was mostly Florida, and, you know, those hotspots have spread out a little bit, and then I think we've pulled together some of those maps from just the trends report over time, to show how that's shifted through the five-year blocks.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair. Tracey, I appreciate this presentation. I know we work together, but I'm really jealous sometimes of how much sea time you guys get, and how much office time and travel time I get, and so thank you for your time, and you really do showcase the need for that long-term monitoring, and how essential it is, but this idea of also the need for expanding that sampling through the council's jurisdiction, both north and south, and I was curious, from an anecdotal standpoint, if you could give us a little bit of an insight of what you guys saw last year, during that 2024 SEFIS recon to the northern expansion, if anything, please.

DR. SMART: Yes, and, before I do that, Chip just yelled at me, Smart at al. 2020. I forgot my own paper. We did look at the distribution of red porgy over time, and it actually hadn't changed through 2020, and so thank you. Yes, and so the SEFIS recon, and so sea robins. It's a lovely area for sea robins. There were some black sea bass, and a few other things, but, man, it was a lovely place for sea robins, but there was some other hard bottom. There was -- So, just north of that turn around Cape Hatteras, there was some hardbottom that looked like the rest of the South Atlantic. Once you got beyond that, it just didn't quite look the same, and that was a little bit more sea robin land.

MS. MURPHEY: Any more questions for Tracey? Go ahead, Clay.

DR. PORCH: Thank you for this, Tracey, and it's certainly been a great partnership between us and Tracey and South Carolina DNR, and I think, you know, we're looking to expand south as well, all the way to the Florida Keys, and so this could really be a marquee index for us. It gets a lot of species.

One of the things that you mentioned, Tracey, is that it takes about a year to read all those videos, and so a question, and how many species are you reading them for? I wonder, you know, if you read, to its full potential, if it takes even more than a year to read all that, and then, second, if you could comment on where you think we are with the automated image analysis. I know we're a bit ahead in the Gulf, from the Science Center's perspective. We can already do it for red snapper, and probably gag, and we're real close to being able to do it for other species. It's just a matter of getting the cloud computing resources in place, but I wonder if you could comment on that, from the SERFS perspective.

DR. SMART: Yes, and Wally might correct me if I'm wrong, but they're probably reading, what, about two dozen species from the video, because they're reading the jacks, the groupers, several snappers, because there are things, like mutton snapper, that typically don't trap, but they're excellent on the videos, and all the species that we do catch, other than the smaller things, like scup and tomate.

I think the automation is good. I think they're -- So, on the Gulf side, I don't think -- I think we have some species that the Gulf side hasn't trained their system on yet, that we have to develop training sets for, like black sea bass. The diversity of redfish also makes it really difficult, especially when redfish are mixed in with redfish, like the porgy and vermilion snapper mix-in in a school. I think that makes it particularly hard.

I don't know. I think, honestly, if we could dedicate time to it, I think we would probably be closer, but I can certainly check in with Nate about that, but I think that would definitely be a way to go. Talking with Ted Switzer, you know, red snapper and red grouper, it works pretty well on.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Well, thank you, Tracey. I think everybody always enjoys your presentation every year, and so thanks so much for coming. I think, next, we've got the dolphin management, with Cassidy Peterson. Is she online? I think, John, you're handling everything, and so we'll go ahead and hear about the MSE, dolphin MSE, from Cassidy, and I think Tom Carruthers, too, and so we'll go ahead and let John get this pulled up. Cassidy, are you there?

DR. PETERSON: Yes, and can you hear me?

MS. MURPHEY: Hi there, Cassidy. Are you there?

DR. PETERSON: Can you hear me?

MS. MURPHEY: You might need to unmute on your side.

DR. PETERSON: Can you hear me? Hello?

MS. MURPHEY: Hang on, Cassidy. I don't think we're --

DR. PETERSON: I'm trying. Testing. Testing.

MR. HADLEY: Sorry, Cassidy. We're working through some technical issues on our end, I think, but I see that you have your mic unmuted, but we can't hear you.

DR. PETERSON: Okay. I unchecked automatic volume and noise processing. Does that help?

MR. HADLEY: All right, Cassidy, and could you try speaking again? They can hear you on the webinar, but not in the meeting room.

DR. PETERSON: Can you hear me now?

MR. HADLEY: There we go. That's it.

DR. PETERSON: Great.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you. Now, if you'll hold on one second, I'll get Tom unmuted, and then we'll get underway here. Tom, I just unmuted you.

DR. CARRUTHERS: Hi, guys.

MR. HADLEY: We can hear you. Perfect.

DR. CARRUTHERS: Perfect. Awesome. Thank you.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you. All right. If you just give me just one minute, I'll bring up the presentation, and we'll get underway. All right. I'm going to turn it over to Cassidy here in just a minute, but, just to tee this up, this discussion item is for the council, and Cassidy is going to go through an overview of the management strategy evaluation, and sort of the revision phase,

and so there's a couple of slides in here that kind of queue up discussion questions for the council, and so we'll pause for those slides, to gather your feedback.

Once Cassidy is done, the idea is to run through just a kind of quick sneak peek of the MSE modeling results relative to Regulatory Amendment 3 that you requested, and so these aren't final results, and it's just kind of a quick overview of what you'll be seeing in the future, and Tom will be presenting those, and so, without further ado, Cassidy, I will hand it over to you.

DR. PETERSON: Excellent. Thank you so much, John. Thanks for saving some time for us to chat about the dolphin MSE, and, whenever you're ready, John, next slide, please. So, just to be very clear, with this presentation, we're primarily looking for feedback on the MSE timeline, which it might be good to change a little bit, so pay attention to that.

We want to get feedback on operating model structure and uncertainties. We would love to be able to sign off on operating model uncertainties today. We also want to present some management objectives and performance metrics and get sign-off on conceptual management objectives today, and sort of outline what a management procedure structure could look like for dolphin.

As a reminder, the purpose of this MSE is to build an empirical management procedure, and so that is an indicator-based management procedure, where we do not have a full population dynamics model. This is sort of thought of as a fully specified recipe for how we set the ACL for dolphin, and it could be based on an indicator of relative abundance.

We want to make sure we simulation test it with MSE, to make sure that the MP that we choose is robust to uncertainty and that it maximizes, to the extent possible, stakeholder-defined management objectives, and so what this management procedure could look like for our region is a management procedure that essentially estimates the amount of dolphin that will be available to the South Atlantic, and, you know, the entire Atlantic by region, in each year and then it comes up with a way to sort of maximize the utilization of those fish across sectors and across regions.

We presented a draft timeline in December. We had requested some additional meeting time with the council earlier this year, and this is a revised timeline, reflecting where we're at in the process. We've come up -- We've encountered some technical issues with the data. We needed to re-pull the data, and so we are a little bit behind in the process, but we also want to make sure that we have sufficient opportunity in front of the council to complete each step of the MSE, and make sure that we have sufficient feedback, and we get your feedback in a meaningful way.

Originally, we had hoped to finish this process by spring of 2026. We're going to need to edit the operating model a little bit, and so, instead, we're proposing that, at this meeting, we're getting some sign-off on operating model uncertainties, and reviewing some performance metrics, and we're hoping to come back to the council in December to sort of refine the management procedures, and adopt any performance metrics, and then we want three opportunities, if possible, to present management procedure options, sort of refine the management procedure itself, choose the top-performing, or preferred, management procedures, and then an opportunity for final action to adopt the preferred management procedure.

We're proposing this so that we get sufficient opportunity for scientific review for the SSC, and ensuring that we have a CIE review, and so this is a little bit of a different timeline than we had

presented last time. We're hoping that this is suitable for everybody, because we would really be doing ourselves a disservice if we didn't get sufficient opportunity to fully consider each of the management procedures, but, at this point, this is optional. This is just a draft proposed timeline, and we are open to feedback on it. I don't know if we want to pause for any feedback on the timeline right now, or if we can do that at the end, and maybe we'll do that at questions.

MS. MURPHEY: I was just going to say let's do it at the end, and so thank you.

DR. PETERSON: Great. Perfect. This needs to be a fairly complicated operating model. It needs to really reflect the important population dynamics for dolphin, and all of the really important fishery dynamics for dolphin, and so this includes a lot of the feedback that we got from stakeholders in the in-person workshops, and with our small stakeholder group, and we also want to be able to accommodate potential uncertainties, or, you know, possible dynamics, especially that might be changing in the future, and we want to make sure the operating model can measure the key performance statistics that we want to get out of the operating model, and so it is a fairly complex operating model that accounts for, you know, this list of requirements here.

This is a diagram of the MSE process. You can remember that the operating model is the hypothetical simulated dynamics of the stock and the fishery. We build multiple operating models to encompass uncertainty, and then we apply the management procedure, which includes the way we collect the data, the way we analyze those data, the control rule that characterizes how we adaptively adjust management recommendations, based on the perceived state of the stock, and the way that those management recommendations are implemented with any key uncertainty.

Everything in green is sort of the management procedure. That's what we're working on building, that pre-agreed-upon fisheries management recipe, and we are designing the management procedure so that it meets objectives for the fishery.

Management objectives reflect what we want to get out of the fishery now and in the future. We use these management objectives to define whether the management procedure performed well, or whether it performs poorly, and we do that by quantifying the management objectives into performance metrics, and we're calculating them from the operating model.

This involves a process of taking conceptual management objectives, something like saying we want to maximize catch, and quantifying them into operational management objectives, which could be something like we want to ensure that catch in each year exceeds some minimum threshold with at least 60 percent probability for each year for the next ten years, and so we want to be able to put hard numbers on that, so that we know exactly what we are calculating from the operating model.

One of the questions we asked our stakeholders in our workshops and in our small stakeholder group is about what are their objectives for the fishery, and the key objectives are listed here. They want to ensure opportunity and prevent fishery closures. They prefer to catch large sizes. They generally, though this was not universal, but they generally preferred stability in regulations, and there were clear regional and sector differences in management objectives. Some regions prioritized improving consistency and reliability of the fishery. Others wanted sort of area-based catch limits and payback measures. Some regions preferred conservation objectives, while others

were more focused on maximizing landings, and some regions were open to considering size limits, whereas others were not.

In general, when we conduct a management strategy evaluation, we typically consider performance metrics that account for stock status and safety, yield from the fishery, and population or catch stability, and so these are some primary management objectives that we always consider, and so these are listed here for what we're proposing to include as conceptual management objectives, or performance metrics, for the dolphin MSE, but we also want to include a metric measuring catch rate, fishing effort, or opportunity, and the size of the fish caught, and we have the capacity to measure these metrics over the short, medium, and long-term time horizons.

With that, maybe if we can pause, on the next slide, and ask if we have -- If we can sign-off, possibly, on these management objectives and use them as performance metrics for this, or if we are missing anything.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Cassidy. Anybody want to provide any input on these management objectives and performance metrics, or is everybody accepting of these? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Hi, Cassidy. Andy Strelcheck. A question about status. How are you defining status in this case, because, obviously, with the population range, we wouldn't have like a status determination criteria to manage by.

DR. PETERSON: Yes, and that's a great question, and it's something that we can discuss more when we operationalize these management objectives, but, typically, we would think of something like the biomass and fishing mortality rate relative to their MSY benchmarks. That's typically what I would think of.

We could also consider -- I sort of lumped safety in with status, but we can separate out safety as another metric, and usually that's, you know, flagging when the population falls below some minimum threshold level, and those will be defined with manager input, based on appropriate levels for the stock.

MS. MURPHEY: Anything else, Andy? Any input? Is everyone good with these objectives and MPs? I see heads shaking, and so, at this point, we're good with that, Cassidy, and we can move on.

DR. PETERSON: Excellent. Excellent. Great, and so we will sign-off on these as conceptual management objectives, and we'll be in touch to operationalize them next time. Another decision point is what uncertainties should we include in the operating model grid, and so a reminder that, when we are creating an operating model, we are making a hypothesis about the underlying dynamics of the population and the fishery, and, anytime we don't know something, or we need to make an assumption about something, we have the opportunity to build multiple operating models that reflect those assumptions or uncertainties.

So, you know, one example here is the red and orange sort of circles. One key uncertainty for dolphin is going to be the level of removals, and so we can build three operating models, one with low, one with medium, and one with high removals, and we can test candidate management procedures across all of them, to make sure that, even though we don't actually know the exact

true level of removals, we're building a management procedure that will successfully manage dolphin, in spite of that uncertainty.

We typically categorize the most important axes of uncertainty in the reference set, and sort of sensitivity uncertainties are put in the robustness set, and the important distinction is that we use the reference set to tune or calibrate the management procedures, and so we make sure that, in the reference set, all of the management procedures are meeting our management goals, whereas the robustness set is sort of a sensitivity test, where we can use to differentiate between top-performing management procedures, and we can use the performance of our management procedures in these robustness operating models to inform exceptional circumstance protocols.

In speaking with stakeholders, they identified some key uncertainties to consider, and levels of removals, including U.S. recreational and international magnitude of removals, was a key one. They proposed alternate movement patterns. They suggested that some management would be challenging to enforce. They suggested some, you know, biophysically and anthropogenically driven changes to catchability or availability, the impact that economics play on fishing effort, and they also highlighted post-release mortality and depredation.

We have tried to sort of characterize some of these uncertainties into these that are proposed here. I think, you know, we might have some additional uncertainties in mind that maybe didn't make this list, but we've separated them preliminarily into reference and robustness operating models.

The reference operating models so far preliminarily include uncertainty in natural mortality. This is a key scientific uncertainty for the stock, and so we'll have a low and a high level of recruitment, and a level of sort of resilience and steepness are typically included in any MSE. We need to think about different assumptions on productivity and resilience, and spatial distribution, and so what has been observed in the data, and potentially as informed with expert judgment, and movement viscosity, and so how likely are the dolphin to move from one region to another.

We've also highlighted some robustness operating models. The one key one is uncertainty in removals, and this includes MRIP uncertainty and uncertainties in international removals, and so some examples of what we could look at are catch reconstructions that include estimates of unreported fishing, or don't include unreported fishing or changes in unreported fishing every year, as well as, you know, an MRIP potential bias, or a misspecification, in observed recreational removals.

We also want to consider future non-stationarity, to make sure that we're building a management procedure that will be future ready, and so we're considering shifts, gradual or knife-edged shifts, in future recruitment, potential changes in distribution, and key changes in availability and catchability, and these can be by region or they can be a shift in the variability in some of these parameters, and we also have some key life history parameters.

We've included changes in somatic growth rate, condition factor, and natural mortality right here, but we also might need to include post-release mortality as well, and so these are some proposed uncertainties for the robustness case, and so next slide, please, where we can pause, and this is another decision point. I would love to have some feedback, and potentially a sign-off, on what are the most important uncertainties, and where should they be categorized, in the reference operating model or the robustness operating model.

MS. MURPHEY: Any thoughts? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I don't have a thought, but I'm about to show how not smart I am. Cassidy, can you explain again -- I'm trying to make sense of the difference between like movement, viscosity, distribution shifts, and changes in availability and catchability.

DR. PETERSON: Yes, and that's a great question, and I know Tom is here, and so maybe Tom will want to chime-in on this. Spatial distribution is sort of when we are building the operating model as an aggregate over space, and so, when we're fitting the operating model, it's non-spatial, and then it gets segregated in space, and so how we sort of apportion fish into space is sort of the spatial distribution component.

Movement is when the operating model is running, how likely are fish to stay in one place, or whether they're likely to move, sort of follow the movement pattern of the Gulf Stream and move from one region to another. Changes in availability and catchability could be related to how easy it is for fishers to catch, like related to catch rate, and so, you know, a lower catchability would result in a lower catch rate, and that could be a result of reduced availability. Does that help?

MS. MURPHEY: She said it helped. Okay. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: So, obviously, because we don't have a stock assessment for dolphin, I'm just trying to think of what are some of the things that we look at relative to sensitivities and things that we model in. I don't see anything relative to reference OMs that jump out differently to me. The stock moves, and so there is at least that part of the migratory patterning of it, and so, in looking down those lists, the robustness OMs -- I think the difficulty, because I remember this even with dealing with HMS with sharks, that international catch kind of alludes us on a lot of things, and so, again, these are kind of things that you're just building in.

How well is dolphin picked up through MRIP, and that's another question that kind of goes in, and so I don't necessarily think that they're a bad robustness check, and so I'm just giving feedback. I don't know if it's just to kind of get the conversation around the table.

Then the non-stationarity, obviously, this is a kind of new field for us to talk about. It's been -- You know, since black sea bass and some other things, it's just now starting to come into our vocabulary, and so, if these are things that are tied to non-stationarity, and they're things to look at, then I don't see any reason to assume that it's not an okay list of things.

DR. PETERSON: Great. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Carolyn. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks again for the presentation, Cassidy. A quick question. When you're talking about the OMs, and you referenced sort of that uncertainty level, and then you had kind of those bounds, are the values that you provided in some of those level ones and level twos dynamic in nature, or those sort of like what you have already put in as your goalposts as you move forward, and so two slides back.

DR. PETERSON: Great question, and so those numbers are not finalized, but I think, most of them that we are putting in, they will be fairly static, and so they'll be constant over the simulation for that entire operating model, but those numbers are subject to change. Natural mortality values will come from primary literature. Recruitment level will come from, you know, values that dolphins have experienced recently, or across all the years. You know, steepness are things that there is some literature to suggest potential values, but we'll generally keep them rooted in scientific plausibility, if that makes sense.

MS. MURPHEY: I'm going to ask our two data folks, that seem to be most familiar with data statistics and everything. Carolyn and Amy, are you all comfortable with these? I know Carolyn brought up the international thing, but that's something to just play around with, and so is every -- Go ahead, Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I mean, I'm going to look to Clay. I mean, are there other things in stock assessments that we use that are part of these -- You know, again, as we're looking at sensitivities and things like that, I mean, is there anything else that you could think of, in a general sense, if you were doing stock assessment, that are things we should be considering?

DR. PORCH: Yes, and so, I mean, it's a pretty good list here. It's just, you know, the devil is in the details of exactly how you're doing it, and what they're trying to accomplish here is, you know, given what we do know about dolphin, set up a model, or a whole slew of models, operational models, and then, within that context, you'll eventually run various harvest control rules hinged to, you know, an index of abundance, or what have you, and then see how well that achieves your objectives within this simulated framework.

The beauty of it is we don't have to get it exactly right. We just want to get some ballpark scenarios for how we think dolphin behave, and, again, if, in that range, we come up with a harvest control strategy that works pretty well, we might guess that it probably works pretty well in real life, and so it's like we don't have to know what MSY is, and we don't for a dolphin, but we can develop simulation models that have that.

Having said that, to your point more directly, looking at a reasonable range of natural mortality, stock production scenarios, and that's with productivity, steepness, and recruitment and all that, I don't know if it's -- It's probably a hard thing to ask the council to weigh-in on, the details of that. I might reframe it to say are there any -- Is there anything that you all know about dolphinfish, some characteristic of the way the fishery operates, that you would want to make sure gets incorporated in the simulation model?

I mean, the short answer to Carolyn is I think they've got it covered, more or less, but there might be something that you know, as people who are familiar with the fishery, that you just want to make sure is incorporated, and, if you articulate that to Cassidy, she can figure out how to make it happen.

DR. BELCHER: So, specifically, like this is the first time, to me, I'm thinking about a sensitivity that allows for looking at spatial distribution and movement viscosity, right, and so it's the idea of the lingering -- The issues that we have with the migratory patterns relative to the fishery with Florida and North Carolina, and is that kind of what those are designed to get at, and so that's kind

of a build-in of something that we haven't generally seen in a stock assessment, but would like to see, and so that's kind of what you're looking for there?

DR. PORCH: That's exactly what we're looking for.

MS. MURPHEY: It makes sense to me. Anybody else? It sounds like everybody is good with this. We heard -- We had some good conversation with the statistician folks. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I'm good with the reference OMs. I guess I had a couple of questions for Cassidy, just so that I fully understand the robustness OMs, and so it looks like you're taking kind of two approaches. One is knife-edge changes that would occur five or ten years out, and others would be gradual declines, or increases, and remind us. Is that over the entire thirty-year time series that you would be increasing or decreasing things on an incremental basis?

DR. PETERSON: Yes, and so, you know, the proposal, and these are sort of very tentative ideas, and we can play around with how we exactly characterize changes in future recruitment, or changes in availability or catchability, but, generally, I think what was presented was, you know, like a 1 percent increase per year for the entire projection period, or a 1 percent decrease. That number could be anything we want it to be, and there was also the idea of sort of knife-edge shifts, and so future recruitment that may be shifts down in your projection year-five, or projection year-ten, something like that, but just to characterize whether we could still manage through a drastic shift in recruitment.

MR. STRELCHECK: Okay, and, just to be clear, for a knife-edge shift, if it happened in like five or ten years, then the remaining or twenty or twenty-five-year time series would just be modeled based on that lower recruitment level?

DR. PETERSON: Exactly. Yes.

MR. STRELCHECK: Okay. So, I mean, I think you've captured a wide range. I mean, it certainly provides a lot of variability. I guess my one concern is the, you know, how realistic are some of these shifts, and, obviously, none of us have crystal balls to determine what the future might hold, and so, you know, obviously, adequately capturing the range of possibilities is critical here, but is there anything that can -- That you've based some of these robustness OMs on that resulted in the percentages that you picked?

DR. CARRUTHERS: I can chime-in here if you would like, Cassidy.

DR. PETERSON: Yes. Go ahead, Tom.

DR. CARRUTHERS: So it's all about what the purpose of the robustness operating models is, or why are we using them, and, really, one of the most important uses is to distinguish between management procedures, like simple rules for management, that you thought were perfectly okay in the reference set, and now you're exposing them to this additional test, and so there's much less burden on the robustness operating models to be exactly the right projection of something, exactly the right gradient.

What you're really interested in is does it reveal a performance difference between two management options that you like the look of, and so what really matters here is do they reveal that something is likely to behave substantially better than another management option in this projection, and so the use of it is less about what's scientifically -- We really don't know, for example, what these shifts are going to be in the future, but what the onus is here, the focus is on here, is whether or not it allows you to distinguish between two otherwise suitably performing management procedures for the reference set, and so while I agree totally that we want to choose things which are roughly credible, I think the purpose of it is slightly different, and therefore it's more about that idea of stress testing.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tom, and so I guess our decision is we'll keep this, our OM uncertainties, at this point. Is everybody good with that? It seems like, as long as Carolyn and Amy are good with it, I'm good with it.

MS. DUKES: Cassidy, just one more quick question, and so, when you're setting these reference OMs, you really want to be thinking about what has already transitioned within the fishery, and so how have the changes in availability and catchability leading up to right now -- How are those being placed into the reference OMs, and then also then into the future non-stationary ones?

DR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, and that's a great question. You'll actually see some of that in the next slides, where we show the fit to the historical index, but what we were able to do was capture the historical shifts, both seasonal and amongst areas, that were informed by a VAST model, and so we did manage to capture historically pretty well, and then we were able to preserve the seasonal behavior and the spatial behavior in the future, and so then it's really a matter -- If we're dealing with distributional shifts, it's just a matter of putting a certain percentage more, or having a certain change in the future, in sort of additional to what we've already captured, and so I think we did the historical thing pretty well.

I think our base case projection is pretty credible. The question, which you may be getting to, is how on top of that do we add changes in the distribution, and that would be about literally adding a percentage of some sort or weight to one of these areas. Let's say you had a northern shift, and you would have an increasing weight towards that area, which would be dragging fish away from southern areas, and so that's how it will be done, but it will all be done whilst preserving what we know about their seasonality and their -- Roughly their inter-area distribution. I hope I'm making sense.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy says yes, and so, Cassidy, I think you've got your answer, and so do you want to move on?

DR. PETERSON: Yes. Excellent. Next slide please, John. With this MSE, we are trying to build an empirical management procedure, and so remember that this uses an indicator, like an index of abundance, to adjust management recommendations, and so, basically, in its most simplistic form, you know, if the indicator goes up, then we can assume that the underlying biomass has gone up, and we can increase allowable catch, or adjust management recommendations accordingly, and so there are -- This table just shows a couple of examples of what a management procedure archetype might look like.

There are, you know, index rate outputs, or inputs, where we're modeling, or we're limiting catches, or limiting effort in some way, to try and maintain a constant harvest rate for the fishery. There are index target control rules, where we basically identify a target level of the indicator of abundance, and we adjust management recommendations to achieve that target, and there's also slope, index slope, management procedures, just as an example, where you basically get your index to something, to some level that is sustainable, and you try to maintain a constant slope, like zero, if the index is at a healthy level.

These are just some examples, and there's a lot that we can do, a lot that we can feed into the management procedure, and Tom will talk about that in a minute, but I also want to highlight that we are working on building in the capacity for Amendment 3 scoping, and we'll talk about that in a sort of subsequent presentation on the back end of this presentation. This is where I pass it off to Tom.

DR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, and I think this is what you wanted me to present on. Okay, and so you've got a problem that's common to a lot of fisheries, in that you really want to have management that can, you know, achieve your objectives, but you want to have responsive management, you know, and you want something that's going to be able to make the most of fishing opportunities you have in a sustainable way, but you've got this problem that it's very difficult to specify and defend a stock assessment.

One approach which is taken, which is sort of increasingly applied, is MSE, and the number-one objective of MSE is generally to establish a simple rule for management that is responsive, but, instead of getting all that complexity to into the assessment model, you have a simple rule, and you test it against a whole bunch of different scenarios, which we've just seen described as operating models.

What I was asked to present to you guys was a very simple, and in many ways exaggerated, demonstration of what this could look like, just so that you can start to think a little bit more about how you would potentially want a responsive data-driven management rule to look like, and so, in this slide, you have four areas, four of your management areas, up the coast here, and, in fact, they're going down the coast, from left to right, and, in the top line, you've got biomass.

That's what's really there. That's truly the biomass. In the middle, you've got an index, which is an observation of that biomass, and, at the bottom, you've got a catch that's been specified, and, in fact, this is going to be an adjustment to the catch relative to what your last year -- The first year before you even started this exercise, and so let's just talk this through.

Let's just say now that the year that you're going to try and set the TAC for is 2024 to 2025, and let's look at the first column on the left. The first index that we see is lagged. The biomass has happened, but our data are lagged, and so the second row down has actually got a year less than the top row. We're now going to set a TAC in that year for the subsequent year, and you can see that the blue line, in that left-hand-most column, is actually slightly below the previous index observation in 2022. It's slightly lower, and, in this example, all this simple rule is going to do is it's going to have a downward adjustment that's in proportion to that.

For VBM, this first column, the index went slightly down, and, in this pessimistic scenario, we also then adjusted the TAC down by the same amount, and you can see, as you read across the

columns, there have been other adjustments in the other areas, and so this is an area-based catch limit rule. In NNC, in the year 2023, our index, on average, went up a little bit, and so our TAC also went up a little bit for the year 2024.

The observant amongst you will see that these points are actually by season, because we have seasonal model. All we're going to be using here are these blue lines, which is the average index in the year before, and, if we go to the next slide, we can see a progression of this, and so one more slide, and so it's been total drama here in this particular scenario for VBM, and we've had a large reduction in the index. Our blue line in the middle panel, and this is the left-hand-most column, has stepped down, and now our catches for 2025 are going to be less than half of what they were in 2022, a very extreme and pessimistic scenario.

For NNC, index levels stayed roughly constant, and so we kept roughly the same TAC, and so what we're looking at here is just an example of a highly responsive, and many would say overly responsive, management rule, and you can see, all the time, the decisions that we're making about our catch limit are feeding back into the system, and they're affecting the biomass at the top, and so this thing is responding. Every year, it's seeing new data, setting a limit, and responding, and then the last update to this slide.

There we've had four years of projections, four years of catch limits, that have moved exactly in step with the change in the index. It's not a particularly optimistic scenario. It's quite pessimistic, but, were it to happen, this is what this management procedure would have specified, and, of course, we could have another management procedure which doesn't adjust it as much, or one that keeps it more constant, and so on. The rule itself is the thing that we're trying to find. That's what this MSE is about, trying to find a rule that we like the properties of, essentially, or managers would like the properties of.

Okay, and so let's have a look at a more optimistic scenario. Now that we know how to read this chart, we can go a bit quicker. Let's step forward here to the next slide, and so, in this particular example, there was an absolutely massive increase in the observed index for NNC. That's the second column along, and we had a huge increase in our catch. It's roughly the same pattern for the Florida Keys, FLK, and this is the southern part of Florida region, and so let's step forward again, and let's just see the last one as well.

What we've been able to see here is a completely different scenario, where, in at least a couple of these two regions, we've had much greater availability, and, therefore, our regional catches have been specified higher. Now, no doubt whatsoever that this is a very simplified example, with a very, very responsive management procedure, to sort of highlight how they work.

We could, for example, have a more damped version of this, and so, if you go to the next slide, you can see something that's responding, but now it's only responding by half as much as the index is changing. Really, there are all kinds of different management procedures that we could specify, and you guys can, obviously, have and provide feedback about ideas and things that you would like for these, but, for the most part, they have a couple of properties.

One is that we know they're responding to data. Another is that they represent opportunity, and that can differ between regions in some years, and so on, but, also, what we're doing is we're testing them for future scenarios that we're not saying are going to happen. We're saying, what if they

happen, and this can -- The analogy that's always used for this, the analogy that's always used, is pilots.

We don't know what the weather forecast is, but we do know that one pilot, for example, flies well in a simulator under heavy crosswinds, with bad light levels, you know, for long distance flights, over this other pilot, and so we can have confidence that they're going to arrive safely on time and so on. We're trying to find that pilot. We're trying to find a way of navigating an uncertain future that's very likely to provide us with the kinds of management outputs that we're -- The management objectives that we're looking for, and so that's the whole idea of these responsive tracking MPs.

Really, they're providing you something that a stock assessment provides you, but they're providing it much more simply, a much more simple rule that can be updated every year, and, moreover, unlike a stock assessment, they can be tested to see how well they do under all these scenarios, and so you can end up with quite a lot of confidence that whatever you end up with is something that should perform pretty well, and management confidence is a nice thing to have.

In terms of managing to fit the index, we do have a spatial index available, made using a piece of software called VAST, and what that does is it takes the U.S. longline data and summarizes it in space, and now here's the aggregated one, and so our fit to that was reasonably good. We've actually got better fit subsequently than the one you're seeing here, but we were able to capture the scale of this reasonably well in the way that we've fitted our operating models.

You could have an MP that responded and set a whole coastwide ACL if you wanted to, for example, but you could do it this way. Here are three areas for which we have a VAST seasonal index, and we have it actually for all of our areas, and here's the fit to the simulated spatial model. This is the one that has got movement and viscosity in it, and what this was able to do was capture the magnitude and the variability of biomass in each of these areas, and then capture it for future projection, and so what we could do is, instead of having some aggregate ACL for the whole stock, we could do it as I showed you in my demonstration, having a rule that operates more individually, and more regionally.

You know, we could have a rule that modifies a coastwide TAC, and then allocates it according to regional availability, and we could mix and match, or we could just have very stable catches, that are like today. What matters really is not so much the rule, but what its performance is, what gets us what we want to achieve, and, actually anything goes, really. As long as you guys can implement it, and as long as it can provide you the outcomes you want, really, you can be -- You know, you can do anything you want with these rules, and try and come up with something really interesting.

Stuff that we could do is we can smooth out the index data, so we don't have these big jumps. If you've got multiple indices, and so, for example, for one area, and you might want to use the adjacent areas as well, and you could combine those indices, and so you could use the index for your area, and a little bit of information from either side, and you can set maximum and minimum changes. You guys might say, realistically, we don't want this thing to go up and down by more than 10 percent, let's say, in any one year, and you can set regional limits, if you wanted to, as well.

There's absolutely no reason why you can't use other inputs, and so you could have your length, or you could have your index, but you could include also something like mean length, and there's no reason why this just has to be something that affects a catch limit. You could also affect your regulations, and so you could alter your bag limits, size limits, and trip limits also in response to data, and so you've got the possibility here to do something really neat, and have some confidence that it's going to be able to navigate these future scenarios.

One of the reasons why we're not showing you more formalized outputs here -- I want to let you know that we have actually constructed this whole thing. This whole machine is actually operating from start to finish right now, but we want to go back to the start again, and just do one last pass through the whole thing, where we update the spatial definitions, because we've had some issues with the way -- Difficulty in interpreting the raw data, and so there's going to be an adjustment, but, essentially, what you guys need to know is we've actually built all the structure of doing this thing.

I think it's very likely that we're going to need to include a careful consideration of missing catch. I think this has been alluded to by Cassidy. We need to finalize those robustness operating models, and get those codified, and it would be really nice to have, to show you, next time you see something like this, some of those rules that I just showed you, the ones that are responding. It would be nice to show you how a few of those different things work, and what the costs and benefits are. If you make it vary less, what do you give up, and what do you gain, you know?

The way that we want to present that is in a little tool called mahiMetrics, where we'll capture all of those performance metrics, and we'll be able to calculate those really easily, and then present them to you in an online interactive app. That's an app that you guys, or anybody else, can go to and have a look at what happens when you change things. Like you choose some operating models, or you choose some MPs, and you can go ahead and actually get involved in it, and have a look at the results so that, you know, nothing is being hidden from you, basically, and you'll get to see the whole thing running and working.

There's a huge amount of work that's gone into this, and so this is just the standard acknowledgement slide, but an enormous amount of work and collaboration to build the datasets and develop this framework so far. We're in really good shape, but we just want to get it right, and so there's been this emphasis to try and just do another pass through the raw data, and, of course, some people have left, but contributed massively to the start of this, like Matt Damiano, and so a huge thanks to everyone on this slide. Cassidy, are we taking a pause, or are we carrying on?

DR. PETERSON: I will leave that up to staff in the room. Should we move on?

MR. HADLEY: Yes, and I think we're going to keep moving along, and jumping over to the other slides.

DR. CARRUTHERS: Okay, and so it's a lot of talking from someone with a strange accent, and I'm sure you guys are like, you know, it feels a bit overwhelming. The good news is that we've built a place you can go to get all of the updates on where we are with this, but also the information on how this project has been coordinated, and also all of the decisions that have been made about

constructing things like operating models, and exactly what we mean by performance metrics and so on.

There's a splash page. This is -- If you had to save any link to do with this project, if you have any interest in staying up to date, copy this link, and maybe someone can put it in the chat, because you can just go there, at any time, and read up all about it, and we'll try and keep this up-to-date, with all the information on it, and that includes how to install software, if you want to play with this yourself.

Of course, there's a real interest now in evaluating some of the proposed regulatory changes in Amendment 3, and the good news is that, in other places, we have already built the framework for doing this, and so you are concerned with -- Next slide. So you're interested in considering different minimum sizes, and you're also interested in modifying bag limits and vessel limits for dolphin, and there's absolutely no reason why this MSE framework can't be used for that.

It's actually perfectly suited to that problem, and not only that, but we can actually show you how resilient or not it is to all of these different scenarios, and so it's not just an evaluation based on today's best, or most credible, scenario for dolphin.

You can also see how well these things would operate under, you know, radically different scenarios for something like growth, which could interact with, for example, a minimum size limit. More recently, in California, I developed bag limit models, statistical models, for allowing you to evaluate different bag limits and vessel limits, and the way they work is by getting lots of raw data and fitting models to those. Okay, and so what's being proposed here? Actually, I think, Cassidy, this is your slide, if you want to comment more about the backdrop to this problem.

DR. PETERSON: Sure. You're doing great though. We put forward a proposed action plan last time to use the MSE to compare status quo management with some of the management actions that were proposed in Amendment 3, and the proposal basically said we're going to use the base operating model, or a narrow set of reference operating models, to test out sort of how status quo management performs, which is listed here, compared to a few alternate static tactical management actions, like expanded minimum size limit by state and sector, including modified daily recreational bag limits by sector, and modified vessel limits by sector, and I do want to emphasize that building this capacity into the MSE actually is a very big ask. Tom had to go back into, like he mentioned, raw trip level data to be able to characterize this, and so I just want to preface his work by mentioning that this is a tremendous amount of work.

DR. CARRUTHERS: Okay, and so one of the things we wanted to create, when we made this package was a thing called mahiMP, and, what mahiMP is, essentially it's set up to do what you do right now. It just does exactly what you do right now, and so you can run the MSE, and it just gives you the results, but you can tweak all of the components of your management procedure.

For example, you could have one of these dynamic TAC rules, if you wanted, like ACL rules, but you can also change the trip limits and bag limits, and you can also change the size limit, and you can do that by area, and you can do it by fleet by area. You've got absolutely total control of your spatial management system, and you could do all these things in combination.

So if, for any reason, you particularly wanted to like increase an ACL, but, you know, decrease the bag limit, whilst having a size limit, whilst saying we don't want to have any more fishing people in the water, any more effort than we have today, you could do all those things, and so mahiMP is set up as a way of allowing scientists, and other people that are interested in getting results and stuff, by tweaking or making modifications to your current management setup.

Size limits are dead simple, because it's already built into the MSE package that we're using. Everything below there is thrown back. We're not retaining them, and the post-release mortality is imposed on them that you assume.

Bag limits and trip limits are way harder, because they depend on the distribution of catch rate that you get, and so a trip would be like a boat going out, and you get an MRIP dataset, and it tells you here's the distribution of outcomes you get, and so people are getting lots, and some people are getting not very many, and what we're trying to do is characterize that distribution of catch per trip, so that we can say, if you were to put in a bag limit, and let's say fifty-four fish, every trip above that wouldn't catch and retain fifty-eight, and they would be at fifty-four, and so four fish have gone back, and those four fish have gone back with this post-release mortality.

What you need to do is have that distribution, and you've got to fit to that distribution, and then what you've got to do is have that move around as the abundance goes up and down,, and so, when there's high abundance, you're going to get many more fish per trip, and then the fraction you put back from the bag limit is going to be higher, and so you've got to have all that working dynamically in the model, and I'll spare you the boring details, and it's hardcore, and like it's really quite tricky to codify, but we've done it and we've got a system running, and, yes, maybe there's some things we can do with those models, but I'll show you a slide now that'll explain a bit more.

Basically, in this one, we've got a not very good fit, but an example fit to some data. Here we are in quarter four for the southern for-hire fleet in this North Carolina/Florida area, and what we can see, with the black line in this figure, is the distribution of catches that were observed, and then what we've got is a fitted, in this case, negative binomial model to that, and so what we've done is try to capture it, and maybe we've done a good job here, and maybe we haven't, but what these models are trying to do is predict the fraction that would be put back if you had a particular catch limit.

In this example, not very many fish would be put back with a trip limit of say forty or fifty, in this particular case, but, in a situation where the abundance is higher, the mean of this distribution would move up, and we would actually start to throw back more and more fish. They wouldn't meet the bag limit regulation, and so we have these five steps. We have to get that trip level data, we have to characterize it by fleet and area, we have to characterize that distribution, with this kind of red line, and then we have to predict, you know, how much of this is over that limit, and you'll be able to predict how it changes as stock size changes.

You send all of that back as a release rate from the management procedure, and so we can do all this stuff. We've done it before, and, in this case, it just depends upon us getting all those data, the trip-level data, and that's something that we've been working on, to make sure we've got all of the data that's available, and I think -- I don't really want to talk anymore about this, because I think it just gets in the weeds, but the point is we can do it.

Whether it's a trip-level data like this, or an individual's bag limit data, we can do something credible and empirically plausible to evaluate those regulations, but I don't want to get into the weeds. I know we've got other slides that get into the weeds, but I think we can just move past those, and so next slide there.

What are we doing next? One is we've got to update these spatial definitions. We want to make absolutely sure that we've got defensible boundaries for characterizing the density of dolphin over a quarterly time period. There's no point in them being too small, because the fish just go straight through there, and what we're characterizing that area is just fish that are actually in other places a lot of the time, and so the areas have got to be the right size, and they've got to make sense with the data that we've got.

I think we definitely want to consider additional uncertainty axes, like operating models that deal with scale, and we want to nail down and provide defensible simulations and management procedures that include your Amendment 3 scenarios, but all of this is -- Basically what we've done is we've demonstrated we can actually do all of this, from start to finish, and so we're in a very good position. What we're trying to do now is just do the best job we can at creating something defensible, so that, when goes in front of a CIE reviewer, you know, it's something we can feel confident in presenting. I think that's everything I want to talk about, I think, but there's going to be more on this.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Tom and Cassidy. Tom, you sound very excited. Actually, you and Cassidy sound very excited about this.

DR. CARRUTHERS: It's a cool case study. It's a cool case study.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and that's cool, and so did you need any more input from us? I know you said something about the timeline, but I think we gave you all the input you needed as far as your robustness sets and your other set.

DR. PETERSON: Yes, and that's good, but, if there's thoughts on the timeline, we would love to hear that, but we would like to extend it a little bit.

MS. MURPHEY: Does anybody -- I think everybody seems to be fine. I think -- Kerry, do you have something?

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, I was actually -- Not to put her on the spot. She's walking back to the table, but if she's fine with the timeline. I just know that she's getting pressure. I don't know what you two are getting from your respective constituents about, because remember that this has been tied in with where we were going with other management, or where we were going with management.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and we were talking about the timeline.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and part of my concern is it's hard for me to figure out exactly what we're doing at all these different council meetings. I don't know that we could go any faster. I mean, sure, based on the research, which I guess is the next topic on the agenda, those research papers, it seems like other people are noticing some of the declines that we had been talking about

in Florida, and so I guess, when I think about the timeline, I was curious to see what other folks thought about those papers, but, even if we wanted to do something sooner rather than later, I don't understand how we would put that, you know, in the middle of this timeline, and so that's, I guess, my confusion here.

MS. MURPHEY: John, Walter, did you want to speak?

MR. HADLEY: John, you're unmuted on this end. You're self-muted. We're not hearing from you.

DR. WALTER: Okay. Can you hear me now, John?

MR. HADLEY: Yes.

DR. WALTER: Thanks, and I just wanted to go over a little bit of a rationale behind the timeline, in terms of how it fits into the council process and why we think that it's not necessarily -- I mean, we do need a little bit more time, but, also, the time that we think is going to be really valuable for the council to get really three bites at the apple, and that's really what the council does with any other management action, is there's the initial part of it, there's the initial looking at it, and then there's evaluating alternatives, and then there's selecting a preferred alternative, and then there's final action.

That's really where we think that it's going to be valuable to get those repeated engagements, to be able to really distill down the alternatives into what is a final action that the council can be confident in selecting, and that's really what the schedule is outlining, and so, actually, I think that that's -- I just wanted to point out that it fits into the process probably even better than here's a final product, and now do something with it. It's here's interim products, and let's refine it, and can we get a little more yield, or can we get a little more stability? It's fitting into the objectives of the council each time, and then maybe retuning the management procedure to achieve better the objectives, and that's the rationale for those repeated engagements. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John. So at this point, is everyone comfortable with this timeline, and we can -- Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I guess I'm fine with the timeline. I just -- I'm just wondering when we're going to -- I guess, on furthering the timeline, when we're going to see something that I understand. I guess that's the short form, and I just had to say it. I mean, it's -- I've been involved with this through the whole time, and I know I'm slow, but it's just trying to get down, and I don't understand a lot, and I'm going to ask some more questions, but not now, but I guess I'm fine with the timeline, but I just -- I don't understand how all of this is going to work.

MS. MURPHEY: I understand you, Dewey. I get it. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: One more thing on the timeline, and so, I guess in my mind, when I look at our workplan -- I mean, that's a lot of council meetings that we're bringing this back to, and I didn't know that we had budgeted coming back that many times, and so I don't know, and I guess that's just something to think about when we see the workplan, too.

MR. HADLEY: So one more comment, and then kind of a question to Cassidy, and maybe John. You know, getting at the timeline here, and the sort of I would say almost two potential actions on the council side, in the near-term, looking at Regulatory Amendment 3, and having the MSE inform that, I, at least in my head, and hopefully I have this correctly, you know, that's one item. Then the larger MSE, with the management procedure, is another.

I don't want to -- I mean, I kind of pose the question to Cassidy, and others at the Science Center, but could those specific modeling outcomes for the size limits and -- Well, for the retention limits and the size limits be presented quicker than what's on the board, or what's on the screen now?

MS. MURPHEY: Cassidy, any thoughts on that, because that seemed to -- That would really work out really well for us on our -- You know, on moving on this, and so your thoughts on that?

DR. PETERSON: Yes, and my thoughts are absolutely we can present Amendment 3 scoping earlier, and so, I mean, I'll have to -- I'll have to confer with Tom before I make any promises, but once we -- Once we update the spatial areas with the new data we've recently pulled -- Again, as Tom already said, the infrastructure is there, and it's done in a way that anybody else can pick it up and run it. We don't need Tom to be, you know, slaving away at his computer running a bunch of different scenarios, and so, once we fit the operating models with the new spatial areas, that's something that can be run fairly quickly.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. That's good news. I see people are glad about that . I'll get Chip, and then Carolyn.

DR. COLLIER: Cassidy, thank you for this presentation. I think it's very helpful. One of the things I'm looking at on there is I see a CIE review after the SSC review, and I think that should be reversed, where it's going to be the SSC providing the catch level recommendations based on the CIE review of the procedures, and so I think that one needs to be reversed. You might want to get some of that scientific guidance from the SSC in advance as well, and so I'm not certain how you want to do it, but we might have to put another SSC meeting in there after the CIE review. Does that make sense?

DR. PETERSON: It does make sense, yes, and I've made a note of it. Thank you for that.

MS. MURPHEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Chip, you went where I went too, because part of me too is I'm thinking about the process where we're doing identifying these management strategies, right, and, if we get too far ahead, and something happens in the CIE review, where does that leave us going forward? I almost feel like the CIE -- If you guys have a product, and it seems like it's pretty much running and good to go, it seems like the CIE should be looking at that now, before we start trying to apply it in Amendment 3 and then find out the CIE says it's not sufficient enough, or whatever. I mean, I'm just going to the -- Unfortunately, the alternative of what could turn out in the CIE review, and then where are we left with Amendment 3?

DR. PETERSON: Thanks for that feedback point . Point well taken. The CIE review is not scheduled yet, and we do have time to move it around, but we do want to make sure that we have the opportunity to kind of finalize the new spatial structure, with all the operating models, before

we move forward with the CIE review of the MSE framework. The CIE review is going to be on the framework, and not necessarily on the management procedures, to make sure that the MSE itself is valid, and a useful tool for developing those management procedures.

DR. BELCHER: Cassidy, I kind of understand that. It's just that, as you're looking at the management procedures, we're doing advise and revise like three times before it ever makes the CIE review, and so the spatial part I kind of get, because that is kind of us fine-tuning how big, and where the coarse cut is going to be between a north and a south, or a latitudinal split, but I just feel like, if we get to that management procedure part too far, and it blows up, we're kind of going to be stuck.

DR. PETERSON: Yes.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. John, do you want to move on to the discussion of the TOR?

MR. HADLEY: Yes, and so there's a draft motion that's been typed up for you, and it relates to this timeline and so, in the fall, the SSC will be reviewing portions of the MSE, including the terms of reference, and so the idea here is the SSC will review it first. However, these terms of reference need to be approved by the council.

To keep this moving along in, you know, a similar format to what's on your screen, what I put together is a draft motion, and, essentially, what this does is it allows the council chair and the Dolphin Wahoo Committee chair to approve the terms of reference for the MSE after the SSC has approved them in the fall of 2025, and so it's kind of a procedural matter, if you will, but, if the council is willing to entertain it, it will help adhere to that timeline, rather than coming back to the Full Council in December and asking for your feedback on the terms of reference, which, you know, you lose potentially a month or two in that process, and so just trying to keep the ball rolling, so to speak, and, there again, kind of adhering to the slide with the draft timeline.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, John. Would someone like to make this motion? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I guess, kind of procedurally, what that would mean then is that the council chair and the Dolphin Wahoo Committee chair would need to listen to the SSC meeting, to make sure that they're understanding what the SSC is proposing, and then, from there, determine whether the TORs are sufficient, and is that --

MR. HADLEY: Yes, and so I think that would be helpful. Additionally, the SSC notes, and what's coming out of the draft report, would be provided to the chair and the committee chair, and so the chair and committee chair would have the SSC's feedback in summary form as well, and so what's going to go into their report that will be presented to the council in December.

DR. BELCHER: Yes, and I'm kind of a little bit of putting work on two people that I probably shouldn't, but I, just think relative to the conversation, if there's questions that come up, that the SSC has, or, in the conversations, there's questions that come up from the council side, it would be better to engage it there, wouldn't it, I mean, because you've got the full SSC at that point to talk to the measures that may come up. I'm just trying to make sure that the two folks feel

comfortable with what they're being asked to look at. I don't know what the TORs are going to look like, and so that's why I'm saying that.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: So, Carolyn, when you were nominating other people for work, it made me think I could nominate you potentially for work as the SSC liaison. It might be good that the SSC liaison -- Because they're likely to be at the meeting, and most engaged in hearing it, and so I'm glad I could share the wealth, if the council thinks that's a good idea.

MS. MURPHEY: I think it would be a great idea, because I would probably contact you and ask you, what do you think of these anyways, and so yes. Thanks. All right. Now would someone like to make the motion?

DR. BELCHER: Just because I'm making work for you all.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and go ahead.

**DR. BELCHER: I propose the following motion to allow the council chair, Dolphin Wahoo Committee chair, and SSC liaison to approve the terms of reference for the dolphin MSE upon review by the SSC in the fall of 2025.**

MS. MURPHEY: I've got a second from Kerry. Any discussion? Any objection? You guys are killing me. **The motion passes.** All right. Thanks, everyone. I appreciate everybody hanging in, and this running late. Again, it was my fault, because I didn't turn the page over, but we are going to just go ahead and put off discussion of the journal articles until tomorrow morning, and, at this point, I will adjourn for this evening, and then we'll immediately go into closed session, and if everybody could leave, with the exception of the council and Monica, that would be greatly appreciated, and John. We're adjourned. We'll come back in session at 8:30 tomorrow morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on September 15, 2025.)

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SEPTEMBER 16, 2025

TUESDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Council Session I of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the North Charleston Marriott, North Charleston, South Carolina, on Tuesday, September 16, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Trish Murphey.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, I guess we'll go ahead and call the meeting to order, and I'm excited to introduce Eugenio Pineiro Soler, the Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries. He's going to give us a few comments, and so welcome Genio.

MR. SOLER: Thank you, and good morning, council. I was a Council Member for twelve years. I spent ten years at the helm, as the chair for the Caribbean Council, and so I've known some of you, John and many others, for many years, and I feel very comfortable here, because this is where things get done.

When I started fishing, and I'm a third-generation fisherman, and there was no such a thing as a council, and no such a thing as science. It was just go and fish, and things have changed, and I believe they have changed for the good.

Let me explain to you that, after thirty years of commercial fishing, and a lack of engagement with any management regime, now we've come to a point where the most important -- Still the most important things in this equation are the fish and you guys, the fishermen and the anglers, the conservation sector, and that's the most important part of fisheries. Science and management came in later, and they have adapted in the best possible way, but we have to place ourselves in a reality, and that is that, nowadays, science is moving much faster than management.

This administration has two priorities, science and fish and the stocks. That's the most important thing, and that's where we're going to put our money. We're putting our money there, and let me remind you that we have good stocks, and we have solid science, and we have good management, and, we're trying to improve every day, but, as I told Senator Sullivan a few weeks ago, when you have a good economy, like we have this nation, and when you have good stocks, and when you have good fish management, we control our destiny. We do, and so, from there on, it's a matter of keeping up the pace.

Of course, that's easier said than done. We have to balance the interests of commercial, recreational, conservation, others, and so it is a duty. Sometimes people do not appreciate what we do here. I was just telling John that, after ten years managing, being chair in the Caribbean, I don't have too many friends, because you have to take decisions. You have to take decisions as a manager, and it's nothing personal. You have to take decisions to make sure that we keep it sustainable.

The worst thing that can happen to a commercial or a recreational angler, and in particular my friends from the recreational sectors, because, even though I was a commercial fisherman for thirty years, every time I go back home, I go with my son, and my cousins, and we're anglers. The worst thing that can happen is there's no fish in the water, and so, when there's a lot of fish in the water, you can manage the rest, and so it is our duty to keep our focus of having healthy oceans and having a good communication with the people that we represent.

I was telling the Deputy Secretary that the council system is where the ocean meets the reality. The real thing in here is the fish and the fishermen and the anglers. The rest is something that we do to manage that, and so the councils, the council members and the councils and the commissions, are where we meet the reality, and we make things work, and we create a moment where, at one point, we have to decide that it's a common element, and that we have to share it, and we have to avoid user conflicts, and we don't only manage for us, but for the future generations.

Sometimes, when I refer to recreational angling to people outside the United States, I tell them that it's not only the industry, and it's not only the boats we build, and it's not only the gear, but it's the mental health component of going out on a weekend, on a boat, and going out there, and your spirit

and your mind are with the people you love, the people you like, and all those things together make us better managers.

When we put all that on the commercial side, it's a livelihood. It's what keeps this nation moving. Yesterday, the President asked us for a budget that we're going to start buying only American seafood, and so that's where we're heading. This administration, we put -- First is the American industry, which includes recreational, and it includes commercial on equal footing in here, and we are going to be working, for the next four years, to make sure that you guys have the resources, in particular the science.

With our science -- If we have the best armed forces, the best health systems, why can't we have the best science, and the best fisheries management system, that we already have, and so it's a matter of keeping the good job that you've been doing, and making sure that you put the same passion that I saw yesterday in this meeting forward in a time of change, because there are changes in NOAA, as you know, and there are changes in science, and there have to be changes in management, because we need to move in a more swift manner.

Deregulation includes a more nimble -- Our stakeholders want better science, better management, and this administration is going to support you to give this to the American public. With that, I leave you, and I leave you with the words of Senator Ted Stevens, who was a friend of mine. I met him with Hogarth and John Oliver, who recently passed, and Stevens told me that Magnuson was not designed to manage fish. Magnuson was designed to manage also people. This is what you guys do. You've got to manage fish, and you've got to manage people. It's easier said than done, but good luck.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you. Thank you so much, Genio. We appreciate you being here this week. Does anybody have any questions for Genio?

MR. CARMICHAEL: We have a few minutes, and so if anybody had any questions or comments, and I thank you, Genio, for that. It's certainly good to hear the support for the council system. I think that's really important, and, you know, I brought back the message from the CCC to the council, and I think the council members, you know, really support that, and recognize the need to manage our fisheries even with a more nimble, and hopefully more efficient, agency, with, you know, less reliance on extremely complicated models, and that sort of thing, and being able to work, as we heard yesterday, on simpler models, and hopefully more timely information for the decision-makers around this table.

We certainly look forward to working with you and the agency to figure out how we get there, when that's kind of a different direction than we've certainly seen the science enterprises go over the last decade, and so I think that's a real challenge before us, but we're glad to have your support. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Anyone else have any comments or questions? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, sir, and we are excited that you're here, and, yes, we all agree with what you say. We can do -- We just have to keep picking the bar up, and being more efficient, and in smart. I was on the S-K panel, the fishery panel, and our last meeting, in the spring, was postponed, and so could you tell us what's going to happen with S-K funds? Are we still going to

get those to help for marketing and things like that? Could you tell me where we're going with that?

MR. SOLER: Yes, and that varies from year to year. The S-K funding, I participated in that project a few years back, and it's very good. It touches the lives of many people. It goes through the budget, and Congress controls that, and so sometimes there's a little bit more, or a little bit less, and we are bound by what Congress decides to give us, and so that's out of our hands. That's the nature of the political system, but, whenever we can, we use them in the best way we can, but that changes every year, from year to year.

MS. MURPHEY: Anyone else? Okay. Well, again, thank you so much.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Genio, you'll be here for dinner tonight, as I understand it?

MR. SOLER: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: So we're looking forward to that for sure. It's a good chance, folks, to, you know, catch up with him, a little one-on-one.

MR. SOLER: Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you so much, Genio.

MR. SOLER: Thank you. Thank you for having me.

MS. MURPHEY: All right, everybody. I think we're going to -- We didn't get a chance to go over the research papers on dolphin, and so I'm going to go ahead and turn it over to John, who is just going to briefly summarize these research documents.

MR. HADLEY: Thank you, Trish, and so this was the last item on your agenda yesterday, and so we're playing a little bit of catch-up here, but I wanted to go over this request, and why we're discussing it, really, and so, to take a step back to the June meeting, as you recall, you received the Dolphin Wahoo Advisory Panel Report, and, as part of that report, the advisory panel discussed Regulatory Amendment 3.

One of the things they were asked, in doing so, since it had been a few years since they had reviewed it, was is there new information that's come to light that you want to bring to the council's attention, and so, in that discussion, several of the recent research papers that have come out were brought up by the AP, and so the three that we'll go over, very briefly, are Damiano et al., which was published in 2024, Rudershausen et al., which was published in 2024, and Runde et al., which was published in 2025.

I'll just provide a very high-level overview of those. I did want to note that if, you know, after this discussion, if you want to want to take a deeper dive, there are links to the paper, each one of these research papers, embedded in the document.

Also, if you want to see the researchers discuss their work, you can go to the council's webpage here. If you go to Meetings, and then down to the SAFMC Seminar Series, all three of these

authors did present on fairly recent seminars for the council's seminar series, and so Trends in Dolphin Lengths Caught in the Southeastern Recreational Fishery, and that's the one that covers the latter two, and then the Damiano et al. paper was recently -- Well, it was from last year, and that was presented at the seminar series in August.

So, again, all these include a recording of those presentations, and so, if you click on it, you can go there, and there's a little -- If you click on this icon, that will bring up the actual presentation of the papers, and so, you know, a couple resources there, again, if you want to do a deeper dive into them, but, you know, at the -- I will say, at the June council meeting, as part of the -- This is why this is coming to the council now, is, at the June council meeting, there was a request to summarize this, and bring it to the council at the September meeting, and so that's kind of what -- To orient you, that's where we are now.

I'll start off, and I'll just, again, provide a quick overview, looking at the Damiano et al. paper, which was published in 2024. It used the VAST model, which you heard about yesterday, and it was sort of the foundation, if you will, and a similar model that's being used in the dolphin MSE, and they -- This paper looked at spatial and temporal dynamics of geographic and seasonal dynamics of dolphin in the western Atlantic, and it looked at different regional indexes of abundance, and the main data source was looking at U.S. pelagic longline data.

The time series that was used was 1986 through 2022, and, really, sort of the take-home message, towards the end was the relative abundance was fairly stable through most of the time series, and so 1986 through 2018. There was a fairly stable overall abundance estimated by the model, with a declining trend in the latter years, and so 2019 through 2022 saw a declining trend overall. The exception to this was looking at the waters from Cape Hatteras through Georgia, where the abundance remained fairly stable. The authors discussed this, and they stated that high fishing pressure, in concert with changing ocean conditions, may be responsible for the recent decline in abundance.

Moving on to the Rudershausen et al. paper, this paper looked at -- It was published in 2024, and it examined recreational fishing tournament data in the Southeast, and so looking at North Carolina, South Carolina, and Florida sportfish tournament data, and it examined the average lengths of dolphin that were weighed, that were brought to the scales, at those tournaments.

In four of the five tournament datasets, there were declines over time in the average lengths of males and females that were brought to the dock at these tournaments, and there was -- In one of the -- There again, four out of five, and, in one of the tournament datasets, there was no change in length observed.

The authors noted that declines in the dolphin size could have ramifications on the population's ability to reproduce, and so it could have reduced individual fecundity of -- If you see smaller individuals, reduced fecundity of those, of dolphin overall, and availability for them -- The production of the stock, essentially, reduced production ability of the stock, and so the authors noted that causes in the size decline could be due to fishing effects, environmental effects, or a combination thereof.

Finally, the Runde et al. piece looked at evidence for declining dolphin numbers, numbers of large dolphinfish in the western North Atlantic, and so this really focused in on North Carolina data.

This study used citation data, and so the good kind of citation, for a trophy fish, and it looked at citation-sized dolphin and wahoo in North Carolina, and so citations issued by the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, and it looked at fishing effort data as well.

This paper examined -- It sort of came up with a catch per unit effort metric, if you will, looking at the effort it would take to catch a citation-sized dolphin or a citation-sized wahoo, and so, from the time series here, from 2000 to 2023, the authors noted that a substantial increase in effort was seen to catch dolphin of citation size. Overall, a fourfold increase in effort required to catch citation-sized dolphin, while there was no such trend observed for wahoo, and so sort of a flat trend for dolphin, but an increase required in effort for citation-sized dolphin.

Kind of comparing and contrasting, the authors are trying to eliminate, or address, confounding issues, such as changing social norms, as far as the variation in the findings between these two species, and the authors noted that the decline for dolphin are likely related to increased exploitation of stock, and so that's kind of the high-level overview. Again, there are resources there to do a deeper dive into each one of those papers, and I'm happy to turn it back over to the council.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, John. Does anybody have any questions for John? All right. Seeing none, I think we will go ahead and jump into our informational session on state management. We'll be hearing from quite a few folks today, starting with Andy from the Marine Fisheries Service perspective, Carrie Simmons, from the Gulf Fishery Management Council, Jessica from Florida's perspective, and then also hearing from Bob on ASMFC, and so I will turn it over to Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: You're actually not be hearing from me this morning, other than to provide some color commentary. Heather Blough is here. She is my Acting Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries, and was heavily involved in the development of the Gulf Program, and so she'll be presenting to you today.

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

MS. BLOUGH: So good morning, everyone. I'll get us started with a fairly high overview of state management, to set the stage and hopefully provide some helpful context for the presentations to follow, and so let's start with legislative authorities. Both the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act provide frameworks for state and federal coordination and collaboration on managing federal water fisheries.

The Magnuson Act authorizes states to regulate their own state-registered vessels in federal waters, in situations where a fish stock isn't federally managed or their state laws and regulations are consistent with a federal FMP or regulations. The act also enables the councils to expand that authority, through a fishery management plan delegation, with the support of three-quarters of voting council members, and this delegation provision in the act is the basis for the Gulf Council's state management red snapper program.

The Atlantic Coastal Act also provides several different governance structures for coordinating the management of coastal water fisheries across state and federal boundaries, and Bob Beal will speak to those a little later in this information session.

How does the Gulf red snapper program work? That program was established in 2020, through the Gulf Council's Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan, and it authorizes the Gulf coast states the ability to manage certain aspects of the private angler harvest of red snapper in federal waters.

Under the delegation, the council continues to set the management goals and objectives for the fishery in the FMP. They establish the catch limits, consistent with the fishing level recommendations of their SSC, and they allocate the catches between the commercial and recreational sectors, the for-hire and private angler subcomponents of the recreational sector, and among the states, in the case of the private angler catch limit, and then they also continue to directly manage the for-hire and commercial fisheries, through the reef fish FMP.

The states are required to set season structures for private anglers who are landing red snapper in their states, and also to establish a bag limit and a minimum size limit that's somewhere between fourteen and eighteen inches. The FMP also authorizes them to establish maximum size limits, if they choose to do so, and, in the case of Florida, Texas, and Alabama, they can request our agency to close all or a portion of federal waters off of their states, in order to extend the length of their state water fishing seasons, and that request is something that Texas routinely asked, as part of its state management strategy.

Our agency is still responsible for conducting the stock assessments. We implement the for-hire and commercial measures in the FMP, including setting the for hire fishing season every year and administering the commercial catch share program. We're required to ensure that the management measures that the states put in place for the private angler component of the fishery are consistent with the federal fishery management plan and to suspend a state delegation in a situation where it didn't implement measures for the private angler fishers or failed to address an identified inconsistency after noticing the opportunity to do so. Then, finally, we also implement the state-specific payback provisions that the council incorporated into the reef fish FMP, in the event of any unexpected overages.

There are several key questions to consider when designing a state management strategy. Naturally, one of the first is how you want to define, or divide up, your management area. The Gulf Council used a relatively simplistic state-based approach. Other approaches could define more regional-based models, where you define two or more regions in which multiple states collaborate in setting the management measures for those regions.

Other questions include who to include in the program. Limiting the Gulf Council program to only the private angler fishery was relatively straightforward, because the Gulf Council had already established separate regulatory structures for their private and for hire subsectors.

Obviously, doing something like that here would require decisions about how to allocate catch among those two groups, as well as among the states or regions, depending on how the program were ultimately structured. The allocation options the Gulf Council considered included options based on historical landings, and also based on the spatial abundance of biomass off their states. They ultimately chose to go with allocations that were generally consistent with what they had requested when conducting pilot studies in the years leading up to the state management program,

and most of those were based on catch estimates. There was one state's request that was based on biomass estimates.

An effective monitoring program is also a really critical component of a successful state management strategy, and, as you all know, Florida implemented the specialized Atlantic coast red snapper survey, back in 2012, to improve the accuracy of our in-season estimates for red snapper, given MRIP's limitations in generating estimates for those short seasons.

It will be really important that any new surveys developed to monitor and manage catches at a more local scale be calibrated, so that we can effectively compare catch limits to landings. We had to calibrate the Gulf surveys after the fact, which created some challenges, and so we're encouraging the South Atlantic states to proactively work with our recreational survey folks in developing and designing any new surveys, just to avoid any bottlenecks or problems down the road. Then, finally, it will be important to develop a good way to adequately address and account for any unexpected overages under the state management program through a good system of accountability measures.

The main benefit of a state management strategy is really the additional flexibility it affords us to better tailor management to local needs and objectives, rather than applying the typical one-size approach to regulations that we often use. It enables the states to adopt and adapt measures that really maximize opportunities for their respective fishermen.

The Gulf red snapper private anglers have really benefited from that additional flexibility, as state management enabled us to align what were really short federal seasons with the much longer state seasons that have become increasingly extended in the years leading into that transition to state management. We do expect that it may be challenging -- I lost the -- Thanks, Chip.

We do expect that it may be challenging to achieve similar benefits in the South Atlantic red snapper fishery until we're able to integrate new survey data into the assessment, to improve our understanding of landings effort and discards, and also find more workable ways to reduce discard mortality in the fishery to support higher catch limit recommendations.

Here, you can see the substantial difference between the Gulf and South Atlantic recreational ACLs. The private angler component of the Gulf's recreational ACL is about 4.6 million pounds, and that high ACL, as well as the development of new state surveys that reduced uncertainty about red snapper catch and effort, are two key factors influencing their ability to have those longer extended seasons in the Gulf.

Because we're already using Florida specialized survey to monitor red snapper catches here in the South Atlantic, we expect that higher fishing level recommendations will likely be needed to help us achieve comparable benefits under a state management strategy here with red snapper.

We are expecting the results of the congressionally-funded Red Snapper Research Program soon, and are hopeful that information from that study, as well as the information from the projects that Florida is conducting under its exempted fishing permits, will help to improve our understanding of the stock in a way that increases the amount of fish available to the fishery and in the next assessment.

So how do we use EFPs? So, in 2018, we issued each of the individual Gulf coast states an exempted fishing permit to test the effectiveness of their state management and data collection programs, through two-year pilots, and those studies really laid the foundation for the region-wide program that the council approved in 2019, and we implemented in 2020.

I think most here are familiar with the EFP process, which generally includes an application, a public comment notice, and then council consultation before we review the applications for consistency with applicable law and make a final decision regarding issuance. The key components of those Gulf Council, or Gulf state, EFPs were discussed and refined for about a year before NMFS formally solicited applications in the fall of 2017, and that pre-engagement was really helpful in streamlining the review process on our end.

When we received the applications in early 2018, we were able to notice them in March, and issue them in April of that same year, and so how quickly we could move on similar South Atlantic applications would depend on when we receive them, relative to the council meeting schedule, the complexity of what's being proposed, and related controversy, but we're standing by to assist and support however we can, and, obviously, we welcome pre-engagement in that process, to help us streamline the review process on our end, and that's all I have. I don't know if you want to do questions now, or wait until -- Some of the questions might be answered by the other presenters.

MS. MURPHEY: Is everybody good with just holding questions until the end of the session? All right.

MS. BLOUGH: Okay.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Heather.

MS. BLOUGH: Sure.

MS. MURPHEY: I think next up is Carrie, and she's online. Are you there, Carrie?

DR. SIMMONS: Good morning, everyone. Can you hear me, Madam Chair?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, we can. Loud and clear. Thanks, Carrie.

DR. SIMMONS: Okay. Good morning, everyone. My name is Carrie Simmons. I'm the Executive Director at the Gulf Council office. I've been working for the council for over eighteen years now in some capacity, and so I was asked to give you all about eight-plus years of history at the Gulf Council table, when we were working state management, sector separation, and discuss some of the lessons learned for red snapper. It's still very large on my screen, and I'm not sure if others are seeing that on the webinar.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and it's just it's filled our screen here, and so I guess it's just big on your screen, but I think it's okay on the webinar.

DR. SIMMONS: Okay. All I can see is the logo, and I'm not sure if others are seeing that like that. Okay. I'll go ahead.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Maybe you're zoomed-in or something, because it's looking like it's okay, and are you guys in the room seeing the slide on the webinar? Yes, and so it might be you're zoomed-in or something, Carrie.

DR. SIMMONS: No, and it wasn't that way with Heather's. It's strange. Okay. Well, as long as you guys can see it, and you can hear me. So, just to give you a little bit of history of red snapper management in the Gulf, historically, red snapper was overfished. We had a rebuilding plan that started in 2005, and the target rebuild was put in place to rebuild by 2032.

During this time, we've had multiple revisions to our rebuilding program, since 2005, and we've had management changes at the Gulf Council and so some of those, just to highlight, since the beginning of rebuilding, we drastically cut the quota, at the at the start of that rebuilding program. In 2007, the council put in place the individual fishing quota program for the commercial sector, and, in 2005, 2004 and 2005, we had some very major hurricanes that destroyed infrastructure, particularly in the northern Gulf, and disrupted many of the vessels that were shrimping in the northern Gulf of Mexico.

Our last completed assessment for red snapper was in 2016, and that was SEDAR 52, and we undertook a research track for red snapper, and that was SEDAR 74. I think, well over a year ago, that was not viewed lightly, or accepted, under the CIE process, and so we have now started -- That should say SEDAR 98, and sorry, but a benchmark process for red snapper, where we have tried to address the gaps that we had during the last research track, in order to move forward with an assessment.

Right now, the stock status for red snapper is not overfished, but still under rebuilding, and we're really just waiting for, you know, the results of this new assessment to be completed, but, again, still rebuilding, meaning that the older age classes, you know, particularly those larger fish, you know, eight and up, have not -- They're not at the biomass level that's needed to get the stock back out of the rebuild. Is this my presentation?

MR. CARMICHAEL: No, Carrie, it's not. It disappeared there for a moment. Okay, and so I think we're on this one.

DR. SIMMONS: Okay, and so these changes in start of the rebuild program worked, right, and so the stock rebounded. It increased in size, and that -- As that increased in size, we had an increase in average size of fish landed, and anglers had more access, and so we had higher catch rates, and so this is good news, right, but what this really resulted in is very short, shorter and shorter, federal seasons for private anglers. We went from 194 to just three days in 2017, and I have some tables here later that show some more of the seasons.

The federal for-hire fleet was unhappy. They did not want to be tied up, and we have a limited access program moratorium on the permits in the Gulf, and so they did -- They did not want to be tied up into this, and they wanted their own seasons be set, and so they wanted to be separated, and there was a lot of complex management, and a race to fish, and dissatisfaction overall with the process, the fact that the stock was rebuilding, and there were more fish out there, yet the seasons were getting shorter.

To take that a step further, and so, to just dig in a little bit more of a good thing gone bad, right, and so this is very difficult, as a as an angler, when you're not involved in the process maybe as regularly, to understand, you know, why, if you're getting increases in ACLs since 2010, is your access, your season, continuing to shorten annually, right, and so this is this is counterintuitive, and this was a huge struggle for us, and we had a time that we went through that the process -- It was really defrayed from this at this time, because fish that were being landed were much larger, and that contributed to the ACL being caught more quickly, you know, and contributing to the short season.

This pushed the states to go non-compatible, and so they had inconsistent state water seasons, which forced the National Marine Fisheries Service to shorten the federal season, and you can see that table I have there from 2012 to 2017 of the federal season for private anglers, which also included the state guideboats at the time, and then the federal for-hire season. You can see, in 2015, sector separation became effective.

Sector separation, again, is dividing of the recreational ACL, and that fleet, to the federal for-hire, which includes charter vessels and headboats, from private anglers and state guideboats, and that became effective under a sunset in 2015, but anglers had had enough. In 2017, the Secretary of Commerce intervened, and they added thirty-nine additional days to the private recreational season, for a total of forty-nine days.

A lot of words on this slide, but, just to give you guys a history of what occurred, regional management was actually initiated in 2012, and the council directed staff to develop a scoping document for a regional management system in the Gulf for recreational red snapper, and they wanted that discussed at their October 2017 meeting.

This became Reef Fish Amendment 39, and so this was started a long time ago, and a lot of people think about 50, but it was actually initiated -- Regional management, which became state management, was initiated in 2012, and so, in April of 2013, the council wrote letters to each of the five Gulf state directors, you know, asking if they were willing to consider, and potentially accept, delegation, because we also discussed a conservation equivalency, as well as delegation, but the council, at the time, was leaning towards delegation, and so they wrote letters to the states, you know, notifying them that there was discussion going on about this, and would they be willing to accept delegation.

In April of 2014, the council developed a regional management document and held a series of public hearings, after that October 2014 meeting, and then, at the October 2014 meeting, the council took final action on that Amendment 40, which I talked about, the sector separation, which apportioned the recreational ACL between the federal for-hire and private angling components for a period of three years, and so there was a sunset originally on sector separation.

In January of 2016 though, after public hearings, the council postponed further discussion of this amendment, and that, at the time, was Reef Fish Amendment 39, as there were other options for recreational red snapper management that they wanted to explore, and some of those, just to highlight a few, were Amendments 41 and 42, which looked at an allocation-based management system for the for-hire and for the headboats separately, federal for-hire and headboats separately.

Then, in December of 2016, Congress passed a law to move the reef fish boundary to the nine nautical miles for the three inner states which was Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, and that made them consistent for reef fish with Texas and Florida.

In 2017, in August, fishermen from different areas of the Gulf requested more flexibility in recreational red snapper management, and this became not regional management, but state management, Amendment 50. They wanted greater social and economic benefits to their particular area, and, as Ms. Blough mentioned, in 2018 and 2019, during the development of the state management amendments, the states worked through exempted fishing permits and pilot tested the state management program for the private anglers and guideboats for red snapper.

The private anglers fished under the state season, and the states were allocated a portion of the ADL, and they monitored the landings. Each state used a separate data collection program, and so this was being done all the while that Reef Fish Amendment 50, and it's actually A through F, was being developed and discussed.

In June of 2019, the council took final action on Reef Fish Amendment 50, and that was a larger programmatic environmental impact statement, and then each state had an environmental assessment, had their own amendment, to set their various management measures, and that became Amendment 50B through F. This amendment, the programmatic EIS, also made sector separation permanent, and the final rule became effective in February 2020.

State management of -- So, today, we have much longer state seasons, as you can see, from 2020 since it became effective through 2024. The note there for Texas, and I think this was mentioned earlier, is the state waters are open year-round, but you can see their federal seasons are listed there to the right. You can see it has changed over time, but, in general, these seasons have gotten longer.

So what have private anglers said recently about state management? We did a recreational initiative, and I pulled some of the recommendations and comments that came from that effort on state management, and I've just highlighted a few of those bullets here, and it says state management for red snapper allows for tailored management measures for each state, and a lot of them felt like it could be applied to other species.

There was generally satisfaction with fishing opportunities. Some folks independently expressed some current concerns with state allocations, you know, saying those were old, and they should be revisited, and also potentially some localized depletion, depending on what state you're leaving from and how long the seasons are.

We also spent some time discussing the balance between access and trophy fish, or even legal fish, and, really, you know, angler satisfaction, and so we did spend quite a bit of time on that, and there's a lot of good information in the recommendations that came out of that working group. Those are just a few that I wanted to highlight, as it relates to state management.

I just wanted to highlight some of the things that the council did to support this effort, as you may be thinking about working through this, and how the council has directed us with looking at this in the coming years, and so we had numerous meetings to identify state-specific catch limits, including close coordination with the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission. Our staff

attended many of those meetings, helped facilitate those meetings, and worked closely with the commission and the Gulf states.

We had numerous meetings discussing various recreational data collection improvements, and we're continuing to that to do that today. The example I listed was the LA Creel program that started much of this in 2015, and then we continued to support landings updates annually, during our April and November meetings, as well as reports out, you know, on the size of the fish that are being landed at each state and where the quotas are. Typically, we get an email monthly from the state directors as well with that information.

What are some of the things the Gulf Council has asked us to work on? They've asked us to continue to look at sector separation for gag, red grouper, and gray triggerfish, and I want to say these are at very early stages. Many of these are just motions directing staff to work on this. Regional and state management for greater amberjack, this one seems to be moving up in priority, particularly as we get some new information on the science about greater amberjack.

Then, recently, they've asked us to consider delegation of the federal for-hire red snapper management to the Gulf states. There's some folks that would like to see this happen, and some of the states, and particularly we've heard from for-hire operators in Louisiana that would really like the council to consider this, and so they directed us to take a look at this here in the coming months.

Just some lessons learned, and Ms. Blough has covered some of these, but I'll go a little bit further with a few of them. Obviously, the benefits are flexibility in management, season and bag limits and size limits, across the Gulf. Anglers want different things. Currently, greater access to the resource, and that may not be the situation at first, depending on the status of the stock. We've improved recreational data collection, and that has reduced uncertainty, particularly as it relates to effort, the effort component of recreational landings, and improved angler satisfaction and buy-in into the process.

Some challenges that we're continuing to work through is stock assessments are getting quite old for red snapper, and reconciling common currency with these landings, and so improvements in data collection have also caused, you know, confusion in monitoring landings, and sometimes that has necessitated calibration, and this sometimes leads to dissatisfaction, and I think a recent example of that would be with Mississippi and Alabama calibrating to the federal program, MRIP-FES.

I would urge you all to think about common currency for recreational data collection across the states at the start, and I think it would make things a lot easier, as one of the key things you might want to consider. As these data collection and monitoring programs for the recreational sector continue to improve, there's also the components of calibrating those landings, as well as the continued improvements that the states have undergone.

Most recently, Mississippi and Alabama are moving all their species to the LA Creel program for the state currencies, and, as time goes on, when the states were allocation -- Or their apportionment was given in MRFSS, the old currency, and yet we have this new information that we're managing and monitoring, and, as time goes on, that gets more difficult to reconcile, and so that is a challenge

that we're currently working through with the Science Center to get a completed red snapper stock assessment, and so thank you, Madam Chair, for your attention.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Carrie, and, if you'll just stand by, I think we'll be doing questions at the end, and so I guess, next, we'll let Jessica go.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Madam Chair. All right, and so we're going to give a state perspective in our presentation. Like Carrie, we're going to kind of give you a detailed timeline, and we're going to start at 2014, but she's right that state management discussions really started in 2012, or 2013.

We're going to talk a little bit about, like Carrie did, getting from the EFPs, like the short-term state management, over to long-term state management, allocations, and then kind of how it works now, and so my presentation is going to be very similar to Carrie's, but we're going to get into other things that were happening kind of at the same time, whether it's congressional items, states meeting outside the council meeting, and things like that.

These are some things that Carrie brought up as well, and so, before state management went into place, unlike kind of what is happening here on the Atlantic, people were really catching red snapper in state and federal waters, and, prior to state management, there were three states that only had a state waters boundary out to three miles, whereas Texas and Florida had a boundary out to nine miles.

Also, as Carrie mentioned, each state had their own data collection system that was in place prior to going to state management. There was also recreational sector separation, that was effective in 2015, that was separating the federal for-hire component from the private recreational quota, and then each state was really setting their own recreational season for private anglers and state for-hire boats in state waters, while NOAA Fisheries was setting the federal recreational seasons for people, private anglers, that were intending to fish in federal waters, and also federal for-hire operators.

Carrie mentioned this too, and so you had differing seasons, and I'm going to show you a graphic on this, but differing seasons between state waters and federal waters, but the longer the state seasons got, because those fish caught in state waters were counted against the quota, then there were progressively shorter federal seasons.

Here's a graphic, and I'm going to come back to this graphic a couple of times, and I'm kind of highlighting the area there in the circle that we're going to be talking about, and this is for Florida, so you can see all the way back to 2005. You can see that the seasons were a lot longer, and you can see the state season in red, and the federal season in blue, and then, once sector separation was in place, the federal for-hire season there kind of in that yellow color.

You can see that the federal seasons were getting shorter and shorter, as the state seasons were getting longer and longer, and then, eventually, once we got to 2018, you can see, here off of Florida, that the state water and federal water seasons were matching up, because that's -- Once the EFP when went into place, which was state management, and then the long-term amendment, and so, the way Florida does it, we are setting state and federal water seasons to be the same.

So where did this idea of state management come from? So Carrie talked about this a little bit, that there was a lot of frustration among stakeholders, state managers, council members, and a lot of people just really frustrated with the management system, and you really had people engaging at all levels, and it wasn't just anglers and state agencies. You had governors, and you had state legislatures, and you had congressional leaders that were really wanting a change, because of frustration with federal management.

Carrie talked about early discussions starting in 2012, and I kind of benchmarked that at 2013, but there were a lot of different activities occurring in these years. We're talking about lots of different amendments that affected, ultimately affected, state management that came through the council process. There were a lot of lawsuits, and there were congressional directives, behind-the-scenes discussions with the states, before you got to the EFPs and the final amendment.

I'm going to go year-by-year here, to kind of talk about some of the things that were happening on kind of the landscape, with you know, everything that was occurring here, and so, in 2014, there was a lot of discussion about this amendment, this Amendment 30B, and so Amendment 30B is basically the amendment that says that federal for-hire vessels must follow federal rules even when they're in state waters, and so the council was trying to remove this, as kind of a lead up to state management.

That way, the federal for-hire boats could take advantage of the longer state seasons, but there was a lawsuit that came about around this time period, and, ultimately, the council rescinded their vote to remove Amendment 30B, and so 30B is still in place today, that these federal for-hire boats have to follow these federal rules as a condition of the permit.

There was also a lawsuit, at this time, over recreational quota. Also, the Morris-Deal Report was produced, and so this was a document -- So there were recreational industry leaders that came together, Johnny Morris and Scott Deal, that were calling for nationwide changes in private recreational fisheries, and they were calling for these changes primarily through changes to the Magnuson Act.

A lot of states started holding some general public workshops, to ask people, that were very frustrated, how they wanted to manage the red snapper fishery, and then the Gulf states started meeting, and this is outside the council process, and some of this was through the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, and then some was just the Gulf states by themselves, and they were meeting to talk about state-by-state allocation percentages, in thinking about how you would divide up the recreational quota.

Carrie also talked about that the Gulf Council passed sector separation, which was Amendment 40, and then Congress also required NOAA to account for fish on artificial reefs in the stock assessment, and so there were a lot of people, at the time, that were saying, hey, when I'm intercepted by MRIP samplers, they don't know whether I took this red snapper on an artificial reef or not, and so there was a lot of -- I want to call it groundswell, where people did not believe that red snapper that were on artificial reefs were being counted in the stock assessment.

There was a particular congressional law, Public Law 113-235 that required NOAA to account for the benefit of artificial reefs when updating the stock assessment, or conducting new stock assessments for reef fish, including red snapper.

Sector separation passed in 2014, but I would say that people were still fired up, and sector separation was very controversial, and a new Gulf red snapper stock assessment was completed, and Carrie talked about this a little bit as well, and it showed that the stock was improving, but it was still overfished. The Gulf Council, through that assessment process, following the process, increased the quota, and states, outside of the council process, developed a framework for state management.

The acronym is wrong there, but it's the -- They were talking about forming the Gulf State Red Snapper Management Authority, and this was kind of very early thoughts about state management. This would have been an independent body that managed red snapper, and it was made up of the state agency folks, and this concept of state management, through this new body, was supported by the recreational industry, but it was very clunky, and it would have covered both commercial and recreational management.

Then, following the states kind of coming up with this idea, Congressman Graves introduced HR 3094, the Gulf State Red Snapper Management Act, which was very similar. It kind of took the components of that Red Snapper Management Authority and put it into a bill, and then the Gulf Council, as Carrie mentioned, was working on Amendment 39, which was a little bit different than state management. It was called regional management.

So a little bit more about 2015, and so, towards the end of the year, there was a public law, listed there on the screen, that funded -- That would fund the government for Fiscal Year 2016, and there were some interesting points in there that weren't just about the budget, that were specific to red snapper, that I wanted to kind of show you, because this kind of started a trend of some of these items being in this congressional budget.

There was \$5 million for an independent stock assessment of Gulf red snapper. Once again, these instructions to NOAA to count fish on artificial reefs, but also oil and gas platforms, and then incorporating that into future stock assessments and management decisions.

This language that was in the budget -- Also, there was language in there about increased allocation of Gulf red snapper to the private recreational sector, and this would be for future quota increases, and so, as these additional quota increases came online, this budget amendment is talking about suggesting that more allocation needed to go to the recreational sector, and then, also, this is where the discussion came from that was talking about extending the state waters for the three states that only had three miles, and so it would extend it out to nine miles, which is what Texas and Florida had.

Once we got to 2016, still multiple lawsuits that were occurring at the time, and there was a lawsuit against sector separation, and the judge ultimately upheld sector separation as put in place by the Gulf Council, and there was another lawsuit that was about allocation. Ultimately, that resulted in a reversal, and so the allocation reverting back to the most recent allocation, which was 51 percent commercial and 49 percent recreational.

Carrie talked a little bit about that there was a sunset on sector separation, but the council, in 2016, extended that sunset for sector separation until the end of 2022, and congressional activity relative to red snapper really continued, and so the House approved that HR 3094, and that that particular

bill was, I would say, controversial, and so people supported the concept of state management, but not how it was drafted in that particular bill. Part of it had to do with the fact that the commercial component would have been given to the states as well, and it wasn't just the recreational component, and so there were a lot of nuances, or details, in there that people did not like.

Also, private anglers, the private angling component, exceeded their quota in 2016, and states were continuing to set lengthy seasons for red snapper in state waters, and so, because of that, NOAA announced this three-day recreational season for federal waters, and that was that was kind of the straw that broke the camel's back, in my opinion.

States began meeting with folks from the Commerce Department, and there was basically a discussion, or a deal brokered, where Commerce would lengthen that federal season from three days to thirty-nine days if states would go back to their commission, or legislatures, or whoever set their state season, and go ahead and match that season and so all the state seasons had already started, at this point when this deal was brokered, and states agreed to shorten their state water season to match this federal season, so that anglers could have more days in federal waters.

Also at this time, NOAA announced a \$9.5 million grant for an independent study on Gulf red snapper, and the council is still kind of discussing state management at the time, and, at first, in this state-by-state management, they were focused on Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi. Later in 2017, Texas and Florida were added to this amendment, and states were continuing to meet outside the council process to discuss what the state-by-state allocation would be.

You had the Red Snapper Act at this time that was introduced in the congressional House and Senate. The congressional appropriations bill, that came late in 2017, that was for Fiscal Year 2018, had some additional money for independent data collection, and it directed NOAA to develop a pilot program to allow states to be in the lead for fisheries management over reef zones in what was the Gulf of Mexico at the time.

The way that NOAA interpreted this is NOAA asked the states to submit exempted fishing permits for state management. Also in 2017, even though the states were meeting collectively to talk about state management outside the council process, and talking about these percentages, Louisiana submitted an EFP for state management that would have taken some quota off the top. This really frustrated a lot of people, frustrated a lot of the other states, and eventually Louisiana withdrew that EFP.

So, in 2018, the information that came out of these independent assessments, the relative abundance of Gulf red snapper was released, and this information was used to calculate the state percentages of red snapper quota. All Gulf states, as Carrie mentioned, submitted EFPs for testing state management of Gulf red snapper off of their state. These were approved by the council and NOAA fisheries, and these were two-year EFPs, and, at the same time, kind of the long-term state management was being worked on, through the Gulf Council, through Amendment 50.

Here's a little bit more about those exempted fishing permits that occurred in 2018 and 2019, and so there was one for each state. It was just for recreational red snapper, and it was for states to set seasons, size limits, et cetera, in state and federal waters off of their state. It was really focused on private anglers, but, also, states were managing these state-licensed charter vessels that could only fish in state waters. You had to have a federal permit to fish in federal waters, and the state-by-

state allocation percentages for the EFPs were determined by the states, and then submitted to NOAA, and NOAA approved that.

Each state season was based on their available quota. Each state monitored their harvest through their own state data collection system, and there were a lot of details in there, but, as the two presenters before me talked about, there were payback provisions in there, and so, if there was an overage of your state quota, then there was a pound-for-pound payback in there.

Then, when we get to 2019, which was year-two of the EFPs there were some states, like Florida, that exceeded their 2018 quota, and so, during that first year of the test of state management, some states went over, and the overage had to be paid back in the second year of the EFPs. Sector reallocation was being discussed by the council.

Then, in the spring of 2019, the Gulf Council approved what we think of as the long-term, or the permanent, state management amendment, which was Amendment 50, and, also, each of the states' data collection systems, and ours, at the time, was called Gulf Reef Fish Survey, and now it's called State Reef Fish Survey, but they were going through a process with NOAA to get certification, and so in 2019 was when Florida's state data collection program was certified by NOAA for use in federal management.

Carrie talked about this as well, and so you had these six amendments that put the permanent state management in place. You had amendments 50A through F. This only applied to red snapper. It applies to private anglers and state-licensed vessels, and remember sector separation is in place, and so the federal for-hire vessels are under a different system.

This was full delegation for each state to manage red snapper, and each state wrote a letter to the council about what they would like to have delegated, like seasons, bag limits, size limits, ability maybe to close federal waters differently than state waters, et cetera, and ability to implement area or depth-specific regulations, if that was something that the state was interested in, and then annual quotas could be adjusted based on Gulf-wide stock underages, or overages, and then the allocation that was in the permanent state management amendment here was slightly different than the state-by-state percentages that were used in the EFP. As Carrie mentioned, this was approved by the council in 2019, and ultimately approved by the Secretary of Commerce in February of 2020.

So lots of discussions about how to allocate that Gulf quota, and this took many meetings between the states over the years, and then the states were taking that information and reporting it back to the council. There were different percentages used between the EFPs and Amendment 50, and the allocations were considered -- There were so many different alternatives, but it was looking at recreational landings over a suite of time series, excluding 2010, which was the oil spill year, looking at things like spatial abundance, biomass, proportion of recreational trips, and we even looked at numbers of recreational anglers.

I mean, we looked at this just so many different ways before coming to some final percentages, and then the same thing for the council. They looked at this a number of different ways before making decisions in Amendment 50. Ultimately, Amendment 50 was very similar to the EFP allocations, but the EFP allocations did not add up to 100 percent of that private recreational quota. There was an additional 3.78 percent that was kind of unallocated from the EFP, and so, when you

got to Amendment 50, that additional percentage was split between Alabama and Florida, and the final allocation is shown there in the table.

So how does state management work now? So each state is setting their recreational season for state and federal waters. They are tracking their quota with their state data collection system, and, as Carrie mentioned, they're reporting out to the Gulf Council each year on where their landings are relative to their quota. Each state is accountable for paying back any overage that occurs. Sector separation is still in place, with NOAA setting those federal for-hire seasons separately outside of this state management process, and commercial remains under the IFQ system.

The speakers before me talked about this a little bit, but I would say that, now that it's been in place for some time, state governors, legislatures, congressional leaders, and anglers, they strongly support state management, and how this works, and how the regulations can be tailored to the needs of the states' anglers, et cetera, and I think that's why people are so excited at the thought of us doing this here on the South Atlantic, is thinking about the successes in the Gulf, and kind of building on that.

So here's that graph again, just to kind of show you, once state management was put in place, and this is specific to Florida's season, and so it took some time to kind of get more quota, step up the season, et cetera, and what you're seeing here is Florida sets the state season identical to the federal waters season, and then you can see also the lengthening of the federal for-hire season over time.

You can also see that there were years that the federal for-hire season was longer than the season off of Florida, and so it just kind of depended on the quota and what we thought we could take without going over. There have been overages in Florida, and other states, over the years, and they just have to be paid back the following year.

Today, we have the Gulf Reef Fish Survey became State Reef Fish Survey, and we have it on both the Gulf and the Atlantic, and, in within our agency, our division, Marine Fisheries Management and FWRI analyzes season options each year, based on the available quota, historical catch and effort, and stakeholder preferences when we set the season.

We're using that State Reef Fish Survey for in-season monitoring and prediction, and this is composed of a mail survey, a fishing effort, an angler intercept survey at the dock for catch per unit effort, and it's really getting year-round as well as monthly estimates of effort, harvest, and discards. Our quota tracking is presented at the council meetings, and, also, the final landings are reported to NOAA, and they go up on their website. That was happening during the EFPs as well, and I think that's my last slide.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thanks, Jessica, and now I will go ahead and turn it over to Bob. We'll just hold questions until the end. Thanks. I'll just go ahead and turn it over to Bob, and then we can take a break and go into questions. How's that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sounds great.

MR. BEAL: Thanks, Madam Chair. I'll go ahead and jump in. John, are you ready to go? You'll be flipping slides? While John is pulling up the slides, and getting them the right size and that sort of thing, just this presentation will be a little bit different than the others. All the others focused

on red snapper, and this is more of a, you know, overall view of ASMFC, how it works, how the states interact, and I'll focus on some of the interactions between commission management and federal management.

I kind of divided this up into four parts. I'll give a what may be a review for a lot of people, but it's probably worth seeing a review of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act, and sort of the fundamentals of ASMFC, and then I'll talk about commission management approaches, and I'll focus on how the commission interacts with different federal entities, such as the councils and HMS, and quickly talk about conservation equivalency, which is a unique thing to ASMFC, and then a couple slides, at the very end, on recreational data collection, with the understanding that this council is going to have a recreational session at the December meeting in Kitty Hawk, and so that that recreational part will be very quick.

I'll jump right into ASMFC background. The commission has been around quite a while, since 1942. All the states signed on to an interstate compact establishing the commission, and so it's the states of Maine through Florida, including Pennsylvania, which technically doesn't touch the ocean, but there's a number of diadromous species that are in Pennsylvania's waters, and that's -- You know, that's how they're involved in the process, and, overall, really what the commission is is a deliberative forum for the states.

The commission is the states. It brings the states together, and lets them talk about their transboundary resources, and collectively how they want to manage those resources, and, as everyone knows, currently, state water jurisdiction along the Atlantic coast is zero to three miles, and the estuaries as well. The overall vision is sustainable and cooperative management of Atlantic coastal fisheries. It's pretty simple and wide-ranging.

The Atlantic Coastal Act is what we call it, and it was approved by Congress in 1993. It was based on the successful Striped Bass Act, which was approved in 1984, and so this expanded the provisions of the Striped Bass Act to all the fishery management plans that the commission has. This set up -- The act set up the general standards for fishery management along the coast. These are not the same ten National Standards that are included in Magnuson. These are very just general terms of conservation management, use of best available science, and so, you know, very, very broad standards that provides a lot of flexibility for the states to manage their shared resources.

State implementation of any regulations that comes out of the ASMFC process, the commission is non-regulatory, and we do not have the authority to implement regulations. That all happens at the state level. State compliance is tied to conservation standards, and what that means -- "Compliance" means -- In the commission terminology, it means the states implementing the regulations consistent with what's in an interstate FMP that was developed by ASMFC.

There is the potential, in the Atlantic Coastal Act, for the Secretary of Commerce to step in and preempt state regulations. This is a seldom-used tool, and we try to use it as little as possible, and negotiate, and, you know, make sure that everybody is on the same page, and states aren't put in a in a difficult spot where they're unable, or unwilling, to implement regulations, but the way this would work is, if a state does not implement regulations consistent with the interstate FMP, the commission can notify the Secretary.

The Secretary then has to answer two questions. One is are the regulations consistent or not, and that's an easy one, and that's a yes or no answer. The second one is more difficult, and are these regulations needed for the conservation of that species, and so the commission can't just dream up some, you know, random regulation, and have all the states put that in place, if it doesn't hinge, and doesn't -- If it isn't founded on the notion of conservation of that species, and so that's a very key part of the secretarial involvement, is it has to be linked to conservation.

The commission works cooperatively with federal partners, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries, on shared resource issues. The Atlantic Coastal Act also set up funding for the states and ASMFC, as well as the federal partners, to work on state interstate fishery management plans and monitoring.

This is a quick schematic of how the commission and the ISFMP, which is the Interstate Fishery Management Program, is designed at the commission. The commission, in the top box there in blue, that's the forty-five commissioners, and I'll talk about who they are in a moment, and then underneath the data is what we call the ISFMP Policy Board.

The policy board is all the states, plus a few other votes, that I'll talk about, and that that's the group that sets up the species that ASMFC works on, the priorities for science, and it sort of establishes the overall direction of fishery management at ASMFC, and then, underneath of that, the yellow box there, kind of in the dead center of the screen, is management boards, or sections, and these are the groups that fundamentally do the management at ASMFC.

The membership of a management board is made up of essentially the range of that species, and so, you know, something like American lobster, which is the northern New England lobster, lobsters with claws, those are the managed by the states, from Maine down through Virginia, and the southern states don't vote on that, and then there's species, like Atlantic menhaden, that the whole coast votes on that, and there's species, like red drum, which is a subset down to the south, and sort of the southern state, and some Mid-Atlantic states, vote on red drum and so the management actions happen in sort of smaller units than the full coast, if that species isn't spread throughout the coast.

Then underneath of that is just a number of different technical committees and advisory panels and other things that are set up to support the management boards, and we also have a larger scientific committee, such as the Assessment Science Committee, that handles prioritizing and dealing with stock assessment issues at the commission.

I talked about, earlier, that we have forty-five commissioners. Since I'm in South Carolina, I'll use South Carolina as an example. Each state delegation at ASMFC is essentially made up of the same three individuals, types of individuals, and the first one is the director of the state fishery management agency, and so, in South Carolina it's Blaik Keppler. Blaik is often represented by Ben Dyer, who is in the back of the room, as her proxy, and then the second person at the commission is somebody from the state legislature.

In South Carolina, it's Ronnie Cromer. He's a legislative appointee to ASMFC, and Ronnie is often represented by Mel Bell. I think you guys -- Some you may have met Mel before a time or two, and so he's Senator Cromer's proxy on a lot of issues, and then Dr. Malcolm Rhodes is a local person here in Charleston, and he's appointed by the Governor of South Carolina, and so all the

other state delegations are made up of the same thing, the director of the state fishery agency, a legislative commissioner, and a governor's appointee, and the governor's appointee can be essentially anyone.

They're recreational, commercial, environmental, NGOs, and they're all -- They're kind of all over the place. Some of them are retired state administrators, and one of those may be in the back of the room as well, Spud, but so, you know, there's a lot of a lot of different makeups of it, but that's the general, the three individuals, and it's one state, one vote, and so, at each of our meetings, these three individuals put their heads together and decide how they're going to vote on any one issue. They don't vote individually, like the council, and they vote as a block, as a delegation, and it's one state, one vote.

The other votes that other individuals and agencies that can vote at ASMFC are National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, which is a small commission that handles what it says, the Potomac River, made up of essentially Maryland Virginia, Washington, D.C., and the regional fishery management councils can vote, and do vote on some of our management boards. The South Atlantic Council votes on the sciaenids board, and John usually comes up to represent the South Atlantic Board there, and so, you know, there are instances where you have all fifteen states voting, plus, you know, four or five other votes, and there can be quite a few people around the table, and I'll talk more about that when we get to joint management.

These are the twenty-seven species and species groups that the commission manages, and lots of different critters, lots of different life cycles, lots of different management programs. It's noteworthy to me anyway that red snapper is not on this diagram right now, but we'll keep talking about that, I suppose, and so that's just a schematic. You know, we do have twenty-seven fishery management plans that are that are in play and effective right now.

I'm going to get into the different management approaches that ASMFC uses, and it's really -- I've kind of binned them into three different categories of commission-managed species, which is solely managed by ASMFC, cooperative and complementary management, and then joint management, and so these -- Each of these are nuanced, and have a different interactions with federal agencies, but they're all they're all in effect, and a number of -- I've listed each species in the next few slides, that show what species is managed under what scenario.

The first one grouping is commission-managed species. This is there is an interstate fishery management plan, but there is no federal fishery management plan, and the species listed here, American eel on through -- I don't know, and there's ten or eleven species there, and there's very limited EEZ management for any of these species.

There's some in place, and there's some general gear provisions that are in federal waters, but there are often not any direct regulations for that species in federal waters, and so, you know, as I said, those are really the states manage those. Some of those fisheries, obviously, extend into federal waters, but the state regulations, when they have to come back home, have a lot to do with where or what the regulations are and what measures have to be followed while they're in federal waters, and that picture, if you guys are struggling to figure out what the heck that is, those are little elvers, glass eels, American eels, the juvenile life stage, that are worth a whole lot of money, and harvested a little bit here in South Carolina, but much more up in New England, up in Maine.

The next category, or this is the sort of nuance of that same category, and these are species that are solely managed by ASMFC. However, there are some federal provisions, and there are no federal FMPs for these species, but there is -- You know, there are provisions in federal waters that affect these species directly.

Red drum and striped bass is -- The only regulation is there's a closure. The federal waters are closed to possession and fishing for red drum and striped bass, and those -- Both of those closures have been in place for quite a while. Cobia, I think everyone around the table here knows that very well. For the Atlantic migratory group, there are still size limits and possession limits and quotas in place at the federal level, but the federal FMP for that portion of the stock, obviously, is no longer in existence, and ASMFC inherited the management of cobia.

Shad and river herring, the councils, New England and Mid-Atlantic, set up bycatch caps for their small mesh fisheries for herring and mackerel, and so there are -- You know, there is no federal FMP. However, there are provisions in those FMPs for other species that limit the harvest or bycatch of those species.

American lobster and Jonah crab is a little bit different. There are -- The commission manages lobster, but there are extensive regulations that are implemented by NOAA Fisheries in federal waters, which extend the lobster management program out in the federal waters in great detail, and, those regulations that are approved under the Atlantic Coastal Act provisions, they have to still comply with the ten National Standards of Magnuson, and so, while Magnuson isn't directly managing how ASMFC operates, we do, by default, sort of back into it with a number of these extension -- Of the regulations that are implemented in federal waters.

This one is cooperative or complementary management, and so, this one, there are interstate fishery management plans, and there are federal FMPs, but we don't -- We're not in lockstep. The idea with these plans is to create kind of a range-wide management program in state waters and federal waters, but there may be, and there often are, differences between the way what's in the commission plan and what's in the federal plan.

The councils generally take the primary role in this, and the commission follows behind, especially on things like setting the annual specifications, TACs and ACLs and those things. Atlantic herring is managed by the New England Council, but ASMFC has an FMP in place, and the commission does a lot of the effort control work, and division of quotas throughout the year, and spreading out the quota, and the quota is really small right now, unfortunately, and so it's --

The commission has a very active role, and the commission can be a lot more nimble than the federal government in implementing openings and closures for Atlantic herring, and what we call days out of the fishery, where no landings are allowed to occur for herring, and, a lot of times, it's only one or two days per week where you're allowed to land sea herring up in up in New England.

Spiny dogfish is very similar. You know, we work with the Mid-Atlantic Council and New England Council on dogfish, and we follow the lead generally of the councils on setting the quota. The states have run the experiment, a couple of times, of setting a state quota higher than the federal quota, and it frankly did not work out very well. You end up in a really awkward situation, where state waters are open, but they're not open to federal permit holders, because federal permit

holders aren't able to harvest, since the federal quota closed, and that -- It didn't go well, and we essentially now are in lockstep with the federal councils on any quotas and other things that are set through ASMFC.

Then coastal sharks is managed, obviously, by the HMS program at NOAA Fisheries. ASMFC, and the states, do implement a number of provisions in state waters, to make sure there's no landings loopholes, essentially, that allow coastal sharks to be brought in that are different than the federal FMP.

Now we get into what we call joint management, and a number of people in the room here have sat through these meetings, and this is summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, and bluefish and it's jointly managed between ASMFC and the Mid-Atlantic Council. I think the third bullet there is probably the real take-home message here. I was going to put "cumbersome", but I thought that was a little derogatory, and so I put "complex" management process.

You know, there are interstate and federal FMPs, obviously, and the goal is to have those FMPs identical between state and federal waters, and it's kind of a seamless approach to the management of those species, but the way this works is ASMFC and the Mid-Atlantic Council meet jointly, at least twice a year, and, if you think about our Bluefish Board, which is all the states except Pennsylvania, and so you've got fourteen states, plus the full membership of the Mid-Atlantic Council, around a big giant table, trying to sort out a management program for these species, and it's quite a process.

The way it works is it requires identical motions at the council and at the commission, and so, if a motion is made to, whatever, set a ten-million-pound TAC for bluefish, and it passes the council, but doesn't pass ASMFC, the council's motion is essentially void at that point, and you've got to go back to the drawing board and try a new council that we can get past both bodies before it takes effect.

So it's a very -- It is joint management, you know, and it's a lot of -- It's a complex process that the SSCs inform a lot of the decisions that ASMFC makes, and we try to stay in lockstep. Every once in a while, we do sort of set the rules aside, and do things a little bit differently, but that's a quite an exception, but this is the most sort of complex and direct linkage between ASMFC and the federal government on fishery management, and so it's a -- You know, what I tried to show there is there's this continuum of, you know, solely state managed, to some cooperative work, and then this is the joint management, which is very, you know, lockstep, linked, between the council and in the states through ASMFC.

Moving on into the conservation equivalency, and so this this is a bit of a unique thing, that as I mentioned at the beginning, this is -- At some times, it's considered kind of the grease that makes ASMFC work, and so what this does is it allows flexibility for the states to implement measures that are conservationally equal, but differ from the standards that are in an interstate fishery management plan.

An example could be, whatever, you know, and I'm making this up, and so two fish at eighteen inches for the recreational fishery, and the state says, you know, we would really rather have a lot -- You know, we have a lot bigger fish here, and we think we would want a higher bag limit, and so we would like three fish at twenty-four inches, or we don't have the big fish here, and we don't

have eighteen-inch fish, and so we want one fish at twelve inches, for example, and, you know, they go through the math, and it's reviewed by the technical committee, and, if it is conservationally equivalent, the states are often allowed to implement those measures.

This is -- You know, it's a very structured process for reviewing these, and approving, and proposing conservationally-equivalent measures, but it works, and it provides flexibility that's really important for the states. It does -- The ability to implement conservation equivalency varies a little bit by the fishery management plan and the stock status. If the stock is in bad shape, a number of the FMPs limit the use of conservation equivalency, to ensure that, you know, the measures are there, and they're consistent, and there's less risk of overfishing, and, while the commission is trying to rebuild the stock, the FMPs provide a little bit less flexibility to the states under those scenarios.

I'll jump into, as I mentioned, a pretty quick review of recreational data provisions. This slide just kind of has a schematic of whose responsibility it is for each portion of recreational data collection right now. The NOAA MRIP program is the survey design. They do the catch estimates, and presentation of that information, and they also review and request -- Or provide approval of requests for regional survey changes.

ASMFC and ACCSP are kind of the functional part of this. We, through the states pull -- You know, conduct the APAIS survey and the for-hire telephone survey, and, you know, the field work and everything that comes with that. That money moves through the commission to the states. We do hire some of the interviewers for states, and some of the states do that on their own, and then the states, as I mentioned in the final bullet, they are the ones that do the actual field data collection, and they -- They're the ones that bring up different ideas for regional survey changes and submit those to NOAA Fisheries for approval.

A couple specific programs here, and the charter observer program is implemented in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Right now, the Southeast Fisheries Science Center is supporting personnel for the next few years.

This is, to my understanding, up and running. It's the data collection is on paper, and then it's put into the database at the state level, and ACCSP is working on a data warehouse for the states to upload their data, and that should be up and running early next year, and then the observer data within the ACCSP is available to all the partner agencies, for assessment and management, and so that that program is new, but is up and running.

The ACCSP for-hire logbook work is -- So far, the work right now is kind of looking backwards to link logbooks and APAIS intercepts on charter boats, and then it's -- So we're going to look backwards at 2019 to 2024, and then the intent is to certify the method of linking those together, and then we'll start looking forward, but that probably won't be until 2026 or 2027 for the for-hire logbook, and then one last slide is alternate surveys.

You know, as a few people have mentioned in their presentations earlier on red snapper, you know, what sort of replacement programs can happen for MRIP, and LA Creel, that Louisiana modeled, and that was mentioned a lot earlier, is one option. It is approved under the umbrella of MRIP, and it's all species all-year-round.

The other approach is to, rather than replacement, is supplement, and this is kind of -- You know Carolyn mentioned, yesterday, that Georgia had is increasing sample size for APAIS, and the other thing that can be done is adding an MRIP-compatible program, like the Florida SRFS program that Jessica mentioned a little while ago, and so that would supplement MRIP data collection with a different data collection, but the data is compatible, and it can be used together.

The couple notes there at the bottom are, if a program has already been certified by MRIP, it speeds things up quite a bit. If a state wants to develop a program that is compatible with MRIP, it takes -- MRIP takes, frankly, years to approve some of these programs, and there is a lot of, you know, time needed to bring those programs together, and so that's just, again, a quick highlight, with the understanding that the council is going to have a lengthy recreational session in Kitty Hawk in December.

I think there may be one more slide, just for questions. Okay, and so, yes, this is the question slide, but the picture is relevant. This is a guy holding a forty-five-inch red drum that he caught on Cape Cod, of all places, and so just one of the number of issues that we're wrestling with at ASMFC. These fish are moving up the coast, and doing kind of strange things these days, and the states are kind of, you know, peddling pretty fast to keep up with what's going on out there, and so I'm happy to answer any questions, and thanks for the time. I appreciate the invite to give the presentation.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Bob. I appreciate it, and so I think we're going to go ahead and take a fifteen-minute break, and everybody can kind of think of what they want to ask, discussion points or whatever, and we'll move into discussion of state management, and so thank you, everyone, and, Carrie, if you can hang on.

DR. SIMMONS: Will do.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MURPHEY: All right, everybody. We'll go ahead and get started with questions. I do want to ask everyone that's on the council that, when you talk, go ahead and speak kind of close to the -- Or a little loud to the microphone, because I think we've got one speaker out, and some of the folks in the back can't hear, and so if you all can remember to do that, that will be real helpful.

I think we -- Well, we've heard from, everyone, NMFS, Gulf states Florida, and ASMFC, and so I guess now we'll just start having our discussion, getting your thoughts. If you have questions -- If you've got questions for Carrie or Bob or Jessica, just as, and we'll go ahead and start, and so, Charlie go ahead.

MR. PHILLIPS: Again, I'm getting over being shy, and I guess I'll start with -- I was looking at Jessica's presentation, and it just kind of struck me as odd that Alabama had significantly, for their amount of coast, a very, very -- To me, and I shrimped over there, and so I'm familiar with that, allocation, compared like to Mississippi, and even Florida, that had the bulk, but Florida has got a huge, huge amount of coastline, and so I was curious how that happened, and is -- If it works out in the long run that it's not, that it needs to be reallocated, how would you go about that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so a couple things. Part of the discussion -- So, yes, Alabama only has 4 percent of the coastline in the northern Gulf, but they have an extensive artificial reef

program. They like to talk tout that they have the largest artificial reef program in the nation. Florida claims we have that, and so Alabama goes back and says, well, we have the largest unified artificial reef program in the nation, because all of their permit areas connect together, but they did have a fair amount of landings, and so, yes, that's kind of how they got that percentage.

Moving forward, yes, you could renegotiate those percentages, and you could look at additional data, bring in other information, and you could bring in information from stock assessments, independent assessments, et cetera, and it would just have to go back through the council. I don't think it would require a 75 percent majority vote to reset the allocation, but, yes, you could -- Just like the council can change anything, the council could change that state-by-state percentage.

I'll tell you that the Gulf states are discussing that, to try to figure out if we want to renegotiate that, or if we want to renegotiate how paybacks occur, et cetera, like if a state goes over, but all the other states are under, and should there be a payback, and so there's -- Those types of discussions are continuing today.

MS. MURPHEY: Chris.

MR. SCHIEBLE: Just an additional comment to that, and so, I believe it was two years ago, Alabama and Florida both recalibrated, and Alabama took a pretty significant haircut on their allocation, and it was about, I believe, about a-half-a-million pounds, when that recalibration took place, and so it's more in line with their historical landings, I think, now than what it used to be.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Chris. Okay, everybody. Go ahead, Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I think this is a great discussion. My mind is trying to wrestle with kind of what the difference is from the Gulf fishery to the South Atlantic, as it pertains to red snapper. For us in the Keys, the fishery is a little bit different in the South Atlantic. The likelihood that you're going to incur -- You know, encounter multiple species when you're catching red snapper is much higher, in my experience, in the in the Gulf, and so I think, as we talk through this, we need to be really cognizant of what the implications of red snapper management, which I'm supportive of, but I think it comes along with more than that.

You know, the idea that we could separately manage red snapper, and not fall back into an issue with dead discards in other species, like gag grouper, mutton snapper, black grouper, I think those are big concerns of mine that I would like council to kind of try and talk through as we feel our way through, you know, state management.

Then, you know, I saw in there that, in order for this council to delegate state management, it has to be consistent with an FMP, and so I think getting into an aggregate discussion in state management is also going to be a little a little tricky, but those are just kind of my thoughts, going through the presentations, and thank you to everybody who presented.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Robert. I've got Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I had a question, and I guess it's for Carrie, regarding her presentation, and I think you all touched on it a little beforehand. I was looking at the table of state season lengths that was provided, and I noticed that, in Mississippi for example, the amount of days really shifted

downward, and I was wondering if we could get some insight as to why that happened. Was that recalibration, or was that data issues or whatnot?

MS. MURPHEY: I don't know who -- Chris.

MR. SCHIEBLE: That's exactly what it was, Tom. It was recalibration, and so, at the same time Mississippi and Alabama and Florida recalibrated, Mississippi took a pretty significant haircut, and I believe they only have about 153 000 pounds of allocation that they fish to, and they use that up pretty quickly, but, being such a small state, they're very susceptible to incidental catches, that take place periodically, that can bump it up, especially with the wave system, and Waves 5 and 6 kind of extrapolated that. This is part of the reason why they are working through the LA Creel process right now, with Alabama doing the same.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead.

MR. ROLLER: So, that recalibration, was that the recalibration FES, just to be clear?

MR. SCHIEBLE: So it was calibrating their state survey system to MRIP-FES, and Florida also did the same thing.

MS. MURPHEY: Carrie, did you want to add anything?

DR. SIMMONS: I was just going to say that. He covered it. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you. I've got Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and, just to follow-up on that, and, you know, certainly Chris or Carrie can add, but, you know, you see a lot of changes to the seasons, both up and down, as well as extension of seasons, happening in the Gulf. Some of that is calibration related, and some of that is the states changing the structure of their seasons, or the bag limits within their seasons, and some of it is changes in fishing effort. Some of it is changes in average size and the abundance of fish nearshore, and so there's a lot of different factors that that are playing into how long those seasons can be set.

You know, one of the things that came out of the Great Red Snapper Count in the Gulf is that a large portion of the red snapper population in the Gulf occurs on this low-relief bottom, that is really off the fishing grounds, right, and so, as you set seasons and harvest nearshore on the fishing grounds, there's been some localized depletion that has occurred nearshore, with that offshore population, obviously, kind of helping to sustain the broader population, and so that's why I think you're seeing a lot of just different dynamics across the entire Gulf, and differences among the states.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. Go ahead, Clay.

Dr. PORCH: Yes, and, to that calibration issue, in a sense, state management is a bit of a misnomer here, in that, you know, the most important management measure, the annual catch limit, is still set by the council, and so it's more like state monitoring. Yes, they have some flexibility, in terms of bag limits and size limits, but the main management measure was the ACL, and, to that end, the

states all coming to the table with different survey methodology was a huge problem, because you didn't know how to compare the different methods among the states.

The allocation discussion was extremely difficult, and, on top of it, some of -- A couple of the surveys, they only got red snapper during the open season, and they didn't get discards, and then, the rest of the year, in the closed season, was still MRIP-FES, and so it really posed a nightmare for the stock assessment, if we were trying to incorporate it, and that's one of the issues that caused delays and the stock assessment, is trying to figure out how can we calibrate back in time, and so you had the allocation issue for the ACL, and how do you calibrate that among the states, but then you had to figure out how are you going to try and get things in state currencies, all the way back in time, especially when they're not getting discards.

It ended up that they elected to go with the FES for the assessment, but, again, the biggest lesson I think we learned from this is it's incredibly difficult to implement this if the states are all coming to the table with their own methodology, that's not already cross-calibrated, and it's sort of like, if you went to a food distribution center, and they said everybody gets one pound of potatoes, but then we all came with our own scales, right, and then we would be arguing amongst each other whose scale is right, and that's the way it went down in the Gulf.

The other thing I wanted to add, and you saw, in Carrie's presentation actually, that state management itself didn't have anything to do with the rebuilding. Rebuilding happened way before then. It started around 2007, when we had a major reduction in the quota, and we had a major reduction in the shrimp fishery, which catches a lot of juvenile red snapper, and that's when the star really started taking off.

The quotas eventually did get longer, partly because the stock continued to rebuild, and partly because we reconciled -- The seasons got longer, because we reckon not reconciled the state and federal seasons, and I appreciate the presenters bringing that up, because that was a major advantage, to me, of state management, having the state and federal serve seasons go back to be the same, but, also, even though we didn't necessarily get SEDAR 74 approved, we did update the quotas, and, in fact, they're the highest in history because of the Great Red Snapper Count.

We actually incorporated that directly, and increased the quotas in response to that, and, you know, the assessment now was stymied because the reviewers found a number of issues that they wanted to see addressed, but the biggest single one is they said the Great Red Snapper Count was not a good estimate of absolute abundance, and it shouldn't be plugged directly in the assessment, and so we're trying to work through that now, but that's where we're at at this point.

I expect that we'll have a workable solution. The assessment now is actually more complicated than it was ever before, broken into three areas, and it should be very informative, once we complete it, but there are so many wrinkles to this, and one of them is the competing information, like with the Great Red Snapper Count, which was a snapshot in one year, and the other is, you know, continuing to try and reconcile all the state surveys.

The good news, and I think, in the longer term, that, you know, has really gotten me excited, is, right now, I think the state and federal partnership is on the best footing that it's ever had, and we're seeing now, as someone mentioned, Alabama and Mississippi adopting something like the LA

Creel approach, and we're very close to having a situation where at least four of the five states are using very similar methodology.

The bulk of the catch will be using a similar methodology, and then, since we're using similar methods, we just need to come up with the calibration back in time for the stock assessment. Moving forward, there's no more calibrations anymore, and it will be a much simpler thing to implement. Thanks.

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

MS. MARHEFKA: Robert, I appreciate your comment, and that's something that's been on my mind a lot, and has there been an example where cooccurring species have had to -- The interaction has had to change the way the approach to red snapper has been managed? I mean, that's clearly not an issue over there the way we're going to have over here, and how will that play out?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Maybe Andy can speak to it, and I can't think of a good example with cooccurring, other than maybe like catching gag on a red snapper trip, but another thing that happened in the Gulf is so the population, as it continued to rebuild, it changed its location, and so it was kind of rebuilding.

In the beginning, when we were first talking about the quotas, there weren't a lot of fish like around Tampa and south, and then, as the population was rebuilding, it was kind of filling out more towards Florida, but that affected things like the initial IFQ quota for red snapper, because there were people, say in the Tampa area, that didn't have historic catches for red snapper, and then, as the fishery was rebuilding, and then spreading back to where it was historically, that -- I feel like it really affected the IFQ more, where people were having to lease that quota, et cetera, but, Andy, I don't know if you want to add more to that.

MR. STRELCHECK: No, and I think that's well said, Jessica, and, you know, with the recreational initiative working group, you know, one of the things that has come out of them is, obviously, the desire for access, but also this interest in having overlapping seasons for some of the key core species, right, and this was actually the first year in the Gulf where we've had gag and red snapper and red grouper open at the same time in quite some, you know, time, but there is still some pretty substantial differences in season lengths amongst those species, regardless of red snapper state management.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy and Jessica. Other questions? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and I'm just trying to wrap my arms around the whole thing, and it's a lot, you know, and I was listening to bob talk about the conservation equivalency, which gives a lot of the leeway that you want. Of course, I guess you have to -- You would still have to split up allocations between the states, or regions, before you could use that, but it seems like the programs like LA Creel have given us more data, so that Clay and Andy can help take the total ACLs out, along with the rebuilding, and so the state management has helped.

It gives you some flexibility, but, really, the bottom line is we needed the fish there to be able to go catch, and we needed to document them, and these new state collection data is helping us get there, which helps them give the fish back, and so that's kind of I'm seeing on the overview.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Charlie. Any -- Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. You know, Jesica, I appreciate you bringing up the aspect that the population rebuilt over time, and geographically, and, when I followed that process, I know that the allocations between the states was probably the most difficult part of the conversation in going to state management.

I was curious if we could get any information, while we're having this discussion, regarding how those allocations were based, and were they done just simply off of recorded -- You know, like recreational catches, or was it done off of abundance, and I've heard several different things mentioned.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I would have to go back and look at the original EFP percentages to see, but we looked at it a lot of different ways, and so we even were looking at U.S. Fish and Wildlife survey numbers, number of recreational licenses, abundance estimates, and do we include the oil spill year, or do we throw out the oil spill year, and I just think that there were a lot of different factors that came into play.

Then, as you saw, what the council passed did not exactly match the EFPs, and it was a little bit different. It changed -- Which as it should, and, you know, the EFP is kind of a test, and so you're also kind of trying to figure out do the states have the right percentages, and then you heard that, over time, then there was this calibration, that changed the percentages as well, and so lots of different ways to look at it.

It's really kind of figuring out what works in this case, in the Gulf, but, over here in the South Atlantic, the states could talk about what is the best way to look at this, what's the best way to think about where the fishery would rebuild, and would that change the distribution of red snapper on our coast.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you for that, Jessica. That was really, really helpful, because I'm just going to state my concern here, as we have this conversation, is just in relation to my state, which is North Carolina, and, when we look at how the data is collected, North Carolina again, it's all through MRIP, and I just feel, when we look at our catches -- They are a very abundant fish in our waters, but it's not being displayed necessarily through our MRIP catches. Our fishery is more offshore, we get less days to fish, and, when you see when we're catching say 1 percent, that's my concern going forward, to how my state is going to be represented in this scenario.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tom. Carrie, did you want to add anything to that discussion, as far as allocation?

DR. SIMMONS: I'm sorry, Madam Chair. Are you talking to me or someone else?

MS. MURPHEY: I'm sorry. Carrie Simmons, I didn't know whether you might want to add to the allocation discussion, since it was Gulf.

DR. SIMMONS: I think Jessica did a great job of explaining. I mean, it was a lot. We had a lot of -- There was a lot of meetings with the states. I mean, we looked at things a lot of different

ways. We looked at it by biomass, and I think we looked at it by effort. I was trying to pull up exactly what we landed on, but I think she is correct in her characterization.

I mean, I think, at the end of the day, there has to be a negotiation between the states, as to what they can live with, and that's kind of what the Gulf Council has asked them to do, and try to get nailed down, before we get the results of the next stock assessment, so that we can put those in the next amendment that would implement the changes based on the new assessment.

I also want to just speak a little bit to the conservation equivalency, and I think maybe Charlie was asking about that, versus delegation, and we did consider that. We went through the process, and I think the reason the council really ended up going with delegation is the amount of time it was going to take for the states to prepare, and I think it's like almost annually they would have to provide the conservation equivalency information, and having all five states do that -- I think that the thought was that was going to be cumbersome, and potentially, you know, take up a lot more time than was necessary, but I would have to go back and look at Amendment 50, but we did spend a lot of time talking about the conservation equivalency versus delegation.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks for that, Carrie. I have Andy, and then Amy and, then I have Robert, and then I have Clay,

MR. STRELCHECK: A comment back to Tom, and then I have some questions for Bob, and so, Tom, just to let you know, with regard to allocation, we had the exempted fishing permits, which the states essentially came together and came up with an allocation, but the amendment included eight alternatives under that action, including considering fishing effort, biomass, a whole host of different ways to distribute the allocation, and so there was a lot of effort, and thought, given, in terms of how we were going to allocate amongst the states.

So Bob indicated that I just needed to send him a fruit plate this morning, and evidently he would have taken over state management, and so, if it was that simple, I would have been more thoughtful this morning, and so sorry, Bob.

So I just really wanted to kind of drive home a couple of points, in terms the differences between the Gulf and Atlantic models. You and I talked during the break, and, you know, it seemed clear to me that you were recommending complementary management, rather than joint management, and so I just wanted to kind of get your take on that, given the complexity of one versus the other.

MR. BEAL: Thanks, Andy, and, yes, I'm still waiting on the fruit plate, but I'll probably have scurvy by the time that shows up, but that's a whole other thing. I'm not really recommending either of these, any approach, and, you know, should the states and want to go down this route, in coordination with the council, the cooperative management approach, where there's certain elements that are in the interstate FMP and certain elements in the federal FMP, I think that that provides the greatest amount of flexibility with the least amount of sort of administrative burden for the different groups to get together, and work together.

As I mentioned, the two joint process is cumbersome, you know, and it's a lot of work, and it's difficult, and the complementary approach allows the states to kind of do what they do well, and it allows the federal government to do what it does well, and what I mean by that is, you know, the flexibility that the states have in crafting recreational regulations, or effort controls, or

allocation, and distributing quotas throughout the year, and that sort of thing, and they can be nimble, and do that very quickly.

You know, that's a lot of what the states do in these complementary programs, and then the federal government, obviously bound by Magnuson, does a good job of setting ACLs and, you know, going through the assessment process, and the SSCs that develop the recommendations to the councils, and I think that works pretty well.

That strikes, in my mind anyway, that sort of happy medium of the state and federal cooperation, without having so much overlap and such an, you know, administratively burdensome process that it's just inefficient, and so that's -- You know, again, I'm not recommending, or suggesting, that we go in any of those directions, but if, you know, the groups wanted to go that way, that seems to be the best mix.

MR. STRELCHECK: Okay. Thanks for that, and then you and I talked, in terms of the models that you described for various species, and you manage, either jointly or complementary, the fishery as a whole, and so like the Gulf model separates out commercial and for hire, where it falls to, you know, essentially continued management by the Gulf Council, and NMFS, versus state management falling to the states, and then a delegation, and so you don't have any kind of split models like that where you're separating out sectors, correct?

MR. BEAL: Correct. They're all kind of all or nothing, you know, both commercial, recreational, and for-hire. All those are included in the either cooperative process or complementary process or joint process.

MR. STRELCHECK: Then the last question relates to kind conservation equivalency, and state-by-state quotas, versus regional quotas, and can you talk a little bit more about that, in terms of how that works?

MR. BEAL: Yes, and we -- On the commercial side, you know, there are a number of species that are in the joint management program that do have state-by-state quotas, and those are pretty straightforward. Each state gets a share, and, you know, the federal government and state government monitor it, and they close it when it's when it's landed.

On the recreational side, it gets a little bit more complicated. There are regions, and I think there are some state-specific management measures, and it's -- You know, each year, we look at what the recreational harvest limit is for that species, and then we also look at the performance of the suite of measures that collectively all the states have implemented, and, you know, then there's a determination made whether, you know, overall, you know, we exceeded the RHL, and reductions need to be made, or the opposite, and we were significantly under the RHL, and relaxation of regulations can occur.

The commission and Mid-Atlantic Council have developed a really complex process, where, each year -- They kind of dampen out the highs and the lows, because we were spending a lot of time what was called sort of chasing the RHL, and so you go one year, and you would be way under, and so you would relax your regulations, and then you would go way over, and now there's a system in place that's linked to the status of the stock, and sort of how far over or under the fishery performs, and there's -- It's kind of capped at about 10 percent, and so you can't -- In any given

year, if you're allowed to relax your regulation say 50 percent, you would be capped at this 10 percent increase, just to dampen out these highs and lows.

The same thing goes on the other side. If, you know, there's an indication that you really need to cut the fishery, you know, that's capped at about a 10 percent reduction as well, and it -- You know, the idea is, across the multiple years, you're going to have some highs, and some lows, but if you just sort of, you know, move along with that, it balances out, and it seems to be working.

We've only had that in place a couple years, but it seems to be an appropriate way, or at least a more predictable way, for the industry to know what's coming next, and it's not a lot of really highs and really lows. It's, as I said, dampened out across it, and so it is an annual review process, and an annual adjustment, but MRIP is the data currency on the recreational side right now for the east coast.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Bob. I've got Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to all the presenters, and all the information that was provided. It's refreshing to be able to learn through the Gulf experiences, as well as the recognition that the South Atlantic and the Gulf red snapper stocks are a little different from one another. Tom, I appreciate you recognizing data, and by far data is going to be a massive driver as we continue these conversations with the potential state management of red snapper.

I have a couple of comments/questions, and so, as you indicated, Jessica, the data collections in Florida, at least on, you know, the Atlantic coast are very directed sampling efforts for the mini-season, with your additional supplemental data through your SRFS program, and that's something that is very unique to Florida, and that the other three states in the South Atlantic can learn through that, but we don't currently have that, and so there is quite a divergence in the amount of data that is being collected, from a fishery-dependent standpoint, in our states, and Tom mentioned it, whereas our states right now are primarily MRIP.

I look at the kind of the short-term goals, and the long-term goals, where an EFP could really help bridge some of those gaps, and answer some of the questions for states to the north, with an idea of a long-term goal for additional supplemental data collections.

Now to the question, and so can you talk a little bit, or perhaps Carrie or others in the room, talk a little bit about how the states in the Gulf paid for their exempted fishing permits and/or any other data collections that they might have, and then just a magnitude of some of the costs associated with that, or am I getting too in the weeds here?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I certainly don't have that information at the ready. I could go get it. State Reef Fish Survey, in Florida, has a particular -- A legislative appropriation, but that's covering multiple species. I don't have like how much each year of the EFP costs, without doing a detailed analysis, including staff salary, dockside sampling, and other things of that nature.

MS. DUKES: Can I have a follow-up? Was oil spill money used for some of that as well in the Gulf for the states?

MS. MCCAWLEY: The oil spill money was used for state data collection programs early on, but there was a time limit, and so I want to say it was five years, and then, during that time period, states were trying to find their own state funding, in order to implement their state data collection programs.

MS. DUKES: Then, lastly fishery-independent data -- I am not as familiar with the fishery-independent data collections in the Gulf as I am with the South Atlantic, and I believe it's G Force, if I'm not mistaken, but are the fishery-independent indexes in the Gulf being used as an indicator, from a standpoint of how the state allocations, as well as the federal allocations in the Gulf, with landings, are progressing and moving along with fishery-independent data as any sort of indicator of if things are progressing well? I know the stock assessment is currently in process, and undergoing, but I was just curious as to if that's being looked at at all, from a tracking standpoint.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So yes. I guess the short answer is yes, and then I'll pass it to Andy and Clay. I mean, we have our own fishery-independent system, plus the Gulf has SEAMAP and others that are going out. A big thing in the Gulf is, as Andy was alluding to earlier, the fish that are offshore, you know, that are in deeper water.

That was a factor at play here in the Gulf, and lots of questions over time as to whether that those deepwater fish were kind of seeding the population for the inshore fish, and what is the role that the Mississippi River plays, and how it's kind of dividing up the stock, or are the fish moving east and west of the river, et cetera, but, yes, I think fishery-independent data is coming into play.

Also, the Gulf Great Red Snapper count came into play as well, including kind of looking at that to think about the percentages and where the fish were, and like where they were on artificial reefs, versus that Gulf Great Red Snapper Count talked about it as uncharacterized bottom, like sand and mud bottom, as a place where a lot of the fish were found off of many states, but I'm going to stop there and pass it to Andy or Clay.

MR. STRELCHECK: Clay can probably speak to this better, but, you know, think of the Gulf, and, obviously, it's not homogenous environment. The G-FISHER index, which was developed and funded in part with Deepwater Horizon funding, operates in, you know, very clear waters off the Florida coast.

It is expanded west, but, because of turbidity and other challenges, obviously, the fishery-independent monitoring, through cameras and other things, has to be done through a variety of different ways, and the Great Red Snapper Count used acoustics for a lot of that work. We have the longline survey, which is a long-running index of abundance, and then just the distribution of anglers and fishing effort population, and substantial differences going from Chris Schieble's State of Louisiana, which is a lot habitat and marsh, to, obviously, heavy population centers, like where I live in Florida.

A lot of different factors there, but, yes, we do have, obviously, information with regard to kind of differences in abundance. One of the big kind of sticking points for a while, and it may still be, is differences in biomass between the western and eastern Gulf, and how that plays, obviously, into allocations and distribution of quota going forward, because the assessment indicated the western

Gulf biomass was considerably higher than the eastern Gulf. I don't know, Clay, if you have anything to add.

DR. PORCH: Yes, and not too much. I would just elaborate that G-FISHER is a partnership between us and the video survey we used to do and work Florida is doing. Florida is our main partner, but now we're getting participation from the other states as well, and I do anticipate that will be a flagship survey for the Gulf of Mexico. It gets a large number of species, and we're making good progress on doing the automated image analysis, so we don't have to have a whole cadre of people trying to read all those videos, which is very expensive and time consuming.

Having said that, it's still a fairly nascent index. It's only a few years old, and so it wasn't really used to figure out state allocations, but it could potentially be, and, as Andy alluded to, the biggest challenge is in the less clear waters in the western Gulf, and what we're trying to do is pair up acoustic cameras with our video cameras and use that as a way to calibrate. You know, when you get in dirty water, you have the acoustics, and that will, again, I think feed into this being a flagship survey for us.

Now, we're doing similar things in the South Atlantic, although we don't usually have the same turbidity issues in the South Atlantic as we do in the Gulf, but we're expanding that survey too, and doing the automated image analysis, and so, potentially, using the expanded SRFS survey, you could do those kind of allocations, based on the distribution of fish that we see in the surveys, similar as was suggested for blueline tilefish.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, and let's see. We've got Robert next.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: A very obvious observation, I think the allocation issue in the Gulf is probably also complicated by the proximity of some of these states. I mean, I imagine a lot of the folks that live in Alabama probably come through Florida to go fish, and so I'm hopeful that, for us in the South Atlantic, that becomes a little bit easier.

I also heard that the states have sent in a letter requesting, you know, congressional support for these EFPs, and for funding, and so I'm hopeful that, if we get those rolling, we'll get some other data from some of the other states that will help us kind of figure out, and, you know, Tom, to your point, we just don't have a lot of data, because the fish are located so far offshore, and FES isn't capturing that, so hopefully that will help us clarify some of that.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Robert, and I was just going to say the states have been meeting and discussing the EFPs. We do not have any details to really share, but we're looking at Florida will be doing something a little different, and I think the other three states will probably be something similar, but we're doing it statewide, just for flexibility, but, yes, we really don't have any details, but I don't know if Jessica wants to add.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I think the intent would be for the states to submit an EFP to test for state management for 2026, and so testing the data collection system, for the states that don't already have one, and then also testing some form of state management for 2026, and so I think that the states are going to be working on that, and we hope to have something to present to the council at the December -- NOAA would present it to the council at the December council meeting.

MS. MURPHEY: So, anyway, I just wanted to make sure everybody was aware of that. I've got Clay, and then Carolyn.

DR. PORCH: Thank you, Chair. I'm intrigued by the idea of conservation equivalency, and I can see a lot of merit to that. You know, in particular, my mind goes to a state could potentially designate an area, say an artificial reef zone, as open all year long to red snapper harvest, and, at the same time, close an area to bottom fishing, to save the discards, and then convert the discards into landings, so they can land even more fish in the open areas, and I could see them doing something like that.

The question, for me though, is equivalency to what, and, getting to, Bob, your presentation, and so this is a question to you, and I noticed that MSY is conspicuously absent in your presentation, since you have different mandates, and I'm curious to the extent that, among the twenty-seven species, how many of them have a goal of achieving maximum sustainable yield, which is a Magnuson requirement, and, if not, what are the -- What other goals are the states really going for there?

MR. BEAL Thanks, Clay. It's -- All the species that we manage jointly, or complementary, with the federal government -- The commission is kind of backed into the Magnuson standards, and what I mean by that is, you know, on the joint management, if ASMFC and the Mid-Atlantic Council have to both approve a like motion, then, obviously, the Mid can't approve anything that violates the Magnuson provisions, and so, for all those species, we are bound by the maximum sustainable yield.

For the other species that -- You know, we're close to that on -- I'm trying to sort of go through them one-by-one, but we're pretty close to MSY on the rest of them, on the ones we have assessments for. You know, there are some species that all we can look at is trends in survey numbers, and landings and things, and so those are a little bit harder, you know, the shad and river herring, which are river-specific, and we've got, I don't know, forty different assessments on each river, and, you know, so some of those aren't really linked to MSY.

They're just linked to, you know, historical performance of the fishery, and those sorts of things, and so it's quite a range, but, you know, the species that we do have robust assessments for, we're pretty close to MSY. We also manage to, you know, F 30 percent, or F 40 percent, for a lot of our species as well, and so we're -- You know, it's -- The commission isn't implementing things that are -- You know, that lack the scientific rigor, or they're not implementing conservation programs that aren't effective, you know, and they are fairly conservative, and trying to get close to what's in Magnuson, but maybe have some flexibility to maneuver around a little bit, based on assessment quality and other things.

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

DR. BELCHER: I'm just kind of curious, because, obviously, ASMFC operates in a different capacity than the Gulf commission does, but how did the Gulf commission consider in this process? I mean, I know they don't have a similar piece as ACFCMA, I was just curious, because of data collections, and I know ACCSP, at one point before its origin, we were looking at the RecFIN and ComFIN modeling, that is now what's part of the Gulf, and so was the commission

part of the discussions, or did they opt out of the discussions, and, I mean, just a little bit more context for the commission.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I would say the Gulf States Commission was serving to bring the state directors together, and so helping to host the meetings, including paying for meeting space, et cetera, if things were needed. I will look to Chris, but they didn't really get into the data collection components, because each individual state was doing that, but, Chris, do you want to add anything here about what Gulf States did?

MR. SCHIEBLE: Thank you, Jessica, and so, also, I think they were instrumental in the most recent part of the process here with Mississippi and Alabama, going through the pilot test on LA Creel in those states, and they facilitated that, and they've also facilitated parts of the recreational initiative, which has been the discard workshops to look into the data, to get a better handle on electronic reporting options or, you know, self-reported data for discards.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Chris. Carrie Simmons, did you have anything else to add to this discussion?

DR. SIMMONS: I think that covers it, but, I mean, this was years of meetings, and discussions, and spreadsheets with different information that was discussed, a lot of times at the commission meetings, and then largely at the council meetings after that, and so it was a long, laborious process to come up with state apportionments.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thanks, Carrie. I've got Bob.

MR. BEAL: Thanks, Madam Chair, and I'll be real quick. Just, you know, a lot of my presentation, and the conversations, are hinging around the notion of an interstate FMP being developed, but, if the ASMFC's role is better for the states of just sort of providing a venue for the states to get together and talk about this, you know, we're more than happy to do that as well. I mean, I think we can -- That could be done during one of our quarterly meetings, where the states are there anyway, or off-cycle, but, you know, there's a lot of levels of ASMFC involvement, and we've done that before.

For southern flounder, the states wanted to talk about that, and we coordinated a stock assessment for that species, and that hasn't -- It wasn't done on a coastwide basis, and then there is no southern flounder FMP through the commission, but the states still communicated a lot, and worked through that, and then, the whelk fishery, up in the Mid-Atlantic and New England, the same thing. You know, there is no interstate plan, but the states have gotten together, a couple of times, and talked about whelk management, and what they're seeing in that fishery, through the commission process, but there's no formal ASMFC involvement, other than providing that venue to bring folks together.

MS. MURPHEY: Well, I think that would be greatly appreciated, if ASMFC could help facilitate, and so let's see. I have Amy next.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think everyone at this table recognizes that there's quite a bit of momentum right now in the South Atlantic for exploring the idea of state management. We have seen several letters from South Atlantic governors, and there's been the establishment of the congressional task force. I feel like this momentum could perhaps lead to

some of the funding deficits that I think some of the states are potentially thinking about, as well as sort of this idea of EFPs.

I mean, I think the idea of testing a suite of management options, that would be beneficial for each of the states independently, but yet have that cohesion amongst us, is really important. There's a lot of questions about catch and effort, and there's questions about how to execute permits, and there's a lot of questions about data collections, and which I'm really looking forward to having this conversation continue around data collections at our December meeting, because it all plays a very big role into this, and I'm just -- I'm very grateful for the presentations today.

They are really providing us quite a bit of insight about what happened in the Gulf, lessons learned, in ways for this council to move forward, perhaps without some of the time constraints, as much as it took in the Gulf, and then making sure that we are staying together, from a unification standpoint, that we're talking and continuing the communication, and so I appreciate this. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Amy. I've got Clay.

DR. PORCH: Thank you. I just wanted to follow-up on something Chris said with the Gulf States Commission and their role with recreational statistics. As many of you know, we actually pumped millions of dollars of IRA, Inflation Reduction Act, funding into the Gulf Commission, and the idea there was, one, helping to facilitate the move for Alabama and Mississippi to an LA Creel, and having side-by-side comparisons with FES, so we can do that backwards calibration in time for future stock assessments, and then, moving forward in time, having fairly consistent survey approaches, at least for the four of the five states, and hopefully Texas will come along too.

They've shown an interest to getting involved, but we've also set up Gulf States to be the final clearinghouse of all those recreational statistics coming in from the states, and so the states will report their data to the Gulf States, and then they'll stitch the final statistics together, and so I think that's been a very important development, and, in our case, because Gulf States didn't have say the same infrastructure that ACCSP already has, we spent a fair amount of money trying to build that infrastructure.

I think, if we move to this kind of state management model in the Atlantic, it's going to be equally important to have some common clearinghouse. Combining resources, state and federal, to come up with a better survey is, to me, a no-brainer. That's part of our recreational fisheries initiative, expanding that state and federal partnership. I know it's already happening, to some degree, in some places already, but having some place, perhaps like ACCSP, manage those statistics, sort of a neutral partner, I think could really help facilitate this process, and I'm curious to hear Bob's perspective on that.

MR. BEAL: I have to admit that I was reading something, Clay. Sorry about that.

DR. PORCH: I thought by throwing "ACCSP" out a few times that it might --

MR. BEAL: It would. The commission, obviously, houses ACCSP, and ACCSP has a rec technical committee and other things, you know, and they would -- I would imagine they would play a very active role in differing data collection programs in the Southeast.

As I mentioned earlier, you know, it's a notion of is it a replacement of MRIP, or is it a supplement of MRIP, and so I think, you know, having all those conversations at the ACCSP rec technical committee might be an effective group to help out with that, but I would see a scenario similar to the Gulf, where the recreational data does come through ASMFC, if there are either replacement or supplemental platforms that are implemented by the states. It still all goes back to your original point, which is consistency and compatibility for that data is probably the most important piece of this, so that states can compare what they're doing to their neighbors.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Bob. Jessica.

**MS. MCCAWLEY: So, just to clarify a little bit more about these EFPs that the states are working on, so I think that we are looking at the recreational component only, and, to kind of further these discussions, thinking about kind of how this happened in the Gulf, where you're simultaneously working on state EFPs, and then also working something through the council process, I would like to make a motion to initiate a plan amendment for state management of recreational red snapper.**

MS. MURPHEY: I have a motion on the table. I think John is putting it up. Do I have a second? Carolyn.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Can you put "recreational" in there?

MS. MURPHEY: Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: If we start this amendment focused on red snapper, is it possible to expand that to the entire snapper grouper complex, as we move through this?

MS. MURPHEY: I'll let Jessica address the motion, what's on the table right now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So I guess the short answer is yes, but I think that there's a few steps to get there, because, right now, the EFPs would be focused on the data collection system, and testing out state management just for recreational red snapper. I think, in Florida, we are -- We are going to hold some public workshops in October on what do people want to see for state management, and when do they want to fish, and I think that we would be pulling in some concepts from our existing EFPs, like the aggregate bag limit.

In implementing state management in our state, I think we're thinking that the aggregate bag limit comes into play, and then, also, when you do this plan amendment, and you're figuring out -- Because, once again, I think this would need to be five amendments, one overarching amendment and then an amendment for each individual state, or sub-amendments, or lettered amendments, or whatever it is, and I think that you could bring in aggregate bag limits for multiple species in there.

Even though you're doing state management for red snapper, you're bringing in the concept of the aggregate, and I think we're going to talk about the aggregate more this week. You're also in the process of moving species out of the fishery management unit, which will decrease the number of species that we're managing, and so I think that there's some steps that would need to occur before you get all the way there, and I think that some of those things could be covered in what you're

considering delegating to the state, like some type of snapper grouper aggregate limit, like what we're doing in the EFP.

That's about as much information as I can -- As my brain can process, thinking about how it worked in the Gulf, and thinking about where we want to get to, which I don't know that we know exactly what that looks like until we test with the EFPs, but this plan amendment, or multiple plan amendments, is going to take a considerable amount of time, and that's why I want to get it going right now, because we're talking like a two-year process to move like permanent state management for the recreational component, whether it's for red snapper or multiple species, and it's going to take like a two-year process through the council while the states are testing EFPs. I see it as kind of like an iterative process, where the state EFPs are going to inform this amendment, and back and forth, which was kind of what you heard of how it worked in the Gulf.

MS. MURPHEY: I'm just going to add, for North Carolina, I mean this -- The EFP is going to be a heavy lift for North Carolina, and I think, at this point, if we can just keep it to red snapper, I think it's going to be just an easier lift for all four states, and so, you know, I think, as we work through things, we'll get there, but, at this point, I'm more comfortable at it just being red snapper. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I know it's a long, long road ahead. First of all, I would like to know how this is going to fit in our workplan, considering the other stuff we've got going on, before I would support it, and there's just so many moving pieces, and I guess you can move to -- You know, to initiate it, and just work through the pieces as you get to them, or we wait until December, and maybe vote on this, and we know more about what pieces we want to be working on, but I would like to know, one, first, where it would fit in our workplan. because this is a lot of work.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Charlie, and I'll let John go to that.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes. Well, and we'll certainly look at that on Friday, and there's various ways this could fit in, but a lot of that is going to depend on things that you do this week with other stuff, such as the FMU changes, such as what is the direction the MSE takes, and what does that amendment that follows the MSE do, and what about the aggregate limits amendment, and so I think it's hard for me to say where this fits in, but I'm -- I feel fairly confident in saying there is a way for you to fit this in, and, to me, a lot it comes down to the pace at which this moves, and when activities start coming online, and so initiating a plan amendment I think lets the council make their intention clear, and then the details are, well, what does that mean?

You know, some people could say this discussion today was a step in that direction, and talking about data in December is working toward this amendment and so we are, in some ways, kind of doing this, but it's just a matter of, you know, when do you get to the point where you feel like you're ready to say, all right, well, what do actions and alternatives look like, and what do we go out and scope, and that would be the next, you know, big milestone for you all.

So, you know, we can look at the workplan and see when we're there to do these other pieces, and so I don't think that, you know, you should -- If you think this is the right thing to do, and it's necessary, I wouldn't hold off now voting for this, because, as you know, various things come up

from committees, and then you, as a council, smooth it all and find the compromise on Friday in the workplan.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and just another point to add to that, Charlie. Before you got back on the council, the council had developed, specific to red snapper, a short-term, mid-term, long-term management plan, and, to me, this fits in with the piece for the long-term management plan, and so, to me, this is just another component of what we already said that we were going to work on. and so the MSE was in that bucket of long-term as well, but we were -- We had a question-mark of exactly what would be in that long-term document, and so I think that this is a -- It will be a result of all of those discussions for long term, but, you know, that was something that we had come up with as a group, like short-term, mid-term, long-term actions.

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

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I had a question before Jessica's motion here, and this is to Clay. I support recreational red snapper -- The management of it by the states, but, at the same time, as a commercial industry rep, how do we decouple the recreational discards, whatever that may be, whatever process is done, from the commercial quota when we do a stock assessment?

I feel like, as we're giving opportunities to the recreational industry, their percentage of the fish, we should give that same opportunity to the commercial industry to harvest their side of the fish, and, as long as the commercial industry is coupled to recreational discards, I see a true disadvantage, and so my question to Clay is, in SEDAR 90, is it possible to have an ACL given from the outcome of the assessment to both sectors, and to take their dead discards off the top, and then both of them given their ACL, because until we do that, the commercial industry is not able to utilize its portion of a catch, because it's getting tied into another sector's discards.

Even if into the future, when we go by state management, hopefully the discard situation gets better, however that may be, but the commercial industry is continually tied into the fishing pleasure, the fishing outcomes, of the recreational industry, and, as a commercial fisherman, watching my industry decrease greatly, vastly, for numerous reasons, I think that's something that needs to be addressed, and I was wondering, Clay, if you could speak to that, how that would work, or if that is possible. Thank you.

DR. PORCH: Sure, and thank you for the question. It's certainly possible to -- In fact, we do model the discards separately during the closed season. You can't decouple it in the sense that, you know, discards actually have an impact on the population, and so the total take, including the discards, affects what you're allowed to harvest, as we do our projections, but the council could take into account the total number of discards and choose to count it as part of a quota that includes discards and landings, if that's what you're getting at, and so it's really an allocation issue, ultimately.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Exactly. What I'm getting at is, in the Mid-Atlantic, you're giving a -- It's my understanding that you're given -- The stock assessment spits out a quota, and both sides are given their ACL, based on historical percentages of the allocation, and their discards comes off the top, and they're given their ACL, is what I basically understand it to be, and I think, given the

gravity of both the recreational industry, and its effect on the commercial end, and the commercial needing access to this resource -- I just think it's something that this council would look to in the future. It needs to go that way. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Dewey. I've got Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to highlight Trish's comment here regarding this being a really heavy lift for North Carolina when it comes to the EFPs, right, and so I certainly can only really support this as long as it only includes red snapper at this time.

I appreciate your comment, Jessica, being that this is the first step in a really long process, that we'll have to have a lot that we're going to shake out, but I have a lot of questions here. I mean, a lot of questions. What are the EFPs going to look like? How long are we going to do them? Right? Like how -- When we're doing different ones in different states, how big are they going to be? How many fishermen are going to be able to participate in them?

I don't know the answers to the questions, because, as I have stated here today and in the past, the way we look at the catch of red snapper -- It severely disadvantages my stakeholders in North Carolina in the recreational and for-hire industry, and so I have to consider them going forward, and so I do have a lot of concerns. While I certainly support the idea of state management, because I think that's a big problem that we've had here, is the fisheries in our different states are just so different, and I think our states are best implemented in how we do some of that management, but how we get there is such a huge question for me that that I'm really struggling, moving forward.

MS. MURPHEY: I can understand that, Tom. I've got Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will just say that South Carolina DNR supports this motion as it's written right here. Red snapper would be the one species for us to start this process, to test this idea, to see if it would work. The idea of the EFPs is in fact a giant experiment, because we don't know exactly what it might look like in the end, and my hope is that these EFPs would be multiple years, and the Gulf's were for two, and perhaps the South Atlantic's could be even longer, because, as Jessica alluded, the plan amendment here would take perhaps several years, and that would give states the opportunity to try out different mechanisms for management options in our states, with respect to, you know, catch, effort, what have you.

I think this also -- This motion also gets back and builds upon our previous conversations yesterday, and facilitates that discussion about the EO response, and we did list this as a high priority, and it will be included in the EO response letter back, and we identified that this needs to have a better source for data collection, and an EFP, and this idea of state management of red snapper, gets to that executive order response, and it also highlights that side of the research and the monitoring plan moving forward. We need better data, and this is an opportunity for the states to potentially collect that good data. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Amy. I have Andy, then Robert.

MR. STRELCHECK: A question for Jessica, and then a few comments. Jessica, in terms of how the motion is written, are you intending this to be open-ended with regard to a lot of the different

ideas we discussed today with regard to state management, or is this more specific to kind of the Gulf model for state management?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't know that we know any of those things yet. I don't know if we know that the Atlantic could implement the Gulf model, and I just feel like there's so many unknowns right now, which is why the states are going to start by, you know, EFPs, and I would argue that I don't know that we fully know what is going to be in the EFPs, but we intend to try to submit something probably in November, so it can come to the council in December, but I think that, kind of like what Tom said, there's a lot of questions that still remain as we embark on this journey through a plan amendment.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks for that, and thanks for the clarification. So certainly the Fisheries Service stands ready to support the states in working through this. There's, obviously, a lot of details to be worked out, and Amy just mentioned, obviously, the presidential order, the executive order, and the support for the use of EFPs, and so we certainly are going to be supportive of that, and I think that's going to very much help inform, obviously, any sort of state management model going forward, and so making a motion today to initiate a plan amendment, recognizing it's going to be a longer process makes sense.

A couple of things that I would emphasize, and, you know, I appreciate the states working together right now on EFP ideas. The sooner you can include NMFS in that process, the better, because we're going to ultimately have to prepare the EFPs for notice and publication, public comment, and we want to be working with you, obviously, on consistency of EFP applications, and so a lot of coordination needs to happen, and lots of questions with regard to, you know, what the EFPs will request with regard to allocation of red snapper quota.

Right now, over 50 percent of our catch limit for next year is already allocated to Florida EFPs, and so what changes, if any, would occur based on the EFPs that have already been approved, versus other state management EFPs.

Then I think the key challenges that would be good to discuss, even starting today, is how we're going to continue to reconcile the small catch limit, which is thirty-times smaller than the Gulf catch limit right now, and I recognize we're waiting on the red snapper count, and as well as a short timeframe, and North Carolina has alluded to it, in terms of how you implement state surveys with EFP development, you know, ongoing between now and the end of the year, and then having a state survey development, obviously, developed in a very short timeframe thereafter. So, to me, it's not impossible to do, but I think there's really some key things that have to fall into place, and get resolved, and I think it's important that we have those discussions as soon as possible.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. I've got Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Thank you, Chair. I just wanted to circle back, Dewey, to your comments, and, just for a little bit of background, I believe I try to approach this not as a rec fisherman, or as a commercial fisherman. You know, while I am a recreational fisherman, we've got various interests in commercial fishing activities, and it's very important to my home and where I come from.

That said, if you think the commercial fishery is being punished as a result of these dead discards, I mean, the recreational fishery was facing a complete bottom closure. It's pretty drastic, you know, measures to address that, and what we've been working on, in Florida specifically, is trying to get the information we need to figure out how to convert those dead discards to landings, and that's where I see the value of the aggregate bag limit.

That's partly why I wanted to start that discussion here, because, if you just went pure red snapper, the rec sector, and even the commercial sector, could be impacted, a few years down the road, by overfishing of black grouper, or gag grouper, and so I think this is a multi-faceted issue, and I recognize all the questions, and it's going to take some time to work through, but I think that our approach, rather than focusing on the split of those dead discards, needs to be eliminate the dead discards, through an adjustment to our fisheries management approach.

I think that will yield a better result for everybody, the commercial sector, the rec sector, and our environment generally, and so I just wanted you to have a little background there, and make sure I was aligned with you, in that I do see the dead discards as an issue. I view it as waste, and it's not the rec sector's fault. They're just following the law. That's the plan that we've put in front of them.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and I'm very much aware of the issue. Even though it would be great if everything turned into landings, the commercial industry, at the stock assessment level, is still tied to the recreational industry, and so it would be great -- I just look at my industry, and what the value would be to the commercial industry to have them fish, and we, as commercial fishermen, can't do nothing about the recreational industry. We don't want to. We just want our portion of the pie, and to be able to go fishing and provide access to this resource, is what we do, and time is not on our side, as we have to watch this stuff play out.

You know, in a perfect world, it would be nothing thrown back on the recreational and commercial side and everybody, but that ain't the way it works, and I'm just looking for things that I've seen work in other areas, and in the Mid-Atlantic, and there's not very many of us commercially left, as our numbers and things, and it shows that, and so, while we work through these issues, and I'm supportive of state-by-state management of red snapper, but I just continue to wonder why, you know, we can't do it like this.

You know, maybe by state-by-state, and them counting the fish, they count less, or there's less there than what MRIP counts, but I just think that each sector in these particular fisheries need to be accountable to their discards, whatever that may be, or whatever formula is chosen, because, if we were not tied to the recreational, or the catch of the recreational tied to us, but particularly the red snapper, and, when you have an allocation that's 72/28, or thereabouts, I see the discard part of the numbers tied to what the commercial harvest could increase, and allow us to be viable, and so that's why I bring that up.

I understand that, but time is not on the commercial's side. We're not afforded that luxury. Our industry has been decimated, and we saw that at the last update that was provided to the council at the last meeting, that I watched online, and so that's my reason for bringing it up.

If I -- If my industry had our piece of the pie, we would be fine. I mean, let us catch our piece of the pie and go on, but we're tied to the recreational industry with this issue, and so that's why --

There's no animosity, and that's why I just look at it, and it's the fact that we're tied to it, and so I would hope that, in some way, the recreational industry would say, you know what, and it may not be -- It may be in state-by-state management, but we're going to account for our stuff, and the commercial -- Here's your percentage. It's possible to do, but it takes the will of the, you know, the people around this table. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you. I'm going to call on Charlie, and then Jessica, and then I'm going to go ahead and call the question. Charlie, or wait a second, Charlie. Myra is hollering at me.

MS. BROUWER: Madam Chair, I'm sorry. If you could put in the queue, and I just want to ask a question. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Go ahead, Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, we've mentioned regional management, and we've touched on conservation equivalency. Are all of these options going to be included in this motion, or is it just strictly state management, because I would like to see -- I would like to leave the whole list of options in here when we start looking at how we want to manage. I don't want to limit us right off the bat. I would like to leave this larger, if at all possible, depending pleasure of the committee.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and I understand that. I'll let Jessica -- Did you want to --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I was going to address something that Andy asked earlier, and so I think that this is just to get the ball rolling, and so I think that anything is on the table for discussion, and that would be something that we would have to figure out as we discuss this plan amendment, and so I'll say that I think any part of those ideas are part of this discussion, and it doesn't have to look just like the Gulf, I guess.

You just got presentations today on how it worked in the Gulf, and that doesn't mean that we've got to do a carbon copy over here, because I don't think it's going to work exactly the same way, but I was going to respond to something that Andy asked a question about, wanting to talk about quota today, and I don't -- First, I would like to say I don't think the states are ready.

We are trying to meet outside these meetings, as part of the process, like what happened in the Gulf, to try to get ready. I think that we hope to have something soon. We also were kind of waiting for the Atlantic Great Red Snapper Count, to really kind of dive into that, to understand where the stock is, and where the fish are, before really getting into those conversations, and so I don't feel like that we could have those conversations today. I want to know more information about the Patterson study before diving into that.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thanks, Trish, and this is a question for Andy, just a clarification, and I thought I heard you say that, starting next year, the red snapper that's out, that's being harvested, I guess, by the Florida EFPs, is going to start counting towards the total ACL, and I'm not sure I heard that correctly, and so if you could clarify. Thank you.

MR. STRELCHECK: What I said was that over 50 percent of that catch limit essentially is allocated to exempted fishing permits, and that's probably not the best way to put it, but it's over 12,000 fish that essentially are being tracked as part of the EFPs. Yes, you're correct that it's not tracked against the catch limit, but we have to look at the cumulative total overall harvest, and how these EFPs play into not only the allowable harvest, but also any sort of exempted fishing permits that we're allowing additional harvest for.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. We have a motion on the table. I figured, since this was kind of a big one, we'll just vote by show of hands. **All for this motion to initiate a plan amendment for state management of recreational red snapper, raise your hands. I've got twelve for. Anybody against or abstentions? All right. The motion passes.** Thank you, all.

I wanted to kind of capture the discussion before this motion came, but I just want to make sure -  
- You know, with this discussion, some of the things that were identified here were concerns of discards of other fish, how is this allocation going to work, you know, how is it -- You know, is conservation equivalency something to consider, and I've got ASMFC as a possible facilitator for the states, and also discussion of the data clearinghouse, which I guess would be ACCSP.

You know, there were questions about what are the EFPs going to look like, and concerns of advantages and disadvantages to states, inclusion of NMFS on these EFP discussions, and also the discussion of decoupling commercial from recreational discards, and so those are some of the points I captured from this discussion. Is there anything else to add? Anything that anybody disagrees? Go ahead, Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Possible regional. Instead of states, possibly regional, or at least I want it listed in the list.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you. Anything else? Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: So, when I look at your agenda, what's published in the Federal Register talks about an informational session on state management relative to federal marine resources, and so I think I would urge you to keep this -- Along the lines of what Charlie said, to keep this as a very broad scope of what you're looking at, to make sure that the public has an opportunity, at least in December, or whenever you decide to bring this forward, that they've got some ability, and notice, really, right, to give you more information and public input, because I think we could -- In terms of this isn't a council decision, under the regulations or the Magnuson Act, but it's certainly -- There's no mention of red snapper on your published agenda, but, given the state management portion of what's published in the agenda, I think you could fit this within there, as long as you keep it broad, and you're not, you know, already narrowing down all the aspects of what you want to consider.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Monica. Something else that we were going to hit on, before we go, was there some topics for potential presenters for the December data session, and I know we're going to be talking about MRIP, and I'll get John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Just what we had talked about before, and I think hearing from ACCSP was something that was on the list, just given, you know, the discussion for a clearinghouse and the job that they already do. MRIP is a potential, and I think Florida, and we've heard a lot about

the Florida data collection program, but I think there may be a more focused presentation that would be useful, and I think, in the past, there's also been discussion of like potentially more about things like LA Creel, since that seems to be the way the Gulf is going, and so that's a few things that I had to start with.

I think we would be -- You know, four or five presentations and discussion, as we see this morning, would eat up, you know, a morning session type of thing, and so that's what we had in mind when we talked about this back in June, is probably a similar session to this, like a half-day.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We also talked about a presentation, like the data analysis from the first year of Florida's three EFPs, and so that was on the list as well.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Jessica. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: It's been implied that there's discussions, at least with Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina maybe, of using a similar survey, or app, and I don't know if that aligns with LA Creel, or what state survey program that might align with, but I think that would be the best use of our time, if there is something that's kind of building momentum with those three northern Gulf states.

The other thing, that may just be a very quick update, is we could ask either Gregg Bray or Dave Donaldson to give a high-level overview of the seven projects that were approved at the Gulf, that will get started next year, looking at discards and fishing effort estimation.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Andy. Anybody else have any other -- Go ahead, Chris.

MR. SCHIEBLE: I can offer a few parting thoughts on this, if anybody wants to entertain that, and I know we're coming up on lunch, but I guess one thing that I haven't heard any discussion of around here is the inclusion of a landing permit, and I think the landing permit is a critical component to all of this, when you're going through state management.

The states have their different unique landing permits, but they all serve the same purpose, and the purpose, in my mind, is to define that user group of offshore saltwater anglers and to separate them from the entire component of saltwater anglers, so you don't have people that are catching spotted seatrout included in your effort estimates for red snapper. The permit defines that, and so, for example, we have a half-a-million saltwater licenses in Louisiana, and we only have about twenty-some-thousand ROLP holders, which is the landing permit for offshore.

If we extrapolated our effort to 500,000 saltwater anglers on a weekly basis, we would burn through the allocation, and the quota, in about two weeks, and we wouldn't have the snapper seasons that we currently have, and so I encourage you to couple that with your discussions as you move forward on this, and maybe that could be included in the EFP testing, is also the potential of a landing permit. Ours is free, and I don't think it needs to be, but I also encourage you to separate it from your license frame, so that it's a separate thing that you anglers have to go get.

You buy a Louisiana fishing license, and it asks if you want to go offshore fishing, and you say yes, and it sends you to a different website, completely separate from our licensing frame, to go get that permit, so you don't get oversubscription of people just checking a box, and saying they're going to go offshore fishing, and they never go, but they get included in that effort.

Another thing, going forward, I think the exempted fishing permits themselves -- They don't all need to be the same. Each state can define their own unique exempted fishing permit that's particular to their state, and so I encourage you to look at the ones that are done the Gulf. They're at the Gulf Council website, and I don't know exactly how you find it, but it's there, and I encourage you to look at them.

So, for example, in Louisiana, we already had LA Creel in 2014. It was certified through MRIP in 2015, and then the exempted fishing permits started in 2018 and 2019. We chose to test an electronic reporting app, and that was our component for our exempted fishing permit, because we already had the data collection system in place. Other states tested data collection systems, and so it doesn't have to all be the same, or standardized, in the EFPs.

I guess, finally, going forward, you have a template to follow in the Gulf, and so I think your timeline is going to be more truncated than what we dealt with, and so you've got about two years of the EFPs, like Jessica said, and it's not going to be as long a duration of that timeline like you saw in those presentations, and I think that's a good thing, because you guys can get this moving a whole lot quicker than we did, and learn from the mistakes, and the hidden obstacles in the room that we tripped over, and allocation is not as bad as it sounds.

I think you guys can work through that, and get that straight, and, finally, we -- Louisiana has helped Alabama and Mississippi implement an LA Creel system within their states for free. We've sent technical staff, and we've had meetings with them, and so I encourage you to reach out to us, if you're thinking about a similar state reporting system, and we're willing to help.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you so much, Chris. John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Chris, I think it's a really good point about the overall saltwater anglers, versus those who are participating in your programs, and you think, if our staff were to reach out to the states, they would be willing to share similar information, and we could provide that to the council, without having to, you know, just ask everybody to come and talk about it.

MS. MURPHEY: Anything else before we break for lunch? I don't think we've got any time, and we might as well just go and break for lunch. Anybody have anything else before we break for lunch? We'll come back at 1:30, and so thanks.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on September 16, 2025.)

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Certified By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Transcribed By  
Amanda Thomas  
October 23, 2025

FC I mon  
9/15

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

Sonny Gwinn

Chris Schieble

Dr. Clay Porch

Monica Smit Brunello

DeLany Farrell

Kristin Foss

Rick Bellator

Dr. Walter Buble

Tracey Smart

Cassidy Peterson

Tom Carruthers

Dr. John Walter

FC 7 Mon  
9/15

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9/14

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

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Kathy Knowlton

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Heather Blough

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September 2025

## Attendee Report: Council Meeting

Report Generated:

09/22/2025 06:59 AM EDT

**Webinar ID**

302-385-691

**Actual Start Date/Time**

09/15/2025 07:50 AM EDT

## Staff Details

**Attended**

Yes

**Interest Rating**

Not applicable for staff

## Attendee Details

**Last Name**

**First Name**

Addis

Dustin

Aines

Alex

Alexander

Sheila

Alexander

Nathan

Baker

Scott

Barger

Jeff

Barile

Peter

Barrows

Katline

Beal

Bob

Bernier

Quinn

Bianchi

Alan

Boots

Benjamin

Borland

Gary

Brantley

William

Brouwer

Myra

Buntin

Jesse

Bunting

Matthew

Burky Lechwar

Heather

Byrd

Julia

Carrigan

Abby

Carruthers

Tom

Cermak

Bridget

Cerny-Chipman

Elizabeth

Clinton

Haley

Clinton

Haley

Corbett

Ellie

Cox

Jack

Curtis

Judd

Darden

Tanya

Davis

Conor

DeVictor	Rick
Degan	Jacqui
DiJohnson	Alex
Dingle	Julie
Dover	Miles
Downes	Athena
Dukes	Amy
Dyar	Ben
Dyar	Ben
Ealahan	Maranda
Emory	Meaghan
Evans	Joseph
Finch	Margaret
Flowers	Henry
Floyd	Brad
Foor	Brandon
Foss	Kristin
Gentner	BRAD
Gloeckner	David
Gooding	Elizabeth
Gore	Karla
Gray	Alisha
Griffin	Aimee
Griner	Tim
Guyas	Martha
HEMILRIGHT	DEWEY
Hadley	John
Hallas	Sara
Hart	Hannah
Helies	Frank
Helmey	Judy
Hiers	Homer
Hildreth	Delaine
Hooten	Jackson
Hordyk	Adrian
Horton	Chris
Huber	Jeanette
Hudson	Joseph
Hull	Jimmy
Iberle	Allie
Ingram	Jamal
Iverson	Kim
Kalinowsky	Chris
Karnauskas	Mandy

Keppler	Blaik
Klasnick	01Kelly
Knowlton	Kathy
Larkin	Michael
Lazarre	Dominique
Leavel	Lillie Callaway
Levy	Mara
Locke	Charles
Lopez-Mercer	Maria
Lorenzen	Kai
M Dobbs	Jeffrey
Mackesey	Brendan
Marhefka	00Kerry
Masi	Michelle
McClair	Genine
McGill	Maria
McManus	Brian
Mehta	Nikhil
Merck	Nicole
Meyers	S
Murphey	Trish
Neer	Julie
Newman	Thomas
Oliver	Ashley
Ott	Emily
Package-Ward	Christina
Peterson	Cassidy
Phillips	Charlie
Ramsay	Chloe
Records	David
Reding	Brandon
Reynolds	Kris
Rivera Garcia	Liajay
Robbins	Megan
SCHLICK	CJ
Seeley	Matthew
Seward	McLean
Silvas	Rachael
Smit-Brunello	Monica
Solinger	Laura
Spratt	Paige
Spurgin	Kali
Stemle	Adam
Stephen	Jessica

Stephens	Haley
Stephenson	Sarah
Sweetman	CJ
Turley	Brendan
Vecchio	Julie
Walia	Matt
Walsh	Mick
Walter	John
Wamer	David
White	Geoff
Williams	Erik
Willis	Michelle
Withers	Meg
Zapf	Daniel
collier	chip
lee	Jennifer
marinko	Jeff
moss	david
o	o
oden	jeff
poholek	ariel
riley	Rick
roller	tom
sandorf	scott
sinkus	Wiley
thomas	suz
vara	mary
zales	bob
Barbieri	Luiz
Black	Karlisa
Bogdan	Jennifer
Bradshaw	Christopher
Bruning	Jake
Cody	Richard
Fields-Rivera	Kayla
Gannon	Megan
Harmon	Jake
Hatcher	Dale
McWaters	Mark
Nejjari	Amber
O'Donnell	Kelli
Puglise	Kimberly
Reynolds	Kris
Sedberry	George

Smith  
Tidball  
Walsh  
Warren  
Wilms  
Wilms

Leah  
Victoria  
Jason  
Camilla  
Sean  
Olivia

September 2025

## Attendee Report: Council Meeting

Report Generated:

09/22/2025 07:02 AM EDT

**Webinar ID**

302-385-691

**Actual Start Date/Time**

09/16/2025 07:36 AM EDT

## Staff Details

**Attended**

Yes

**Interest Rating**

Not applicable for staff

## Attendee Details

**Last Name**

**First Name**

Addis

Dustin

Aines

Alex

Angers

Jeff

Aukeman

trip

Bajema

Jordan

Baker

Scott

Barbieri

Luiz

Barger

Jeff

Barile

Peter

Barrows

Katline

Beal

Bob

Bernier

Quinn

Bianchi

Alan

Black

Karlisa

Bogdan

Jennifer

Boots

Benjamin

Borland

Gary

Brantley

William

Brouwer

Myra

Brown

Hunter

Buntin

Jesse

Bunting

Matthew

Burky Lechwar

Heather

Byrd

Julia

Carrigan

Abby

Cermak

Bridget

Clinton

Haley

Corbett

Ellie

Cox

Jack

Crosson

Scott

Curtis	Judd
Dancy	Kiley
Darden	Tanya
Davis	Conor
DeVictor	Rick
Degan	Jacqui
Delaney	Glenn
DiJohnson	Alex
Diagne	Assane
Dingle	Julie
Dover	Miles
Dukes	Amy
Dunn	Russell
Ealahan	Maranda
Emory	Meaghan
Evans	Joseph
Farrell	Delaney
Fields-Rivera	Kayla
Finch	Margaret
Flowers	Henry
Floyd	Brad
Foss	Kristin
Franco	Dawn
Froeschke	John
Gentner	BRAD
Gialanella	Tiffany
Gloeckner	David
Gomez	Josalyn
Gooding	Elizabeth
Gore	Karla
Gray	Alisha
Griffin	Aimee
Griner	Tim
HEMILRIGHT	DEWEY
Hadley	John
Harrell	Ryan
Hart	Hannah
Haymans	Doug
Helies	Frank
Helmey	Judy
Herrick	Daniel
Hiers	Homer
Hildreth	Delaine
Hollensead	Lisa

Hordyk	Adrian
Huber	Jeanette
Hudson	Joseph
Hudson	Joseph
Hull	Jimmy
Iberle	Allie
Iverson	Kim
Juliano	Jocelyn
Kalinowsky	Chris
Karnauskas	Mandy
Kellison	Todd
Keppler	Blaik
Klasnick	01Kelly
Klibansky	Lara
Knowlton	Kathy
Kolmos	Kevin
Larkin	Michael
Lazarre	Dominique
Leach	Scott
Leavel	Lillie Callaway
Levy	Mara
Lind	M
Locke	Charles
Lorenzen	Kai
M Dobbs	Jeffrey
Mackesey	Brendan
Marhefka	00Kerry
McClair	Genine
McCoy	Sherylanne
McGill	Maria
McManus	Brian
McWaters	Mark
Mehta	Nikhil
Merck	Nicole
Meyers	S
Mikaljian	Amanda
Monk	Melissa
Murphey	Trish
Neer	Julie
Nejjari	Amber
Newman	Thomas
O'Donnell	Kelli
Oliver	Ashley
Ott	Emily

Owens	Marina
Package-Ward	Christina
Perkinson	Matt
Phillips	Charlie
Ramsay	Chloe
Records	David
Reed	John
Rindone	Ryan
Robbins	Megan
Rule	Erica
SCHLICK	CJ
Salmon	Brandi
Saurman	Emma
Schmidtke	Michael
Seeley	Matthew
Seward	McLean
Silvas	Rachael
Simmons	Carrie
Smillie	Nick
Smit-Brunello	Monica
Smith	Leah
Solinger	Laura
Spanik	Kevin
Spurgin	Kali
Stemle	Adam
Stephen	Jessica
Stephens	Haley
Stephenson	Sarah
Sweetman	CJ
Turley	Brendan
Vecchio	Julie
Waldo	Jennifer
Walia	Matt
Walsh	Mick
Walsh	Jason
Walter	John
Wamer	David
White	Geoff
Wiegand	Christina
Williams	Erik
Willis	Michelle
Wilms	Olivia
Wilms	Sean
Withers	Meg

Zapf	Daniel
colby	barrett
collier	chip
gwin	sonny
marinko	Jeff
moss	david
oden	jeff
peters	sophonda
poholek	ariel
roller	tom
sandorf	scott
sinkus	Wiley
thomas	suz
vara	mary
vincent	matthew
zales	bob
Alexander	Nathan
Alexander	Sheila
Bradshaw	Christopher
Bruning	Jake
Carruthers	Tom
Cerny-Chipman	Elizabeth
Clinton	Haley
Cody	Richard
Downes	Athena
Dyar	Ben
Dyar	Ben
Foor	Brandon
Gannon	Megan
Guyas	Martha
Hallas	Sara
Harmon	Jake
Hatcher	Dale
Hooten	Jackson
Horton	Chris
Ingram	Jamal
Lopez-Mercer	Maria
Masi	Michelle
Peterson	Cassidy
Puglise	Kimberly
Reding	Brandon
Reynolds	Kris
Reynolds	Kris
Rivera Garcia	Liajay

Rudershausen

Sedberry

Spratt

Tidball

Warren

lee

o

riley

P

George

Paige

Victoria

Camilla

Jennifer

o

Rick