

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

COUNCIL SESSION II

**Hilton Garden Inn Outer Banks/Kitty Hawk
Kitty Hawk, North Carolina**

December 12, 2025

Transcript

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Other observers and participants attached.

The Council Session II of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Hilton Garden Inn Outer Banks/Kitty Hawk in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina on Friday, December 12, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Trish Murphey.

MS. MURPHEY: Well, it looks like everybody is ready, and so do you want to go ahead and start? One thing we need to go -- So I'll start with this is Full Council II. The first thing we'll do is we'll have Marcel present the SSC other agenda items, because that got missed on Monday, and so we'll go ahead and turn it over to Marcel to open and to go over all SSC stuff, and so thanks.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you, Madam Chair. I only have three slides, and so I'll try to be brief. Julie Neer and Emily Ott provided the SSC with an overview of the proposed new SEDAR process. We had really good discussion, and the SSC really welcomes the proposed expanded input of the committee, especially during model development. However, because we really don't know how everything is going to work out, there were some concerns about the overall SSC workload.

The SSC made several recommendations for the new process. We felt that it would be good to hold a kind of a kickoff, or what we called a kickoff meeting with the assessment technical team, fishery stakeholders, and other experts before assessment development. That would help to identify useful data and assessment approaches. Several SEP members mentioned that it is very important that stakeholder representation needs to be sincere to ensure further -- To ensure buy-in and avoid further erosion of public trust, and the committee agreed. We recommended that the ATT is updated during the process, by one or more follow-up meetings, to inform stakeholders of the progress, and also to provide an opportunity for additional feedback.

Relative to the terms of reference, we thought it would be a good idea to develop separate terms of reference templates for Science Center and for SEDAR assessments. The SSC also mentioned that, if the terms of reference are established prior to stakeholder input, it's possible that valuable knowledge of the fishers and others may be lost, and we, of course, realize that the AP can provide that information, but there may be other information available outside the AP.

Given some of the workload and other concerns, a review of how and when the process works would be beneficial, and the SSC plans to do kind of an internal review and discussion of how everything works for us as an SSC, in terms of effectiveness, the check-in, the realized workload, et cetera, after a couple of years.

Also, the SSC asked if council staff could provide a brief update on ongoing assessments during regular quarterly SSC meetings. That gives us an idea of what's going on. In addition, we recommended that at least one so-called check-in is held for every assessment before final model review. This would give the SSC an opportunity to provide some feedback before finalizing the assessment model.

We also discussed that maybe one or two additional short SSC meetings, for instance as webinars, would be good to allow for a more iterative process during the model development and review. We also asked about the need for flexibility during the SSC review phase, so that potential changes to the model are possible, as opposed to one single final review. We noted that, of course, that may affect throughput if any changes require an official revision request, for instance, from SSC to council to Science Center.

During our discussions, we realized that the terminology was sometimes confusing, and so we felt it would be good to develop a table to ensure consistent terms for the different groups, the stages, the meetings, et cetera, and also to ensure consistent expectations and roles of the participants in each stage.

I have only one slide left, and so, Madam Chair, if you are okay, I'll go through that before I answer any questions. Last slide, please, and these are the remaining items on our agenda. Judd provided a summary of amendments that you're working on. We provided feedback to the terms of reference for Spanish, king mackerel, and snowy grouper, and our recommendations are in the draft TORs. The only agenda item that we were not able to discuss was the dolphin MSE, and I expect we'll be doing that in one of our upcoming meetings.

We received a recorded presentation on the revised MRIP-FES, similar to what you received earlier this week, and the SSC requested to receive a revised survey and statistical design, calibration of methods, and uncertainty specific to the South Atlantic region, or that we receive an update, another presentation, on these topics. We also thought it would be good to have the SEP review the methodologies used in the development of the new survey.

We also had an excellent presentation by Dr. Tracey Smart and Rich Harrington on the genetic study of black sea bass, and the SSC had a highly technical discussion on the methodology and the statistical analysis. The bottom line is that the SSC agrees with the conclusions of that genetic study that supports separate genetic stocks between the South Atlantic and the Mid-Atlantic/New England area at the North Carolina-Virginia border.

The SSC approved the workplan for the Joint Gulf and South Atlantic MSY Proxy Working Group, but we asked for clarification about how chairing this workgroup would work, and I think the current plan is that one of the council staff members will facilitate the discussions, so that all SSC members can fully participate in the workgroup discussions, and three SSC members volunteered to be part of this working group.

Finally, we discussed the various other SSC working groups and SEDAR panels, and added members where that was needed, and now that completes my report, Madam Chair, and I'm glad to answer any questions that the council may have.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Marcel. Anybody have any questions for Marcel? Go ahead, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Marcel, for the presentation. I think this is great, and I really like the feedback about the technical teams. I'm curious if the SSC has had a chance to talk any more with the Science Center and get any reactions, or thoughts, on this. Unfortunately, Clay has been sick this week, and not here at the table, and so I wanted to just ask on behalf of the Science Center.

DR. REICHERT: We have not, or I have had no follow-up discussions. As I mentioned earlier, the SSC meeting occurred during the federal shutdown, and so we did not have any opportunity to get some feedback from the Science Center yet.

MR. STRELCHECK: Okay. Well, I'll certainly share this with Clay and team, and make sure there's some feedback loop, but I think they're going to be onboard with your recommendations. I like also the fact that you want to kind of come back to this, and give some input with regard to

how it's working, and I think we probably want to do that sooner rather than later, as we kind of adapt to this new process, and so thanks for that.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Marcel. Just one question on the black sea bass genetic study that -- I saw that also, and so nothing has really changed since the last genetic study that they had, and so it kind of puts to rest the theory that, where the bass have declined at the southern end, that they didn't transport to the Mid-Atlantic.

DR. REICHERT: Yes, and I believe that's the general consensus. Also, the SSC mentioned some other studies, one by Julie Vecchio at South Carolina DNR, and others, and I think Dr. Buckel did some studies on black sea bass movement, and black sea bass generally doesn't move around a lot, and so there was some other information available that strengthened our idea that it wasn't that black -- That a large part of the black sea bass population moved north. I hope that answers your question.

MR. HULL: Yes, it does, but it begs another question, and so did the SSC discuss what possibly could have happened to the animals in the southern end of the South Atlantic range of black sea bass and why the population diminished so badly?

DR. REICHERT: No, we did not, because that was not part of our discussion. Our discussion at our last meeting was strictly to that genetic study, and so we did not discuss this, other than what we discussed before during our black sea bass stock assessment review. We had several -- We discussed that at several of our meetings.

MS. MURPHEY: I've got a hand online. John.

DR. WALTER: Good morning, everyone, and thanks. I'm filling in for Clay here, who is a bit under the weather. I just wanted to thank Marcel and the SSC for the presentation and say it's good to see that there's momentum here for some of the changes that we're working on together.

The only concern is that we don't want to backslide to having as many meetings as we had before, and so, you know, while we get the recommendation for some check-in meetings, I think, as we work through the process of the technical teams, and gain some comfort with that process, we want to certainly hope that we can maintain the throughput, and be a little more efficient, and not have to have as many meetings as we have had in the past, noting that that really is the goal here, is to become more efficient, and to be able to provide advice in a more rapid timeframe, so that it is more current with the things that are going on in the water. We're open to some more conversations, I think, and hopefully we'll be at the table, at the meeting, for the next SSC, so we can have that conversation on how this is going to work out. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John. Anything -- Anyone else? Okay. Marcel.

DR. REICHERT: Real quickly, to that point, I think the SSC is very sensitive to that, and the balance between throughput and the potential for SSC input, and so we did discuss that in our meeting, and, of course, as an SSC, we also would like to see more throughput, and so thank you for that, and I'm looking forward to further discussions with the Science Center.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Marcel, and so now we will be moving into committee reports. I said we're going to do reports. Are we doing reports? Would you all rather do the workplan first? You would? All right. We're going to make a slight change to the agenda and go with the workplan. Okay. If you want to go ahead and do the workplan, that's fine. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Just a dumb question, and so I don't mind putting this first, but then I guess we just need to be diligent when we go through the committee reports and change the timing and tasks motions, so that it matches the decisions that we make in the workplan.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, that's right. If we end up making some major change, we can always bring it back and look at that impact at the end.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and that sounds like a plan, and so we can pull this up anytime, I guess. All right. Take it away, you guys.

MR. HADLEY: All right, and so what's on the screen now is the revised workplan, based on the input this week and a few other items that have come up. If you click on the link on the meeting webpage, this will come up on your own device, if you want to follow along on your own computer, but, anyway, so, you know, as has been the case in the past, we'll start from the top. Those are sort of your active amendments.

As you move down, you have your sort of planned amendments that have a timeline associated with them, and then, at the bottom, the sort of other catch-all, other council activities that will be discussed at future council meetings, and so, you know, if there's a little highlight magenta there, those are the items that I kind of flagged that have changed, changed this week, and I'll start from the top and sort of go down.

The long-term snapper grouper MSE response, that added another meeting, just because I think that may need another meeting or two, just before we can start getting a more formal amendment document together on that, but that will be coming back to you through next year. Then, moving down, the next change is the evaluation of the Snapper Grouper Amendment 61. We added a meeting for that, just to reflect that we probably need a little bit more discussion on that before a public hearing document could be ready, and so we extended that out one meeting.

Then the snapper grouper commercial fishery amendment as well. As you recall, when you discussed that, you were good with sliding that one meeting, and allowing a little bit more time to develop the actions and alternatives and a public hearing document, and, to go along with that, there's the golden tilefish assessment response. That was taken off of the March agenda meeting, because that will be folded into another amendment, perhaps the snapper grouper commercial fishery amendment, and I think we'll have a more solid plan coming up, but that was taken off of the March meeting, to reflect the council's discussion yesterday.

Additionally, the hogfish assessment response amendment has -- That was originally, in your previous workplan, that was scheduled to be discussed in March. That has moved, for the assessment response discussion, to December, just to reflect the SSC review timeline on that.

Then, moving down, there are several other items here. These are the other activities, and so the non -- Necessarily non-FMP related activities, and so the updated goals and objectives for outreach efforts, and so there will be a short sort of outreach-related agenda item in March.

Additionally, we noted that there will be a Snapper Grouper Commercial Subcommittee meeting. That time is accounted for in the amendment, and so I don't want to double-count that, but I wanted to reflect that that will be occurring at your March meeting.

The item related to setting allocations and catch levels with inclusion of discards, that was taken off of the March meeting. That probably needs a little bit more discussion amongst staff, and also amongst the SSC, before it's ready to be presented to the council, and so, you know, that's not to say that work is not continuing on that, but it will likely not be ready for council review in March, and so that's a little bit of a change there, and we also added a discussion of the innovation plan for the snapper grouper fishery, and so sort of a follow-up to the discussion yesterday, to continue the discussion into March.

A few other items, and I will note you have the updated SERO priority items, and so these are the primary and secondary priorities from the agency. There's a column there that captures that for the amendments that are in development, and then, also, towards the bottom here, the amendments that are undergoing rulemaking, and so there's the agency primary and secondary rulemaking-related priorities.

Finally, there was one addition that was added to your anticipated amendments category in the table here, and so, as you may recall from I believe it was in June, there was a plan amendment to update catch levels for unassessed species, and that was removed from the workplan, and just due to an uncertain timeline, but I did want to add that back down in there.

Those unassessed species catch levels will likely be updated, perhaps after the revised information from MRIP is provided, and so you did receive a presentation on that. Hopefully, likely the middle part of next year, those numbers will be available, and then you will -- The SSC would then need to take that updated information and provide updated catch level recommendations for the council, and so that's sort of a -- I just wanted to note that that's a placeholder there for now. We don't necessarily have an exact timeline for that.

With that, scrolling back up to the sort of grand total here, it looks like the -- As far as time-wise, you know, the bottom line here, the target, is eight or less, and, for the meetings next year, as far as what we have on the agenda right now, everything is eight or less, and so looking at I would say a, quote, unquote, normal meeting timeline throughout the week, and I'll turn it over to the council.

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

MS. MCCAWLEY: That was a little fast for me this late in the week, and maybe I need some more coffee, but I was going to ask some questions, and so I'm on row -- I think it's 15, and if you could go back up to red snapper state management. I think that this is that amendment, and, when we had the chair and vice chair lunch, we talked about maybe that doesn't -- That amendment document does not need to come back to the March meeting, and I can't tell kind of how it's listed

here. It looks like, because there's a 3.5 under that section, that it looks like it's still coming back to March, but I can't remember what "S" means.

MS. MURPHEY: John.

MR. MCCAWLEY: Yes, Jessica, and it is still listed, and we wanted to bring this up, and so I'm glad, because that was going to be my first question to the council, is to -- You know, to say do we think it's premature to be starting this, given the where the EFPs are, and should we wait a little bit on actually getting down to start the amendment? I think we keep it on the plan, to show that it is intended, but we would like the EFPs maybe to proceed, and get some information, before we come to the point of coming up. The "S" means scoping, and so the idea would be we get a general sense of what you want to do, and approve something for scoping, and I'm not quite sure that we're going to be there in March, certainly.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that's kind of my thought as well, is I think I would scope, at the earliest, like in the summer, assuming that the EFPs are partially underway and all that, and so I don't know that there's enough information to do the scoping, and like it -- It's still too early, even for scoping, in my mind, and then that would also free up some time in March, and so that's just my opinion.

MS. MURPHEY: I guess I was -- I don't know, and I'm just thinking out loud here. Would it be best to wait until we get the first year EFPs gone through or what?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't know that we need to wait that long, just because it would be a full plan amendment. It's going to take, you know, a lengthy amount of time to get it in place, and so then it might mean more years that you would have states under EFPs, as opposed to a council action, and so I would like to just push it until later in the year, because, by the time that you get through year-one, and then you're trying to figure out year-two, we postpone the state management amendment by a whole year plus, I guess, and so that's what I'm saying, because it takes so long to do a plan amendment. Maybe there's a way to do scoping kind of sometime mid to late next year, after maybe every state's EFP has already started, and then people have some ideas about here's what I like and what I don't like.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. John, to that.

MR. CARMICHAEL: If the EFP seasons go on in like in the May-June window, then you guys should have information coming into your reporting -- Maybe by September you have a little general bit of feedback from your fishermen as to how things are going, in which case we could move this "S" meeting out to September.

MS. MURPHEY: That makes sense to me, but I've got some other hands. Andy, Charlie. I'll get Andy. Go ahead, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Trish. I think it would be beneficial to hold some time for follow-on discussion of the EFPs. As I mentioned, I think the public comment period could very well be open in March, and so, if you would like to provide more official public comments at that point, you would have the opportunity to do so. We'll see, obviously, kind of when that window is, and

if you would like us to bring it back, and I know you're going to be giving us comments today as well.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I agree with Andy. Just leaving some if we need to talk about something space in there. Plus, as far as scoping I really think we should be at least well through the EFPs, so we know what -- People know what they're talking about, know what they're looking about, and we don't know what the next assessment is going to give us. If the next assessment looks really good, then maybe we don't have to go so fast, you know, and so that's going to play into the factors, too.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Charlie. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I just wanted to clarify, and I just want to manage expectations. I don't know that the next assessment, and, you know, what the numbers say, really replaces the state management EFPs, because a couple of things. Basically, the EFP would be testing out state management before the council has to act on it, but also in there is the other thing that the council is asking the states to do, which is establish state data collection programs.

Since the whole Amendment 46, which was the federal recreational permit, kind of went away, now it's kind of being transferred through the state management EFPs, and that's where the state data collection system is coming in. I just want to manage expectations that the results of the assessment isn't going to -- They're kind of decoupled. They're not necessarily related, and so the EFPs were the way to get the state data collection programs that the council wanted up and running.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I'll respectfully disagree with Jessica, because, as you know, with state management in the Gulf, the stock assessments provide the catch levels, and catch advice, that are then the basis for state management, and so the outcomes of the assessment are going to be critical as we move forward with state management and how that shapes your exempted fishing permits and any changes going forward with those exempted fishing permits, and so, to me, they go hand-in-hand and relate very well to, obviously, what you're doing today, in terms of your proposals for EFPs and where we go after the stock assessment is available.

MS. MURPHEY: Jessica, to that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Maybe I misunderstood what Charlie said. I thought that Charlie was indicating that, maybe with the new stock assessment, we didn't need the EFPs, and I was saying that the EFPs were going to also test the state data collection program, and so maybe I misunderstood what Charlie said.

MS. MURPHEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: No, and that's not what I said. I was thinking -- My thought process is the public is wanting access to fish, and so, if they get access to fish through the new assessment, we need the data collected from the states win, lose, or draw. We desperately need that, and so that's got

to stay on track, but, if the public has access to their fish, then maybe we've got a little more wiggle room on fixing our management data collections like we want to. Does that kind of make sense?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and that's fine. Any other questions? Any other questions? Amy.

MS. DUKES: Different subject, but can you help remind me where in this workplan the potential outcome from the wreckfish MSE work might be coming into?

MR. HADLEY: There is an item down here in the other activities for the ITQ review. I think it may depend on when the results of that MSE are available, but perhaps that could be started along that timeline, and so 2027-ish, if you would.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. I just want to make sure I understand where the state management amendment is. Is that going to be pushed to September? Okay, and so we're -- John.

MR. HADLEY: Just to summarize, I think, at least in my notes, I have move scoping until late summer, or after summer, and so that would be coming -- A scoping document, in that case, would be coming to the council in September 2026 for state management.

MS. MURPHEY: Kerry, did you have -- I think we're done with that. Go ahead.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I just want to ensure that there's adequate time at the next council meeting, whether it's through the Commercial Subcommittee or through Snapper Grouper, because I felt we were sort of rushed this week, and what I really want is time to dig into those trip limits, so that we can really have narrowed down what we're talking about before it goes to the AP in spring, and I think it deserves -- I think we need a lot of time to think that through, and so, if you guys could build that in, I would really appreciate it. Thank you.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Kerry, when we reviewed the agenda, we talked about two hours for that. Now, I think, with pushing back the state red snapper, we could give you more, if you think two hours might not quite cut it.

MS. MURPHEY: Actually, didn't we decide on two-and-a-half? Didn't we land on two-and-a-half?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Okay. Two-and-a-half.

MS. MARHEFKA: Give us two-and-a-half, and we'll take three, and we'll make it up somewhere during the meeting.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I mean, I think, if we can give more time for that -- I think we could plan with more time than that, because I feel like that's covering a lot of issues, and making a lot of good progress, and so I think it's well spent.

MS. MURPHEY: I have Andy, and then I'll get Dewey.

MR. STRELCHECK: Would it be a possibility to have maybe a virtual subcommittee meeting between now and the March meeting as well, because I think this is a complex topic, that I think

would be worth further discussion, and then we could be even better prepared for that March discussion.

MS. MURPHEY: I'm going to let Kerry address that, and then I'll get to you, Dewey.

MS. MARHEFKA: I think most of us agree that we really were not happy with the way -- Not not happy, but it was just that it's not a great way for us to have that conversation. The last time we had it, Jessica, I think you and I had talked about that. If I'm misspeaking, someone tell me, and I'll change, but I personally find it much harder to have these kinds of conversations virtually, but that's me, and so, if other people feel differently, but I'll be there.

MS. MURPHEY: My recollection is that we just decided we were going to do this in-person for council week, and so I think that was pretty much decided, and I see heads shaking that that's the case.

MR. CARMICHAEL: We have the time.

MS. MURPHEY: We have the time. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I just want to make sure, before we have any discussion, that we're going to have the data available. I think one of our biggest things that we need to decide on is what species we're talking about, but I think that's going to be informed -- When I say data, and I know it might be a heavy ask, but I would like to see three years by month of data, and that's going to inform us for what we have, looking at it across, and that will also cover, you know, the different seasons.

MS. MURPHEY: Chip is here for --

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and I was just getting ready to ask you all what you would like to see in the analysis. If you remember previous committee meetings, we had presented the trip limit analysis to you all, for all the species that have trip limits, what percent were reaching those, and so you want you want that broken down by month as well, and anything else?

MR. HEMILRIGHT: To me, month and states, the state, and, if there's any confidentiality, just denote that, or something like that.

DR. COLLIER: I'll do my best, and then, you know, if we're dealing with percentages, that makes a little bit different, because I wouldn't be reporting direct landings or anything like that, and it would be very difficult to get back to landings, and, just from a previous, Georgia with South Carolina or Georgia with Florida?

DR. BELCHER: Well, I think it's just -- Again, where the difficulty is, you can't really get a scope of what Georgia's fishery looks like if you put it in with Florida, because, obviously, if you try to say percentage, that gets it away as well, but, for South Carolina, we're closer in magnitude. Now I understand, like with the headboat, like you said, there's area things that might dictate it being in a different direction, but I think, relative to commercial we're probably better.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Just trying to think about the workload that we just put on Chip a little bit, and I agree with Dewey that states are going to be really important in order for us to really listen to what some of the public comment the other night was regarding commercial split seasons as well, and so, if looking at it in a month is going to be a little too complex, perhaps maybe we can do the quarters. We're going to leave it to you, but I just don't want to -- The volume of data that we're going to have to look at might be a little too complex if we do it by state by month.

DR. COLLIER: The volume of data is -- I can produce you as much data as you want. It's going to be your digesting of it, and I'll work with other staff to make sure we can get something that is digestible.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have one more question, and it and it's a little off - subject, but I just want to make sure that we are onboard to do three meetings to make sure that we apply that sunset SMZ. That is that is one of my soapboxes right now, and I want to make sure three meetings is enough, and right now we're pushing that to June. Do you think we can do that in three meetings?

DR. COLLIER: I mean, it's up to you all. Can you do it in three meetings? I can provide you the information.

MS. DUKES: Fair statement. We're going to do that in three meetings. I'll hold it.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Are we in a position to bring anything in March to get everybody thinking about it? It's been so long, and maybe just an introduction, and refresher, since we seem to have cleared a little bit there for March.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and I think that would be very good, to have something brought in March.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Are we good with that? So I had a question that caught my eye too on here, the allocation discard stuff. Where does that land?

MR. HADLEY: So, right now, I don't think we have a timeline for that coming back to the council. You're talking about the setting allocations and catch levels with the inclusion of discards? That I think we need to have staff discuss a little bit more, and, again, the SSC input, and it's just not ready to go live before the council.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, and that's what I thought, but I was also thinking -- Aren't we going to have to wait on MRIP to get their calibrations and all that too, because I think that's what we talked about as well as --

MR. CARMICHAEL: I mean, yes, we do want to see what the MRIP has, and I think we need to think about a better way of talking about this, because discards are included in the things that we do, and so that's something we can brainstorm as staff, is just how we approach this, and maybe do some background on other things, and try to summarize what some of the issues are, but, you know, that that can sort of be something that we're working on, and, when there's a time to bring this back, we can.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. That sounds good, because I just -- That just came to mind too when we were going through that. Anything else on the -- Andy. No? Okay. Anything else on the workplan? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Two things. What is envisioned for the headboat vessel limit discussion? I feel like we've got a lot of conversation about that, and it's just something that we haven't necessarily gotten off the ground, and so what are we hoping to achieve from that conversation?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I thought that we had said we were going to look at it species-by-species, if we were going to establish vessel limits, and so I can't remember what this particular item is, because, you know, we addressed it with gag and black and all that, and so I wasn't sure if we were just bringing it back if we looked at recreational vessel limits again in the future.

MS. MURPHEY: Myra.

MS. BROUWER: So, at the June meeting, the discussion I recall is you narrowed it down to a handful of species. We took that to the advisory panel, and they had some very specific recommendations for how you could go about exploring vessel limits for headboats, and so that's kind of where we are.

What we what I'm envisioning, for I guess in March, is to bring you feedback from the Law Enforcement AP, and then talk about how do we move forward, and do we start working on an amendment, and then you guys tell us which species you want us to start working on, and we go from there.

MS. MURPHEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks. That's helpful, and then I know there's a poll that went around the Coral 11/Shrimp 12 for a January webinar, and so do we want to talk about that during the committee report, or talk about it on the workplan now?

MS. MURPHEY: We can -- I've got the date now, if you want to. I was going to bring it up in the committee report, but I think we've -- We've got a date, and so do you want to talk about now or --

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, let me put -- Let me put my perspective on the table, because I wasn't here during committee, unfortunately, and I was traveling in. I understand, obviously, the council wants to make this a priority, and get this done in January, and we likely can get the economic analysis done for you.

We will have analyses and rulemakings for blueline, black sea bass, a Federal Register notice for red snapper EFPs, and Coral 11/Shrimp 12 all colliding with one another in the first quarter of next year. My view, and I've shared this with John and the team, is that the first three that I just mentioned are going to be our top priority to complete and move forward, and that Coral 11/Shrimp 12 will fall after those.

I say this because the rock shrimp fishery harvests nearly all of their rock shrimp in the August to November timeframe. If we miss that window, which I think we will likely not meet, in terms of

rulemaking, then the shrimp fishing access area would not be in effect for this fishing year, and we would have until essentially August of 2027 to implement, and so I don't see a huge gain in having a separate webinar in late January to get -- Potentially get this in place, given the other priorities, rulemakings, and like the slim likelihood that we're going to actually be able to put the shrimp fishing access area in place by the end of this year.

It is a priority for me to, obviously, move this amendment forward and get this done, but it is also fourth on the list, in terms of other priorities, and so I just wanted to frame this, and you can decide, obviously, whether you want to proceed in January or not, but the rulemaking likely will take us into the end of the year, and likely will miss the rock shrimp fishing season this year.

MS. MURPHEY: Thoughts around the table? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Obviously, that is not what we wanted to hear, but, if that's the way it is, I don't see a whole lot of utility in trying to beat a dead horse. If we can't get there, we just can't get there, and so I could live with March, but, as bad as I want to see this done, and in the hopper, and the chances of another shutdown after the end of January, and nobody knows what that chance is, but it is definitely higher than zero, and, if that happens, it's going to slow things -- Everything down, and so I hate to say I could live with March, but, just being practical, that might just be the most practical thing to do.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Charlie. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess I thought, in committee, we were saying that we wanted this action in the analysis done before a next possible government shutdown, and so that's why I thought we were putting it where we were putting it in January, and maybe, since we would be having a council meeting to take a final action on it, it could go up in the priority list for the NOAA folks. I do understand that, by the time the whole piece gets through the process, it might be past their fishing year, but, I mean, it's been so many years, and I just would love to get this completed, and so that's -- I guess I am leaning towards still trying to have the webinar meeting, and finalizing in January, but it's up to others.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other comments? So I was kind of the same way. The whole reason we wanted to push it to not -- You know, to be January 30th was the fear of another government shutdown, and I guess trying to -- Again, thinking out loud, if we skip January, and you had a government shutdown, my guess is we won't have anything ready in March, and that's just my thinking. Andy.

MS. STRELCHECK: Well, I mean, as I said, I think we'll have this analysis in January, one way or another. I met with the Gulf Council during the shutdown. I am an essential employee, and so, for some reason, if we were in another shutdown, and you have the economic analysis by the end of January, you could still proceed forward and take action in March, and so I don't see the shutdown as the hurdle.

I really just -- I'm trying to convey to all of you that we, the Fisheries Service, are trying to be very thoughtful and strategic in terms of prioritizing all these actions, and everything can't be a priority, and what I think you would agree with, right, based on the conversation around the blue line and black sea bass, they are kind of top priorities to move forward right now, with the red snapper

EFPs being a huge workload for the agency outside of the council process, and so I'm not trying to defer our work. I'm just trying to give you some perspective, in terms of what we're trying to consider as we move things along.

MS. MURPHEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Everything Jessica said was my understanding as well, and I support what she said, and I guess what's the harm in having the January webinar, and just getting it in the pipeline? That's the part I don't understand. It's a couple hours in January. If it doesn't get dealt with, it doesn't get dealt with, but at least it's in the pipeline.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy, did you have your hand up?

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was going to agree. It's just -- It's a checkbox for us. I would like to get it off of our plate before we move into March.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, considering the table, yes, we can at least get it off of our workplan if we go ahead and do it, and at least we followed through with what we said we were going to do, as quickly as we could do it, and, like Andy said, there is a slim chance that it could be done by the end of the year, and so I don't have a problem with doing it in January. I like to do stuff that makes logical sense, as much as possible, but I don't have a problem with doing it in January, and taking it off the plate.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, and so what I'm hearing is the analysis will be done in January, or by January. We could still have our meeting, get that one off our plate, and that's one less meeting in March, or one less committee meeting in March, and so, actually, this is kind of being efficient, as far as our workload, and so, if everybody is still good, we can still stick with the January meeting. It's a couple of hours. We'll have the analysis, and then we'll be ready to go whenever it gets -- It jumps through its department -- It's NOAA hoops, and so, is that okay, and we'll just stick with it? John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and that seems to be your intent, and, as we discussed in committee, we're anticipating that it will be a one-week advance on the briefing book, Andy, just so you're aware of that, and not two, and so it gives you guys a little bit more time, right? It's one topic, and you kind of know what's in there, and you were comfortable with that, and he said the analysis could be done, and so I think we can have the meeting. Then, as things get submitted to the Regional Office, I think the priorities remain, as Andy said, where it's blueline, and it's black sea bass, and then it's this, in terms of their processing and rulemaking and all of that stuff.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Well, thanks for the discussion. Thank you, Andy, for your thoughts, too. I think we'll go ahead, and it's been decided that we'll just stick to the January meeting, and so, at this point, the date we have is Friday, January 23rd, either 10:00 to noon or 2:00 to 4:00, and so we -- Who wants 10:00 to noon? Okay. 10:00 to noon, and is that -- So 10:00 to noon is okay. Okay. That's been decided, and so thank you, guys. Good. We killed that horse now.

All right. Anything else on the workplan? Okay. It sounds like we're good on the workplan. If questions come up, we can pull it back up, and adjust, and so are we ready to go into -- Are we going to go -- Are we ready for Full Council?

MR. CARMICHAEL: We can go into the meetings, and we can knock that out, and then we'll go into reports.

MS. MURPHEY: Do you want to just knock all -- Do you want to just to do these and then go to the --

MR. CARMICHAEL: So just a reminder, and here's the meetings that you have coming up, the regular list. You see it, and you see we have a lot going on in January and February, and, as usual, that will fill out for April and May, because that's what happens every year, and I think, if we scroll down, we see your heads-up for where we're meeting in 2027 as well, and so mark your calendars, and be ready. You see your year laid out before you. Any questions, as always, give us a shout. Myra, I think we wanted to talk about the LE AP topics next, so we can just dispense with all these. We already did with that? Okay. We already did that, Trish. That's right. We talked about that earlier in the week. We're good for committees.

MS. MURPHEY: All right, and so I guess we will start with the Closed Session Committee Report. All right. The South Atlantic Council Executive Committee met via webinar on November 17, 2025, and the committee approved the meeting agenda and minutes of the prior meeting, and so we went into closed session and discussed personnel considerations.

We then did a budget review. Kelly provided an overview of the 2025 budget, with expenditures through September 2025, and proposed a draft budget for 2026. Expenditures during 2025 are on track with the budget expectations at this point in the calendar year and are higher than recent prior years, due to an increase in contracting costs. The final 2025 funding allotment was 1 percent less than 2024 funding.

The final 2025 expenditures are not expected to exceed the 2025 total budget, and funds carried over from the prior budget cycle that ended in 2024 have been used in 2025 to support activities that were planned for but not completed during the prior budget cycle. No funding allocation information is available for 2026 at this time.

As in prior years, the 2026 budget is based on assuming status quo funding levels from 2025. The draft 2026 council budget is substantially below the 2025 budget, due to a reduction in contract expenses and the lack of carryover funds availability. The overall budget exceeds anticipated core funding, due to the continued availability for 2026 of additional grant sources, such as those provided for red snapper activities and the IRA.

However, costs for supporting core council activities, and staff obligations do not exceed expected funding for 2026. The committee approved the draft 2026 budget, and the budget will be revised and brought back before the committee in 2026 if 2026 funding is significantly different than assumed. The council entered a new grant period in 2025, and this current period is four years, with 2026 being the second year in the cycle that will end in 2028.

We also talked about workplan, and Kelly reviewed the 2026 activity schedule and workplan. The activity schedule detailing planned meetings and budget related expenses provides the foundation for developing the most variable aspects of the budget. As with recent prior years, the activity schedule includes the full range of council meeting activities.

Support for the council representation at the UN Committee on Fisheries meeting in 2026 was added. Representation at this meeting rotates among the eight councils, and it's the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's obligation for 2026, and the council workplan was also reviewed, highlighting management activities planned through 2027. The council has a full workload planned for through 2026 and into 2027. There is some opportunity, beginning in mid-2027, to address new topics or unforeseen situations if progress proceeds as expected on current items.

The recent federal shutdown will likely impact the workplan, although the full extent is not yet known. The council will be briefed on developments through the regular workplan review that occurs at each meeting.

We discussed the administrative handbook and the statement of organization practices and procedures. John reviewed the proposed modifications to the administrative handbook and the SOPP and suggested changes addressed. Number one is the additional details and clarifying language identified in the report of the 2024 enhanced site visit by NOAA. Number two is ensuring consistent policy language between the handbook and the SOPP for overlapping topics, and three is we're modifying the public comment statements to reflect current practices, and number four is increased use of references to the handbook for personnel and meeting policies to reduce redundancy and the need for modifying separate documents in the future. No changes in current practices or policies were proposed.

The committee approved the suggested changes and provided additional guidance that will be included in the final documents for council approval, and so we had three motions. **Motion 1 was to approve the updates to the handbook, as presented and modified, and this was approved by the committee, and so, on behalf of the committee, I so move.** Any discussion? **Any objection? So the motion passes.**

Motion 2 was also approve the updates to the statement of organization practices and procedures, as presented and modified, and so, on behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? **Any objection? Motion passes.**

The third motion was to approve the draft 2026 operational budget, as presented and modified, and so, on behalf of the committee, I so move. Discussion? Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Just there was -- During this Executive Committee meeting, there was discussion about COFI, and we were trying to figure out if we were -- If it was our year, and so I just wanted to make sure that, by approval of this, we were approving, adding that COFI expense, just making sure.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and that was up in the text, that we added that in.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other discussion? **Any objections? So the motion is approved.** That is the end of the Executive Committee report. Okay, and so we will go ahead and go into the Closed Session Committee report. The council met in closed session on Monday, December 8, 2025, and discussed the following items.

We discussed advisory panel selection, and reviewed those applications, and made recommendations for appointments, and so I have several draft motions here for folks to make, and so the first one is for the Law Enforcement AP. Do I have anybody that would like to make that motion? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: **I would like to move that we appoint Bob Zales to the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel.**

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have a second? Dewey. Any discussion? **Any objection? Okay. The motion passes.** We have a second motion for the Mackerel Cobia AP. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: **I would like to move that we reappoint Charles Locke and Thomas Newman and appoint Lynn Gokey to the Mackerel Advisory Panel.**

MS. MURPHEY: Do we have a second? Jimmy. Any discussion? **Motion approved.** Our next motion is also about Mackerel Cobia, and so would anybody like to make that a motion? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: **I would like to make the motion to appoint Nathan Everett and Cory Gwinn as the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council representatives on the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel.**

MS. MURPHEY: I have a second from Tom. Any discussion? **Any objection? Motion approved.** Our next motion is over Spiny Lobster AP. Do I have a person that would like to make a motion? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: **I move that the council reappoint Sean Espenship, Gary Nichols, Justin Smith, and Mimi Stafford and appoint John Greco III to the Spiny Lobster Advisory Panel. Also re-advertise an open seat on the AP with the intent of appointing a representative from the Carolinas.**

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have a second? Amy. Any discussion? **Any objection? Motion approved.** Our next motion is about Habitat. Would somebody like to make that a motion? Amy.

MS. DUKES: **Madam Chair, I make the motion to appoint Daniel Royser as the North Carolina Department of Marine Fisheries representative on the council's Habitat and Ecosystem Advisory Panel.**

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have a second? Tom. Any discussion? **Any objection? Okay. That motion is approved.** Our next motion is for wreckfish. Anybody like to make that motion? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I would like to make the motion to appoint Tracy Dunn as the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel representative and Vincent Bonura as the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel representative on the Wreckfish Advisory Panel.

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have a second? Amy. Any discussion? Any objection? Motion approved. Thank you everyone on those APs.

The next thing we discussed was the SEDAR Assessment Technical Team, and so, under the new assessment phase of the SEDAR process, an assessment technical team made up of individuals with relevant scientific expertise and fishing experience would be available to provide feedback and guidance to the Science Center analysts during stock assessment model development. The ATT members will be chosen by the Science Center, with representatives recommended by council staff.

Members may include SSC and AP representatives, state agency scientists, university researchers, and others with relevant expertise and experience, and so then we'll move on into SEDAR panel and SSC appointments. We have a motion for the Gag Grouper Topical Working Group. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Madam Chair, I make a motion to appoint Walter Bublely, Fred Scharf, and Luiz Barbieri to the SEDAR 106 South Atlantic gag grouper topical working group.

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have a second? Carolyn. Any discussion? Any objections? Motion approved. We have another motion for SEDAR 90. Would anybody like to make that motion? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I offer the motion to appoint Genny Nessler as chair, with Marcel Reichert as an alternate, and Chris Dumas and Alexei Sharov as SSC reviewers to SEDAR 90, which is the South Atlantic red snapper review panel.

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have a second? Amy. Any discussion? Any objections? Motion approved. Our next motion is on MSY proxies workgroup. Anybody care to make that motion? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I move that we appoint Kai Lorenzen, Alexei Sharov, and Jie Cao to the joint with the Gulf MSY proxies workgroup.

MS. MURPHEY: Amy has a second. Any discussion? Any objections? Motion approved. The next motion is the Red Snapper Research Project Review Panel. Anybody like to make that? Amy.

MS. DUKES: Madam Chair, I move to appoint Marcel Reichert as the chair and Luiz Barbieri as the SSC reviewer for the South Atlantic Red Snapper Research Project Review Panel.

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have a second? Carolyn. Any discussion? Any objections? Motion approved. I think our last motion is on greater amberjack. Who would like to make that motion? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: **I move that we appoint Luiz Barbieri as chair and Steve Turner and Marcel Reichert as SSC reviewers for the Greater Amberjack Independent Estimate Project Review Panel.**

MS. MURPHEY: I have a second from Amy. Any discussion? **Any objection? Motion approved.**

The next thing we talked about was the Endangered Species Act Shrimp Workgroup. The Section 7 consultation process requires the consideration of ways to reduce and minimize bycatch and bycatch mortality of giant manta ray and smalltooth sawfish in the shrimp fishery. The council requested the formation of a workgroup comprised of biological experts, fishery stakeholders, and management personnel to address this requirement. The council did review a list of members, and it's shown in the table below, if someone would like to make a motion to adopt those members to the workgroup. I've got Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Yes, ma'am, if they can put the motion back in my sight. **I would like to make a motion to appoint those on the table below to the ESA Section 7 Shrimp Workgroup.**

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have a second? Amy. Do I have discussion? John.

DR. WALTER: Thanks. This workgroup looks like a great group of people to work with. I just wanted to note that it might be beneficial to have someone from the Science Center support this as well, given that we do a lot of the data collection and analysis there, and so, if the motion author would allow for a friendly addition to the group in the Science Center, we'll try to offer that.

MS. MURPHEY: Jimmy is fine with it.

MR. HULL: **Yes. Sure.**

MS. MURPHEY: So who would you like to add?

MR. HULL: **I would like to add to the motion that we also appoint someone from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center to this Section 7 workgroup.**

MS. MURPHEY: Does that get what you need, John?

DR. WALTER: Yes, and if it would be possible for us to provide a name at a later date, because we're going to have to look at workloads, and who would be most beneficial to it, but I think we would have a lot to offer. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, John. Any more discussion? **Any objections? Motion approved.**

Then we're going to go into SSC appointments. North Carolina DMF designated seat appointee on the SSC submitted a letter of resignation in November, due to changes in job duties, and so North Carolina identified a new designee for this seat, and this individual submitted an application for the SSC. The council reviewed the application for the designated North Carolina state SSC seat and provides the following motion, and so who would like to make that motion? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I move that we appoint Matt Damiano to the North Carolina state agency designated seat for the Scientific and Statistical Committee.

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have a second? Amy. Any discussion? Any objections? Motion approved.

Then we talked about SSC and SEP optimization. At the June 2025 meeting, the council had directed staff to evaluate the Scientific and Statistical Committee and the Social and Economic Panel seats and committee size to ensure council needs are being met and the committee size is optimized. The council reviewed the membership and composition of both the SSC and SEP during the closed session and elected to maintain the current composition and size of these committees until the next round of appointments. The council directed staff to consider the SSC and SEP optimization strategies for the next round of appointments during the June 2026 meeting. Then we also conducted the annual review of the Executive Director during the closed session.

We have some directions to staff. One is to re-advertise an open seat on the Spiny Lobster AP; to send notification letters to appointees and email notifications to those not selected by December 20, 2025; conduct an orientation for new AP and SSC members before the March 2026 meeting; advertise open seats on advisory panels for consideration by the council during the June council meeting; and consider SSC and SEP optimization strategies for the next round of appointments during the June 2026 meeting.

Under Other Business, we did have a council member introduce discussion of modifications to the council's parental leave policy, and council members directed staff to collect information on other council's policies and bring this topic before the Executive Committee to review and develop a recommendation, and that is the end of my report for closed council.

Okay. I'll go ahead and jump into Full Council Committee report. The committee met in open session on Tuesday, December 9. The council adopted the agenda for the week and approved minutes from the September 2025 meeting. We had some reports provided by our council liaisons, as well as our Lines of Communication with the Georgia council representatives.

We heard from the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement Compliance Liaison, Matt Walia, who provided a brief on fisheries enforcement during Quarters 3 and 4 for 2025. We also heard from U.S. Coast Guard Lieutenant Tom Pease. He delivered a brief on the U.S. Coast Guard activities for Fiscal Year 2025 in support of fisheries enforcement.

We had other reports from the National Marine Fisheries Service, from Andy Strelcheck and Dr. Clay Porch. They provided some updates from the Regional Office and the Science Center. From the Regional Office, the golden tilefish landings on longline have continued to come in after the closure, but no overage is anticipated. Gag has a small overage, as a result of late reporting, and this will need to be paid back next year.

SERO also will be conducting an annual planning meeting with the Science Center and will share more on that prioritization of activities at future council meetings. A council member asked whether modifications to the Section 7 ESA definitions would affect the ongoing consultation on the shrimp fishery.

From the Science Center, the center has been assessing the effects of the recent furlough. The South Atlantic Deepwater Long Line survey was not affected, but there will be some delay in finalizing FES statistics. Stock assessment output has been severely affected, especially after the loss of lead analyst Dr. Kyle Shertzer.

The Science Center looks forward to working with council staff to identify how to complete various assessments, given that there are currently only three analysts supporting the Southeast region, and the council should look at relative priorities of assessments for 2027 and 2028.

We also heard from Steve Poland and Purcie Bennett-Nickerson on their management program review project. They provided a short brief on the project's objectives, design, and progress to-date. The project aims to enhance the council's responsiveness to changing fisheries and ecosystems by improving regulatory processes and governance restructures. It will focus on three objectives of resolving regulatory bottlenecks, optimizing the council's committee structure and coordination, and developing a more robust risk policy framework.

Case studies of recent amendments will help illustrate challenges and opportunities. Interviews with a wide range of council and industry participants will be an integral part of this project, and the council will receive a more in-depth update in March 2026.

We also heard from Dr. Katherine Papacostas on the MRIP-FES survey revision. She delivered a presentation on recent revisions of the Fishing Effort Survey. The NOAA Office of Science and Technology has concluded data collection and analysis as part of a large-scale study conducted through 2024 to test improvements in the Fishing Effort Survey.

A preliminary study completed in 2023 indicated the order of fishing questions had an impact on the overall estimates of recreational effort, but a more robust study was necessary to confirm findings. This more comprehensive study was completed in summer of 2025 and underwent a peer review by the Center of Independent Experts to help fine-tune the revised methods for obtaining recreational effort estimates. In addition, a calibration model developed to rescale the historical effort estimates produced from the current Fishing Effort Survey also recently underwent peer review. The presentation included an update on the status and follow-up of study calibrations and associated peer review processes.

I think everybody can just review those highlights below, and I'll skip through those, and then we heard from the Southeast Region Permitting Information Management System updates. Kevin McIntosh, who is the Assistant Regional Administrator for NMFS Operations Management and Information Systems, delivered a presentation outlining the history, successes, and future enhancements of the Southeast Regional Permitting System, or it's called PIMS.

The improved system, PIMS 2.0, is anticipated to go online in January or February of 2026. There were several questions and comments during the subsequent discussions, and those are also below, and I'll just let everybody read through those themselves.

Then we had a report on one-stop reporting from Dr. Jessica Stephen, SERO Branch Chief. She gave a presentation on progress towards the one-stop reporting, and she went through the for-hire

programs will not be included in initial applications of the program. The OSR project will only include the Southeast Coastal Logbook, GARFO's eVTRs, and HMS Pelagic Logbook.

She also hit on the recent executive order mandates, and discussed authentication, and she went into a fair amount of detail of the difficulties of this authentication this is going to be. I think we can read through the rest of these. I think people had questions on the multifactor authentication, and there may be a beta application available in late winter or early spring to allow fishermen to try out the system voluntarily, to test that out, and that concludes that report of open Council I.

All right. Well, to continue on, and I'm almost done for me, I think. This will be the Habitat and Ecosystem Committee report and the Shrimp Committee report. The committee approved the agenda, the Habitat and Ecosystem minutes from March 2025, and the Joint Habitat and Ecosystem and Shrimp Committee minutes from the September 2025 meeting.

We discussed Coral Amendment 11 and Shrimp Amendment 12. Staff reviewed the final draft amendments, including the final draft rationale, and noted the economic chapter and social environment chapter, which is Chapter 3.3 and 3.4 -- Those sections have not been updated since the submission of Coral 10, but this information included data from 2015 to 2019.

Updates to these sections were delayed due to the recent government shutdown, and General Counsel recommended delaying final approval of the amendment until these sections have been updated, and so the committees made the following motions and gave the following directions to staff.

Motion 1 was to approve the modifications to the needs statement. I think everybody sees that. **The modification was to the needs statement, to change it to optimize the yield, and so, on behalf of the committee, I so move.** Any discussion? **Any objection? Motion approved.**

Then we had direction to staff, and we already actually hit on this, but we will hold a meeting at the end of January to approve this amendment for submission, and the date is now Friday, January 23 at 10 o'clock, and so I have a next motion for timing and tasks, if someone would like to make that motion. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I would like to make the following timing and tasks motion to adopt the following timing and tasks: update the economic and social environment sections, which is Chapters 3.3 and 3.4 of the draft amendment and organize an ad hoc webinar council meeting to review updates and approve for submission, which the meeting is going to be held on January 23, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have a second? Amy. Any discussion? Any objections? Motion approved. That is the end of the Habitat and Shrimp Committee report, and so I'll hand it over to Amy for her report.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Citizen Science Committee met December 9, here in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. The committee approved the December 2025 Citizen Science Committee meeting agenda and the transcripts from the December 2024 meeting.

The citizen science research priorities were reviewed by staff, providing background information on the citizen science research priorities, and gave a brief overview of the process outlined by the CitSci SOPPs and updated these priorities.

The council reviewed and discussed the updated citizen science research priorities, which incorporated input from both the Citizen Science Projects and Operations AP. The committee supported adopting and updating the citizen science priorities as presented, with modifications below, and there were seven modifications made by this committee. I'll let you guys read through them.

Additionally, great conversation was actually had during this part of the Citizen Science Committee meeting, and some of the key additional points from the committee's discussions are summarized below. Just to highlight a few of them, the committee emphasized the importance of sampling design, early communication and coordination on projects that require substantial involvement, develop projects that address multiple priorities simultaneously, and Southeast Fisheries Science Center interest in cooperative research fleets, and opportunities to collaborate between the agency and the citizen science programs, and so thank you for that, Clay.

In addition, direction was given for the APs to discuss the idea of prioritizing into high, medium or low categories, and so that will be discussed at the following AP meetings next year. **A motion was made to adopt the updated citizen science research priorities, with the modifications as suggested. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? Any opposition? Seeing none, motion approved.**

We then went on to the citizen science program indicators. In 2020, the council adopted the citizen science program goals, objectives and strategies. Since then, council staff have used these to guide the overall program's direction and development of their annual workplans. To help evaluate progress, the program plans to review its activities under each goal, objective, and strategies every five years. The first review took place in fall of 2024 and covered the program activities from 2019 to 2024.

In addition to its five-year review, staff are interested in identifying key indicators under each goal that can then be monitored more regularly to help access and assess the program between its five-year reviews, highlighting opportunities for improvement and to measure the program's ongoing success and impacts.

Staff provided an overview of the fourteen recommended indicators for regular monitoring. Each were developed with input from the citizen science team. The committee was supportive of the indicators as presented, noting that they will help monitor and assess the important parts of the program. Members also observed that, as the program matures, that these opportunities will have opportunities to narrow the list of indicators.

Additionally, members noted, as the program continues to grow, it may be helpful to monitor trends in the data over time. Additional feedback suggested that monitoring volunteer retention, which staff are currently monitoring within the individual projects, could be valuable. Members also suggested tracking whether citizen science project data were used in assessments and management, and not just recommended or considered for use, to be valuable.

The citizen science program then went into the organizational structure. Staff provided an overview of the citizen science program organizational structure, as outlined in the SOPPs, including a brief description of the roles of each of the citizen science committees and various citizen science advisory panels.

The program currently has two active advisory panels, the Citizen Science Operations and Projects AP, as well as the citizen science pool that can be used to create short-term ad hoc workgroups to address specific topics. The third AP, the Citizen Science Program AP, has not yet been established.

During the 2025 webinar meeting, the CitSci Operation AP discussed whether this AP needed to remain. Members noted that the program has evolved, and the original envisioned roles and responsibilities of this group have largely been absorbed by the other CitSci or council advisory bodies. Given that, and the limited staff capacity, the CitSci Program AP recommended that the council consider removing the Citizen Science Program Advisory Panel from its SOPPs. The council was supportive of this recommendation, for the reasons outlined by the AP. Members noted that the ASMFC and ACCSP held seat that was not established on the Citizen Science AP should be incorporated into existing panels.

A motion was made to remove the Citizen Science Program Advisory Panel from the citizen science program's standard operating policy and procedures. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? Any opposition? Seeing none, motion approved.

There was an additional motion to add an AP seat for the ACCSP representative to the Citizen Science Operations Advisory Panel. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? Any opposition? Seeing none, motion approved.

Since that motion, ACCSP staff reached out to Julia and myself and recommended the appointment of Julie Simpson to serve on that citizen science seat. In order to make sure we were following proper procedures, we did have Ms. Simpson fill out the Citizen Science Pool, which she has done, as we have with all of the other sitting members, and so, at this point, would anybody on the committee entertain the draft motion on the screen? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I propose the motion to appoint Julie Simpson from ACCSP to the Citizen Science Pool and to the ACCSP seat on the Citizen Science Operations AP.

MS. DUKES: Thank you. Do I have a second? Charlie. Any discussion? Any opposition? Seeing none, motion approved.

There was a brief citizen science program update, where staff prepared a recording presentation highlighting the citizen science program and project activities, and encouraged council members to review that presentation. I am happy to say that Ms. Judy and Mr. Jimmy both received their descending devices for watching that video and identifying the shark. There was no other business. At this time, Madam Chair, that concludes the summary report from the Citizen Science Committee meeting.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you. Thank you, Amy, and congratulations, Judy and Carolyn. I'm sorry. Jimmy. I guess, right now, we'll go ahead, and we'll take a fifteen-minute break, and then go into Snapper Grouper. All right.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MURPHEY: All right, everybody. We'll go ahead and get back started, and I'll hand it over to Jessica to go through the Snapper Grouper Committee report, and then we'll be done. You ready? Okay. Jessica is ready.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Okay. I'm going to try to not read this report word-for-word, and so the committee, the Snapper Grouper Committee, met earlier this week and approved the minutes from the September 2025 meeting and agenda for this meeting and received updates from SERO on amendments that have been submitted to NOAA Fisheries.

Then we went into black sea bass EFP, and so we received a brief from SERO on the application for an exempted fishing permit titled "Project to Modernize Pot Fishing for the Southeast Commercial Black Sea Bass Pot Portion of the Snapper Grouper Fishery Using Subsea Buoy Retrieval Systems" by Kim Sawicki.

This proposed project would be completed in three years, and this is the third application submitted to further research on subsea buoy retrieval systems in the South Atlantic. The project's purpose is to test different on-demand systems, and address damage caused by sharks, as well as explore socioeconomic feasibility of this gear type.

One of the requested exemptions is fishing in the closed area. The council expressed concern over the requested take of black sea bass, given the upcoming reductions in harvest for that portion of the snapper grouper fishery, and the council requested clarification on how much black sea bass has been caught in previous EFPs and the number of participants. It was clarified that fishermen who participate do so voluntarily, and are provided no stipends.

The comment period will start when it is noticed in the Federal Register, and last for thirty days, and staff will develop a letter stating the council's comments, and so I'm going to pause here, because I don't know that we know -- So I think Myra sent around some updated information to answer some of these questions, and so I don't know that I know what our final comments are. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I've asked Rick to come up, and correct me, Rick, if I'm wrong, and so Kim Sawicki has modified her proposal request, and reduced the number of fish that she's requesting per year from 40,000 to 20,000. She also provided some I'll say unvalidated landings data, but from logbooks, that indicated, I think over the course of the last three years, a little over 20,000 pounds of black sea bass were landed.

Then, late last night, this morning, she also provided kind of a comparative document, which I have not looked at, but it appears to show kind of the differences between the 2022 EFP versus the 2025 EFP. Rick, do you have anything else to add?

MR. DEVICTOR: No, and Kim is online, and so, you know, she can answer any questions there, but, as Andy said, we have more information on the exact differences between the two studies, and, as Andy said, the number that was landed with her previous studies.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so I guess I'll push a little bit more. Are our comments -- Well, let me go to hands, and then we need to think about what are the comments. Now that some of our questions have been answered, what are our comments? Dewey?

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I thank Kim for supplying the landings previously, and, just looking at this, how much has been caught, and do we know, that is caught by hook-and-line? The thing I don't want is, when I look at the past participation, or the past catches -- Are we assuming that this 20,000 pounds is 4,000 pounds per vessel? Is that my understanding, when I read the EFP?

MR. STRELCHECK: I think that's a question for Kim, and so the original EFP indicated 10,000 per fisher, or up to 40,000 pounds per year, and so I don't know now if there's less fishers, or if she's reducing the amount per fisher in the program to 20,000. Kim, can you answer that? Is she able to --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Myra, is she unmuted? Okay. Thank you. Kim. Kim, it looks like you're self-muted on your end.

MS. BROUWER: It looks like she's having some issues. She keeps coming on and off of the webinar.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so I'm not sure if we're going to be able to get that answered. Maybe those are some questions that we provide in the letter, if we can't get it answered today.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: How about from Jimmy or Charlie?

MS. MCCAWLEY: She's on again. All right. Let's try one more time. Kim, if you can hear us.

MS. SAWICKI: There we go. Thank you. I was just trying to text you all the answers in the chat, and so, no, that 20,000, Dewey, would be spread across the vessels. Generally, we sort of saw more effort in certain areas when there were more sea bass, particularly up north, and so we would propose to share that across the vessels that are listed on the EFP.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and I was thinking that it was each vessel had 4,000 pounds.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I can't tell, from her answer, if that was the case. It sounded like the amount would be where the fish are at the time, and so it sounds like it could be more for some vessels than others.

MS. SAWICKI: Correct. That's correct.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay.

MS. SAWICKI: That's how it fleshed out in previous years.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you for that clarification. More hands are going up. Go ahead, Dewey, and then we'll go to Kerry and Tom.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: The numbers that you sent us yesterday, or last night, how many vessels was that from?

MS. SAWICKI: Three, and the majority of those landings were verified and sent to us from North Carolina DNR, but I also had trip tickets from research trips that we conducted with other fishers, and so the analysis that I sent is essentially anonymized to protect fisher data.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and so I know that there is currently a lot of concern, given that what we know is that, through Reg Amendment 37, we're greatly reducing the ACL. I guess we're going to have an ACT for this fishery now, and that number is very small, I believe. Like you said, Trish, that number is like 48,000 pounds, right, and so, given that, I can -- You know, I'm -- Again, my support for this program has not wavered, but I also understand the concerns we're hearing. I wonder if, Kim, you might want to mute yourself again. Thanks.

I wonder if one of the -- If this EFP may be more supportable by the council if there was a further modification to the amount of fish taken. I don't know -- If I'm reading the numbers from last year, while they asked for forty-something thousand fish, or, I mean, forty-something thousand pounds, I believe it was 4,15, or something pounds, that were actually taken, and so I guess my question would be is that accurate, and, if so, is a number sort of closer to that more palatable? How they're divvied up among the boats, in my mind, is their business, in a way.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Kerry, for those comments, because I can build off of them. Obviously, you know, the work and research done by this EFP is pretty integral. I really appreciated hearing from those -- The public commenters from the west coast talking about how they've been able to expand upon some of the work here. This is a clean fishery, and, you know, this is the future for some of that stuff.

That being said, my concern here is only in regards to the number of fish being asked for. It's kind of coming to us at a difficult time, being that the council is really working on this fishery, and we're having to reduce -- Reduce the ACT so much, and so, I mean, for me, I would be more supportive if that number is going down, like Kerry mentioned. I just -- It's just, with only 48,000 pounds, it's really hard to find a number, I think, that's going to be palatable, unless it's considerably smaller.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: I would just add that the fish are going to be caught where the fish are, and the majority of the fish are off North Carolina, and so that boat is going to be fishing regardless for

that -- Under that 48,000-pound ACT, and whether he's able to utilize ropeless gear while he's fishing, regardless, is what's at stake here, and I think that it really doesn't matter.

The fish are going to be caught by, and there's only a few fishermen left, by the same fishermen that are doing it. I mean, in my area, we'll catch a couple baskets, if we're lucky, but the fish are going to be caught off of North Carolina, and that boat can participate in the EFP while he's prosecuting his fishery. I think that's the point of it.

He needs -- Whether it's 20,000 pounds, 10,000 pounds, and, I mean, if you put a limit on it to where, under the EFP, finally we reach that limit, and so then he doesn't use ropeless gear, and he continues on fishing, and the EFP is stopped, and so I think it just provides the opening for -- I got it wrong? Okay. Go ahead.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I think the stick here is that it's he is allowed access to -- Someone has allowed access to an area, whoever is in this EFP, to a closed area that other vessels aren't, and so it does change -- It is a different playing field, and, again, I say that as someone in full support of this, but I think that's where people that have concerns are coming from, and so it's not as if he's just using a different gear in the same place everyone else is fishing. That would be easy. It's that the members of this EFP have access to an area that no one else has access to, thereby giving them an advantage at that pile of 48,000 fish. You know what I mean?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I'm looking at one of Kim's previous EFPs, because I was curious about whether or not they had fished the closed area before, and some of the language that supported their asking to be able to work in there is also working against black sea bass, because it says -- This is her most recent one that finished, and so just to be clear, and I can send everybody the link for it, if you prefer.

It says, let's see, work requires exemption from this rule, as it would not be possible to fish the gear in any other area and return pertinent data on the economic viability of this gear for this fishery without access to the resource, which is in greatest abundance, is most valuable, and easiest to access in the winter closure area and closure period. That's an unfortunate, but understood, statement, and so it's just something to think about.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I'm going to try to wrap up this discussion a little bit, and so the letter coming from the council will say what, that we are generally supportive of this, this work is important, and here's a couple of points, and maybe the couple of points are about the numbers of fish, and anything else, and so do we have any other concerns that we want them to know? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I'm still not sure how Amendment 36 figures in on this as well, because we did approve the gear for commercial use in 36, and it's sitting in a queue waiting for secretarial approval.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I agree with that. I don't know how that factors in in the letter as well, but, either way, they would be using the gear in a closed area, and so, you know, you would need an exempted fishing permit for that. I'm making sure there aren't any additional hands. Myra, do you think that you have what you need for this letter?

MS. BROUWER: I will put together a draft and send it to you all to look it through.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and so is it my understanding that 20,000 pounds is what the ask is?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I see heads nodding yes from Andy and Rick that yes.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I personally am not comfortable with that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Because it's too many?

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right, and so I guess our comments are the 20,000 is still too many, and so I saw more hands going up. I saw Amy, and then Trish.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and, Kim, I appreciate you pulling that information together, as far as the total black sea bass landings under the EFP thus far. I think I was just curious of how you were using North Carolina DMF trip tickets, and how you were able to parcel out when the vessel was actually utilizing the EFP and when the vessel was just, in fact, prosecuting the fishery, and so a better understanding -- If all of those fish that you provided, that 23,000 pounds that you provided us in that data last night, was all under the EFP, or if that's just what the vessel did each of those years, I think those are two very distinct points that we need to make sure we're parceling out, when the boat is just fishing and when it's fishing under the EFP.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kim, I'm not sure if you heard that, that it looked like, for those vessels, it was the entirety of their landings, and perhaps some of those landings were not taken under the EFP. Do you know, Kim?

MS. SAWICKI: Those were all -- My apologies, and I should have put the full title. I just had it at the bottom of that chart. If you guys can look at the table, it says total of black sea bass landed under EFP, and I should have put the total in the table description, and so that was just EFP-landed fish, and the way that we were able to parse those landings out.

First of all, obviously, you all know that I'm -- I have to record all the data on the reliability, but so I have all the dates, the actual fishing dates, that the fishers participated in the EFP portion of their fishing, and so this -- The dates that you're all seeing on that table are strictly landings under the EFP, and so the fishers did land regular potted black sea bass at other times of the year that is not, not included in the data that I provided to the council.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you for that clarification. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I was just going to agree with Dewey that I'm -- The 20,000 still concerns me, because that's still over half of the ACT that's being requested, that we're talking about now, and, you know, I support the work too, but I'm just concerned about the impact of on the sea bass from this EFP.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so I think we can include that in the letter. I saw more hands. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: If you recall, when I -- When I started this, my comment to this conversation, I had suggested a number that was closer to 4,000 or 5,000 pounds, based on, if you look in 2024, it's 4,151 that were landed. There was a higher year in 2023, and then a lower year in 2022, and so, you know, 5,000 pounds, 4,000 or 5,000 pounds, maybe if we want to suggest a number. You know, my goal is to make it palatable for this. I want to -- You know, so Kim understands like, you know -- I think there's a lot of support for this. It's the number that's the issue, and I want it to be palatable for this council for that number.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Once again, Myra, do you have what you need for the letter? Okay. Anything else? Any more discussion on this? Good discussion. All right. I'm going to go back to the committee report.

All right, and so next we got into the South Atlantic Red Snapper Research Project update, and Chip gave an overview of the research study, clarifying the results that have been finalized in January of 2025, or that should be 2026, I believe. There will be a review of the project's methods and results by individuals appointed by the Center for Independent Experts prior to incorporation and management.

After reviews, findings of the project will be reviewed for incorporation into the ongoing SEDAR 90 assessment. The SSC is scheduled to review SEDAR 90 in October of 2026, followed by a presentation to the council in December of 2026. The committee asked if reviewers had been appointed by the CIE, but the list has not been provided to the council staff.

All right. Then the committee went into the Commercial Subcommittee report and Amendment 60, which is the commercial permit and trip efficiency document, and so refer to the separate subcommittee report. Additionally, the committee directed the interdisciplinary planning team to explore multiple options for procedural implementation of dynamic trip limits, including providing some bounds within which the Regional Administrator could have flexible authority to adjust trip limits as needed, and the committee also directed staff to remove the VMS from consideration in implementing the gear stowage action and to develop that action only for vessels that have a valid directed shark permit or golden tilefish longline endorsement.

Then the committee discussed the SAFE report, and Chip presented a draft SAFE report to the committee, highlighting information that was included in there. The committee requested that Georgia be grouped with South Carolina and that a figure be added showing landings relative to sector annual catch limit. NOAA Fisheries requested consideration of adding ecosystem-related information and asked that their staff be given an opportunity to review the report, and then the final SAFE report will be posted on the Snapper Grouper FMP webpage and the regulations webpage.

All right. Then we got into the red snapper EFPs, and so first we went through the FWC 2024 Atlantic red snapper EFP project year-one results, and I delivered that presentation of those ongoing projects, and then there's some bullets there that are some of the takeaways that are listed there in the document.

Then we got into the state EFPs addressing management of recreational red snapper. Andy introduced Annie Hawkins, NOAA's Chief of Strategy, and she addressed the council regarding the proposed state management EFPs and expressed optimism about the future of the red snapper recreational fishery management, and the council has full support from the agency in exploring better ways to manage recreational red snapper in the South Atlantic.

Representatives from each of the South Atlantic states presented each of their EFP applications that were submitted on November 10th to explore state management of the recreational red snapper fishery, and, during the discussion, council members expressed concern as to how the proposed level of red snapper harvest and increased recreational effort will impact the commercial ACL.

The expectation is that directed recreational effort will change, but overall effort will be spread out over the length of the open seasons. However, not all council members were in agreement regarding this expectation. Specific comments submitted by council members are in an appendix, and these will be used to help develop the council's letter for these EFPs. Any discussion on this? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: The EFPs, SERO will be reviewing these, Andy, and there will be another bite at the apple, so to speak, to give comments at the council, because I know we had a lot of questions about there's -- There is no numbers in these things, and what kind of analyses are going to be done, and you also have -- There could be localized depletion when you're starting in May, and is commercial season could be starting in May also?

I just wonder when does it -- If not, would it be under the public comment part? I have a lot of questions, because you all haven't reviewed this yet, or it's in review, and so I'm just wondering if there's any deficiencies that we would have to comment on.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Dewey, and so, yes, you're correct. We're reviewing these currently. As I mentioned, we have to do a Federal Register notice, provide a summary of the EFPs. Once they're deemed complete, they'll go out for public comment. There is likelihood, potential, that that could overlap with the March council meeting. Regardless, you could request an update on the EFPs, even if the public comment period isn't open, and get input and information on any changes that have occurred.

One of the things that I wanted to mention during this discussion, and look to the state representatives and states, is a coordination going forward, right, and so we feel it's very important to have some conversations with you in the near-term, potentially as early as next week, for Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina.

We really want to focus on your data collection programs, and how we can assist and improve the proposed data collection programs, and then have also a more holistic conversation with all four states with regard to the proposed EFPs and any refinements between now and, you know, the

Federal Register notice. So, with that said, I certainly would love to get some input in terms of how we can best do that and coordinate with one another going forward.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Charlie, then Tom.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I definitely, you know, support states, you know, taking up the baton and trying to collect data, so we can manage stuff on knowns, instead of unknowns, but I am still concerned about, if the EFPs significantly increase catch for the recreational sector, it is going to totally throw out the sector allocations that we have -- That we currently have now, and so, even if it didn't, even if commercial still got their same amount of fish next year, the sector allocations won't be anything -- Could potentially be far away from where they're supposed to be, and so I would like to make sure the agency is still keeping that back under consideration. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I just want to let everybody know that I asked Myra to go ahead and just put the comments, general comments, up. I'm not putting them up here to wordsmith or anything, but just to let you all know -- Let you all see what's written, and you can see out, and so, anyway, just I think there's a lot of comments here, and so I think they'll -- You know, and so I just wanted her to skim through those real quick, and you guys see what we do have.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think -- Charlie, I think that comment is captured, but if you don't think it is, then -- Okay. All right. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. I mean, looking at these EFPs, first of all, I think one of the biggest issues in managing red snapper is just the difference of our fisheries in our states, and I do believe that, if given the resources, that our states can do a better job individually setting our limits and collecting data on our fishery.

Unfortunately, I just -- I just don't think we're there yet, and so, while I'm supportive of the idea of state management, one of my major concerns is the difference from the Gulf process, which we hear a lot about.

First of all, as we've heard many times, that those states went into this process of state management having state allocations and ACTs, or ACLs, to individually be their target. They're still having problems with their data collection, and the biggest concern I have, and, I mean, I come at this as a North Carolina fisherman is -- You know, I stated in committee that I don't support my state's EFP.

I do not, but I don't support any of these EFPs as they are written, and one of the major reasons is because the differing of resources between our states. We're trying to do this with current resources, and, speaking from our state, and as someone on my state commission, we don't have enough resources currently to do our own -- To perform the mission of the state, and we're being asked to do a lot with no more. We're trying to do it with our current resources. If this is going to be successful, we need funding and other things now, before we try to implement this, and I'm just -- I mean, I absolutely want access for our fishermen for these fish, and I want it sooner than later, but I feel, without those resources, we are rushing it. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks. I think we're capturing some of that information, and I appreciate that. Anything -- Any other comments?

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Let's move on then.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Next up -- I'm sorry.

MR. STRELCHECK: I asked a question of my state partners, and did not get a response, and so I want to get a -- I want to try to figure out a path forward here, and I would love to hear your input, please.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Amy, and then Judy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Andy, and, yes, we do realize that we need to start partnering at this point with you and your staff. We can have a talk next week. I'm interested, and curious, to see the thoughts and the processes of how we can do better with our data collection, especially with the three states to the north, using a single tool to collect those data. We put a lot of thought into it as well, but I know we potentially could have missed something, and so I welcome those opportunities to be able to ensure that the success of these EFPs is shared by all of us.

MS. MCCAWLEY: From Florida's perspective, we can certainly meet next week as well. I didn't -- I didn't think that you were wanting us to like live doodle what day and time, and can we do that offline, figuring out the day and time, but, yes, we can certainly meet next week. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I'm not asking for the date and time. Because there has been limited communication up to this point between the states and NMFS, and vice versa, right, we feel it's really critical now to quickly move forward and amp up our coordination, right, and so that's what I'm emphasizing, and, if there was any concerns about doing that sooner rather than later, I wanted to hear that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and, before I go to Judy, I'll go to Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Yes, and, I mean, I can tell you that we're willing to come to the table, but, as Doug's proxy, I don't know what Doug's schedule is like, and so I have to say that, you know, I can speak to what my availability is, but I know he's going to want to be in those conversations.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Carolyn. Also, before I go to Judy, Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and, Andy, you know I'm always up to talk about all this, and so, you know, give me a holler anytime, and we can do one-on-one, or the whole group, but, yes, just -- I'm all for talking about it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Great. Judy, you had your hand up?

MS. HELMEY: Yes, and I just wanted to say that I was -- I am for the EFPs, and I think that, if it's approved, the states will have a better opportunity to determine the harvest more accurately and precisely, more so than we are now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I think we're good. I guess we can continue moving through the document. The next item is black sea bass, Regulatory Amendment 37, and so we heard from our AP chair, presenting the AP's comments and recommendations relative to this amendment, and council staff presented the amendment actions, alternatives, and draft rationale.

The committee reviewed their preferred alternatives, noting that additional discussion may be necessary following the Wednesday public comment session and prior to consideration of final approval at Full Council, and the committee did express concern about adding language that would prohibit fishing for black sea bass and commenting that interpretation of this language could be subjective and problematic.

NOAA Fisheries noted that, if the council prefers a no action alternative, that then moving that action to the Considered but Rejected section of the amendment could speed the federal rulemaking process following submission, and so I don't know the best way to do this. I think that we wanted to have some discussion of some of the alternatives and the document, and so I don't know -- You know, since they're not all listed out here, I don't know how you want to do that. Trish, and then Tom.

MS. MURPHEY: I guess my thought, after listening to the public comment and discussion around the table, I guess the bag limit probably needs to be brought up. I mean, I kept hearing three from the public, and even from around the room, and so I wonder if we need to discuss that one again.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, and I don't know, Myra, if you want to go grab that action from that document, so that we can have it in front of us. Next up is Tom.

MR. ROLLER: My comments are going to be specifically regarding the bag limit, you know, and I'm waiting for it to be up, but I kind of know what it says in my head, but we had a lot of discussion. We had some good public attendance here, and some comments on this, and it would appear, for most fishermen, particularly those in North Carolina, that three is a much more palatable bag limit, and still gives us a fairly long season, through the end of November, if I'm not mistaken, versus the two-fish limit, which would get us through early January.

It just would appear that the consternation, understandably, is about the loss of January, February, and March, but there's not really much we can do about that here, and so I'm not sure the benefit of that December season is really enough to justify, you know, going from three to two.

At the same time, what I did want to denote is, you know, in the Mid-Atlantic, obviously, their different genetic stock of black sea bass is doing well. They have a pretty constrained season, even with a larger bag limit, and, honestly, even with three fish, our season is going to be kind of similar to theirs. They have, I believe, a split season, if I'm not mistaken, in the Mid-Atlantic, but it's not a year-round season, as far as I can discern, and so I would recommend that we would make our preferred alternative -- Do I need to make a motion?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, please.

MR. ROLLER: Okay. I move -- I need to go back to -- Can you go back to that page, please? **I move that we deselect Preferred Alternative 3 and we make Alternative 4 our preferred alternative.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We have a motion. We have a second by Trish. It's under discussion. I see heads nodding yes, but we're going to need a little bit more discussion here. This is final action for this document, and so Kerry, and then Amy.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I am in support of this motion, based on public testimony that we heard during the public comment period.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and, to build upon Kerry's comments, I would also say that this was the preferred alternative of the advisory panel, and taking them into consideration is also really important.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I guess -- Judy, and then I have a question for Tom.

MS. HELMEY: Are you --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Judy, and then I was going to ask Tom a question.

MS. HELMEY: Yes, and I'm for this too, and I'm for -- I am. Well, I'm going to try to talk here in a minute. I forgot what I was going to say. This is what happens when you get over seventy. I do want to go for the three-bag limit, and I forgot what I was going to say, and I apologize.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's okay. Tom, is it your intent that we would stay with the size limit that's already in place, and, you know, go with the size limit of the AP, or what? Just wondering what your intent is, if you were thinking of selecting other different preferreds in this document.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you for that, Madam Chair, and so my intention is to stay with the thirteen-inch size limit, which I believe is also the recommendation of the AP. I also want to thank Amy for bringing up that comment, because the AP's comment, and the comments on this have really influenced my decision here, as well as the public comment, and I also -- Just, per my rationale, I want to note that North Carolina is the biggest player in this fishery, and this fishery is going to have the biggest -- It's going to have the biggest impact on our state, and, from everything that I've heard, it's that three fish is much more important.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I was just going to add, you know, I think, originally, we were always -- We were concerned about keeping the season longer, but, in this case, I kind of got the message from the AP that the season, that the season -- They would rather have three fish, and a shorter season than this. That was what I got out of it, unless I got that wrong.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead.

MR. ROLLER: That was my understanding, too. Most of the comments were that they -- Folks were upset about the loss of all of January, February, and March, but, again, there weren't any alternatives for to address that. There did not seem to be that much support for having, you know, the fishery open, you know, through early January, and it seemed to be folks really wanted those three fish for the majority of the peak fishing seasons.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and, Tom, another question. It's also your intent to not change our preferred on the closed months, keeping those the same as well?

MR. ROLLER: For the spawning season closure? Correct. Yes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I got my questions answered. I think I'm supportive of this as well. Any further discussion of this motion? **Is there any objection to this motion?** All right. **Seeing none, the motion carries.** All right, and so the next step -- I can read the motion, but it hasn't actually been made yet. Go ahead, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just reminding that, if it's the intent of the council to select your current preferred for the size limit of no action, then passing a motion to move that to Considered but Rejected would be helpful.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thank you for that reminder. Yes, let's do that. Kerry, would you like to make a motion to move that action to Considered but Rejected?

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and can someone remind me what number action that is?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: 4.

MS. MARHEFKA: 4? Thank you. **I move that we remove -- That we move Action 4 to the Considered but Rejected appendix.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Do I have a second? Second by Tom. Under discussion. Does everybody understand why we're doing this? This should speed up the analysis. All right. **Any objection to this motion?** All right. **The motion carries.**

All right. I can read the draft motion, but then someone else will need to move it. **The draft motion is to approve Regulatory Amendment 37 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region for formal secretarial review and deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate and give staff editorial license to make any necessary editorial changes to the document/codified text and give the council chair authority to approve the revisions and re-deem the codified text.** It's moved by Carolyn, seconded by Kerry, and this is a roll call vote by John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Okay. I will go down the list alphabetically starting with Belcher.

DR. BELCHER: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Borland.

MR. BORLAND: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Dukes.

MS. DUKES: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Helmey.

MS. HELMEY: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Hemilright.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Hull.

MR. HULL: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Marhefka.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Phillips.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Roller.

MR. ROLLER: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Spottswood. Absent. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Murphey.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: **The motion passes unanimously with one member absent.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, John. All right. Next up, we'll move into blueline tilefish, Abbreviated Framework 5. In September, the council initiated Abbreviated Framework 5 for blueline to implement the SSC's recommended catch levels based on SEDAR 92, and our

Snapper Grouper AP chair presented the AP's comments and recommendations related to this Framework 4. Then the council presented the amendment document, analysis, and rationale.

The SSC's recommended ABC was in total removals, inclusive of discards and landed catch, and staff reviewed an analysis of commercial and recreational discards used to remove overall discards from the recommended ABC to determine a total ACL based on landings, and the committee expressed concerns about the uncertainty of available discard estimates, but ultimately felt the benefit to the fishery of quickly implementing the recommended ABC was greater than the potential benefits of waiting for a more prolonged process.

The committee still intends to work on a subsequent amendment that would include reevaluating jurisdictional apportionment percentages with the Mid-Atlantic Council sector allocations and discard estimates, and so I met with Chip about this. Chip, I don't know if you want to explain our discussion a little bit more. I said that I had some concerns, and so I said I would meet with Chip offline about the concerns, and maybe Chip can explain it better than I can.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and there was a question on whether or not -- Or what the actual value that was provided by the SSC was, and so I went back into the documents, to make sure that we were doing everything properly and reading -- Re-reviewing the documents that were provided to the SSC in May of 2025, it did include total removals.

Total removals is landings plus dead discards. For blueline tilefish, it's assumed to be 100 percent of the fish being released are dead discards, and so all discards in the recreational -- All discards for blueline tilefish were included, and the reason that they're providing those total removals is trying to make sure the sustainable catch is accounting for everything that's there, and then when we're looking at developing -- Or when this council is looking at developing an ACL, we can only track to the landings.

Annual estimates of discards for the recreational fleet would likely be over 90 percent PSEs in most years, and therefore highly unreliable. Commercial estimates are generally provided when stock assessments are done for discards, and so trying to get those two values into an overall catch stream that would include total removals could be problematic, and the recommended approach is just doing an ACL based on landings only.

In order to get to that, we would have to remove the portion that's estimated to be discards from the ABC that was provided from the SSC, to make sure that you're not developing an ACL that would be exceeding the ABC, and so, with that, what we were recommending is using the amount of -- The average amount of discards from 2017 to 2023, and take that amount from the ABC recommendation to develop an ACL, and that's what was provided to you all at this meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Chip, and I just wanted to note that I went back to my SSC representative from the FWC to make sure that I understood what had happened at the meeting, and he went back to the material, and so I'm all good. Just to track that down, and so I appreciate the extra work, and extra discussion, Chip.

All right, and so we have another draft motion here, unless we want to have more discussion, any more discussion, on what we're doing here with blueline tilefish before making this motion. I'm looking around the table. I see heads nodding no. Okay. All right.

I can read this motion and then someone else can move it. Approve Abbreviated Framework 5 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region for formal secretarial review and deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate and give staff editorial license to make any necessary editorial changes to the document/codified text and give the council chair authority to approve the revisions and redeem the codified text. Okay. Moved by Carolyn, and seconded by Dewey, and I will pass it to John for the roll call vote.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Okay. Same process, and so we'll begin with Belcher.

DR. BELCHER: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Borland.

MR. BORLAND: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Dukes.

MS. DUKES: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Helmey.

MS. HELMEY: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Hemilright.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Hull.

MR. HULL: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Marhefka.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Phillips.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Roller.

MR. ROLLER: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Spottswood is absent. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Murphey.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: **The motion carries.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Next, we moved into snapper grouper fishery management unit revision, which is Amendment 61. The FMU currently consists of fifty-five species, many of which are unassessed or have low landings, and the council is considering changes to the species composition through the amendment to streamline ongoing management of the fishery.

In doing so, the council selected seventeen species to evaluate if there's a continued need for conservation and management, and the council has indicated that these species may be up for removal from the FMU altogether or designated as ecosystem component species. The committee reviewed the comments from the AP, and from scoping, and provided input on draft ecosystem management objectives relevant to EC species and the number of species that will continue to be considered in the amendment and measures to include in the amendment.

In doing so, the committee provided the following guidance. The draft ecosystem management objectives are acceptable as presented. It was noted that the report on commercial landings for unmanaged and EC species in the South Atlantic region is being developed and will be provided to the council at a meeting in the latter half of 2026, and annually thereafter, and, in discussion of the species and potential measures that will be further considered in the amendment, it was noted that additional information was needed, and, as such, direction to staff was provided on the nature of the information that the committee would like to see at the next meeting.

Then there's the direction to staff, and I'll read that. At the March 2026 meeting, receive a presentation on how the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council has designated ecosystem component species and implemented associated measures. Also, consider how other councils have designated ecosystem component species in their FMPs and associated measures. Further examine past SAFMC actions regarding EC species and removal of species from the FMU and the Snapper Grouper FMP. Request information from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center on what a simplified approach to assess species considered in Amendment 61 would entail, including the timeline and staff capacity to carry out these amendments, and provide additional information on the path for designated ecosystem component species. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. We had a lot of good discussion on this amendment, and there's two things that stood out to me, two expressions. The first one is the cure is worse than the sickness, and the second is the juice isn't worth the squeeze, and so, when I look at this, I'm kind of trying to ask what we're trying to do.

First of all, I can't support any of these species going back to the states to potentially manage, because that's just too difficult. The only thing which really hung me up was the comments by,

you know, by John Carmichael regarding the potential revisions of catch, you know, on the backend, and so, when I look at this, I look at the advice given to us by counsel, and, if we were to address this in the way that addresses all the concerns expressed by the majority of this council, I think we're looking at a motion, or an amendment, that's not deregulatory, and that's actually maybe regulatory, in the sense that we could be creating another permit, or just not addressing all these concerns we have regarding keeping these under the, you know, snapper grouper commercial harvest and whatnot. I mean, it's my opinion, and I will make a motion if I get a second, to direct staff to stop working on this amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I personally would like to see this additional information before making that decision. That's just me. I would like to get a little bit more information, understand what we've done in the past, understand what these other councils have done, and hear a little bit more about the Mid-Atlantic, and so that's just where I'm coming from. Charlie, and then Carolyn.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I totally agree with Tom, and I also totally agree with you, and so leaving it in there for at least one more meeting, so we can get a good, clear picture of options, and what we can do, and what we can't do, might be the best path, and whether we decide to stop now, or stop in March, it's going to be some, you know, staff time involved in doing some of this stuff, but it's probably worthwhile to see this, and so we can make a better educated decision.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I've got a list of hands going up. I've got Carolyn next.

DR. BELCHER: Yes, and I support holding onto it for another meeting as well, just to see where we are.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and, I mean, I think we've had some good discussions. There's certainly been some issues raised with regard to the potential for directed harvest if we remove certain species, and so I really want to dig into that, and understand that a little bit better, but I still go back to, yes, there might not be a substantial gain here, but we have a lot of species in our management unit that we do nothing with, and we likely will never do anything with in the future.

We're not even really managing them, other than saying they're in a management plan, and so I think we need to carefully look at those species and determine whether it's even worth continuing to keep those in the management plan.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. I had Tom next.

MR. ROLLER: I appreciate that Andy, but, you know, most of our discussion regarding the snapper grouper complex is that it needs holistic management, right, and, if we don't do that much with them, at least we have some sort of safeguard that we don't have a directed fishery developing next to these other discard-laden fisheries, right?

You know, the rationale provided by, you know, Jessica and Charlie is fine. I mean, I would like to see that rationale. I think that is helpful, though I will warn this council -- I mean, I was very involved, at least as a stakeholder, in that Mid-Atlantic omnibus amendment, which was arguably

one of the biggest lifts a council has ever done. I mean, it was an extraordinarily large amendment, and I'm not sure we're willing, or have the capacity, to do something like that, right, and I will still go back -- Even though we want that analysis, I will go back to this list.

I think, when we really shake down to it, I don't think we're going to find more than one or two species on there that we really agree to take off, which comes down to is the juice worth the squeeze? I don't think we're going to get there. Whether we kill this amendment now, or we do it in March, I think we're going to end up to the same conclusion. If people are agreeable to, you know, look at it again March, I'm fine with that, but I would just warn folks, given staff time, and resources, I really don't think we're going to come to another finding, you know, come the next meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Tom. Thank you for this discussion. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you. Just a quick clarification. Do you want us to request for a Mid-Atlantic staffer to come present to you in March, or do you want us to put this information together?

MS. MCCAWLEY: John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I would suggest that I think, rather than burden them with this, just let our staff reach out and talk to them, so we can just provide you an overview, and really focus more on ecosystem component stuff than perhaps the overall omnibus, and try to, you know, control the magnitude of information. It could be a lot here, and so I think we, as staff, will try to distill this down as best we can, in these presentations, to really what we understand is what you're truly interested in.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. All right. Good discussion on this. I'm going to move on. All right. Next up is yellowtail snapper and mutton snapper, Amendment 44. This is a joint amendment with Reef Fish Amendment 55 for the Gulf Council. This is in response to SEDAR 79 for mutton and SEDAR 96 for yellowtail, where both assessments indicated that the stocks are not overfished or experiencing overfishing.

The council reviewed an updated decision document with actions that would establish the stock OFL and ABC and jurisdictional apportionment between the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils, establish regional ACLs, and modify South Atlantic sector allocations for each species, and staff also reviewed how the plan team intends to analyze landings from Monroe County, Florida, as well as feedback from the AP and the Gulf Council.

The committee discussed the range of alternatives for the jurisdictional apportionment actions and used the allocation decision tool to develop alternatives for the South Atlantic sector allocation actions. The committee made the following motions and gave the following direction to staff.

The committee made a motion to approve the purpose and need statement for Snapper Grouper Amendment 44, and, on behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? All right. **The motion carries.**

The direction to staff was develop preliminary set of alternatives for Action 3, which was the sector allocations for mutton for the South Atlantic and Action 4, which is the sector allocations for yellowtail, and there are some draft actions that have been put in here by staff, and so I think we'll see these at the next meeting. If people wanted to comment on it now, that's fine. Otherwise -- Okay, and I see heads nodding no, and so we'll look at those at our next meeting.

Also, then we went into management strategy evaluation, and we received an update on both the snapper grouper and the wreckfish management strategy evaluation. Both projects remain on schedule and continue to advance, based on recommendations from the council, SSC, and APs.

Then we went into golden tilefish, and Chip presented the results of the revised golden tilefish stock assessment. This was revised when a discrepancy in commercial landings was identified. The committee discussed whether to reinitiate work on Abbreviated Framework 4 to adjust the golden tile ABC and ACL, based on SSC recommendation.

During the discussion, it was noted that the current total ACL is set to increase in 2026, but the newly-recommended ABC is slightly below this level, at a thousand pounds less, about a thousand pounds less. The committee decided not to proceed with using Abbreviated Framework 4 to adjust catch levels, since the stock is not overfished, and the adjustment to the annual catch limit would be minimal.

Instead, the committee passed the following motion to add updating the ABC and ACL for golden tilefish in a Snapper Grouper FMP amendment based on the SSC recommendation. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? So, just to be clear, this is not coming to the special council meeting in January. Like we had discussed, this will go into some other vehicle, and that's what this means. Okay. **Any objection to that motion?** All right. **The motion carries.**

Then we went over AP recommendations on items not on the agenda. These had to do with the trip limits on sale of fish, and about greater consistency in announcing closure dates for commercial species.

Then we went into the innovative management approach for the snapper grouper fishery. Council staff led the committee through a brainstorming exercise to refine goalposts and principles that can guide and inform future discussions. The committee intends to finalize these in March, and then the revised document, with all of our edits, is also at the end of the committee document, in Appendix 2, but you'll see that again at the March meeting.

Then the committee went into Other Business, and so Other Business included commercial trip limits on sale, and the committee discussed the issue of this. The issue will go to the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel at their January meeting.

Within this meeting, staff will request that the LE AP comment on suggestions for acceptable forms of evidence to denote that an attempt to sell occurred, and where there could be potential gaps in the system, and then the Office of Law Enforcement representative also commented that, for any change in the regulations concerning trip limits and sale, changing the regulation would also require change of prohibition. All right, and so next up we have a timing and tasks motion. I'm going to go to Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and, just before you pass timing and tasks, I wanted to see if there is any direction as far as where golden tilefish should end up, or is that something you want us to, as a staff, talk about and bring back in March? I'm mostly thinking about it from the standpoint of, if it ends up in the commercial amendment, we're, you know, kind of moving that through, and do you want -- Would you want to include it in the actions there, if that's the destination that it ends up in, and so I guess looking to see if you all have direction, or if you have -- If your direction is for staff to kind of put it where we think it belongs.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm very comfortable leaving that to the discretion of you all.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I'm looking around the room. I don't see any other hands. Okay. Thank you for that, and so we have a lengthy draft timing and tasks motion, if someone would like to make this timing and tasks motion. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Direct staff to do the following: continue development of Amendment 60 (commercial permit and trip efficiency) via subcommittee for council approval for the public hearings in June 2026; prepare information for council discussion of the headboat vessel limits to bring to the March council meeting; continue development of the snapper grouper management strategy evaluation; prepare and submit Reg Amendment 37 (black sea bass) and Abbreviated Framework 5 (blueline tilefish) for the Secretary of Commerce; develop a report of landings for unmanaged and ecosystem component species, with the intent that this report be updated and provided to the council annually in the second half of the year by council and NMFS staff; continue development of Amendment 44 (yellowtail and mutton) including a preliminary analysis; continue development of Amendment 61 (the snapper grouper FMU revision), including requested additional information and presentations for review at the March 2026 meeting; prepare a list of topics for the spring meeting for the Snapper Grouper AP to bring to the March 2026 meeting; include a time on the March 2026 agenda to finalize the snapper grouper innovation plan; prepare a letter to send to NOAA Fisheries on the black sea bass EFP; prepare a letter to send to NOAA Fisheries on the state management EFPs submitted by Florida, Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina; add updating the ABC and ACL for golden tilefish based on the SSC recommendations in a Snapper Grouper FMP amendment, and on behalf --

MS. MCCAWLEY: You're just making a motion. Yes, and you just made the motion. Do we have a second to the timing and tasks motion? Charlie. Any discussion on the timing and tasks motion? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Just a point of clarification. Because the state EFPs are not final, and not reviewed, are we prematurely getting ahead of that with comments? I guess that's -- I'm not sure what the formality is with that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The way I understand it is we're sending in these initial comments. We don't know the timing and process that will come, and then we're assuming there will be some revised versions for March that we could perhaps provide additional comment on.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: There's something I forgot to mention. I've got an AP topic that I would like to bring up.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay.

MR. ROLLER: **I would like the AP to look at changing the recreational golden tilefish opening, because North Carolina, and particularly the Carolinas, have been shut out of the fishery the last few years, because of closure, and so I would like to look at having a different opening for the fishery, and see what the AP thinks.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and we'll still have one more meeting before the AP meets.

MR. ROLLER: I understand. I just want to make sure it's recorded there, and that we know it's coming.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay.

MR. ROLLER: We're not going to be able to do anything with that until we hear from the AP, in my opinion, and so I just want to make sure it's there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so, Myra, I believe he said recreational golden tilefish season. Is that what you said?

MR. ROLLER: Yes, and so the recreational just -- It opens January 1 right now, and it's been closing in February for the last few years.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We've made a modification there. I assume the motion maker and seconder are good. All right. Any other discussion of the timing and tasks motion? **Any objection to the timing and tasks motion?** All right. Any other business to come before the Snapper Grouper Committee? All right. Seeing none, I'm going to pass it back to the chair.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, everyone. I guess I just need to see -- Is there any other business, any other council business, that needs to be discussed today? Seeing none, I will adjourn this December council meeting. Thank you, everyone.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on December 12, 2025.)

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
January 22, 2026

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

Sonny Gwin

Kristin Foss

Kathy Knowlton

Shep Grimes

Rick DeBictor

Dr. Marcel Reicher t

Dr. John Walter

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FULL COUNCIL ROLL CALL VOTE 2025-2026

DATE: 12/12/25

LOCATION: KITTYHAWK NC

MOTION: BSB - RA37 submission

NAME	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
Belcher	✓		
Borland	✓		
Dukes	✓		
Helmey	✓		
Hemilright	✓		
Hull	✓		
Marhefka	✓		
McCawley	✓		
Phillips	✓		
Roller	✓		
Spottswood			
Strelcheck	✓		
Murphey (Chair)	✓		

ABS

FULL COUNCIL ROLL CALL VOTE 2025-2026

DATE: 12/12/25

LOCATION: Kitty Hawk NC

MOTION: SG Abb FW 5 - BlueLine Tilefish Approval

NAME	YES	NO	ABSTAIN
Belcher	✓		
Borland	✓		
Dukes	✓		
Helmey	✓		
Hemilright	✓		
Hull	✓		
Marhefka	✓		
McCawley	✓		
Phillips	✓		
Roller	✓		
Spottswood	ABSENT		
Strelcheck	✓		
Murphey (Chair)	✓		

Attendee Report: December 2025 Council Meeting

Report Generated:

12/15/2025 09:42 AM EST

Webinar ID

690-222-395

Actual Start Date/Time

12/12/2025 07:40 AM EST

Staff Details

Attended

Yes

Interest Rating

Not applicable for staff

Attendee Details

Last Name

First Name

Addis

Dustin

Aines

Alex

Angers

Jeff

Atkinson

Seth

Bailey

Adam

Baker

Scott

Barbieri

Luiz

Barile

Peter

Barrows

Katline

Bernier

Quinn

Bianchi

Alan

Blough

Heather

Boots

Benjamin

Borland

Gary

Brannon

Gettys

Brantley

William

Bruger

Catherine

Bunting

Matthew

Chadwick

Bart

Cheshire

Rob

Coleman

Heather

Curtis

Judd

DeVictor

Richard

Degan

Jacqui

Dover

Miles

Dukes

Amy

Flowers

Henry

Foss

Kristin

Gore

Karla

Gravitz

Michael

Guyas	Martha
HEMILRIGHT	DEWEY
Harrison	Alana
Hart	Hannah
Helies	Frank
Helmey	Judy
Hildreth	Delaine
Howington	Kathleen
Hull	Jimmy
Iberle	Allie
Iverson	Kim
Klasnick	01Kelly
Klibansky	Lara
Knowlton	Kathy
Larkin	Michael
Law	Alexander
Lazarre	Dominique
Levy	Mara
Mackesey	Brendan
Malinowski	Richard
Marhefka	Kerry
Markwith	Anne
Masi	Michelle
Matter	Vivian
McClair	Genine
Meehan	Sean
Mehta	Nikhil
Murphey	Trish
Newman	Thomas
Oliver	Ashley
Package-Ward	Christina
Padgett	Kathryn
Palmrose	Kristin
Phillips	Charlie
Porch	Clay
Ramsay	Chloe
Records	David
Reichert	Marcel
Reynolds	Kris
Roller	Tom
Sawicki	Kim
Sedberry	George
Seward	McLean
Silvas	Rachael

Spurgin	Kali
Stasser	Katie
Stemle	Adam
Stephen	Jessica
Stephens	Haley
Sweetman	CJ
Turley	Brendan
Vara	Mary
Venker	Ted
Walsh	Mick
Walsh	Jason
Walter	John
Wamer	David
Westwood	William
White	Geoff
Whitten	Meredith
Williams	Erik
Withers	Meg
bonura	Vincent
collier	chip
gloeckner	david
peters	sophonda
thomas	suz
zales	bob
Allen	Shanae
Aman	Kevin
Amendola	Kim
Anker	Shari
Aukeman	Trip
Auster	Peter
Baertlein	Heather
Bajema	Jordan
Banks	Kesley
Barger	Jeff
Batsavage	Chris
Beal	Bob
Binion-Rock	Samantha
Blum	Catherine
Bogdan	Jennifer
Brewster-Geisz	Karyl
Brouwer	Myra
Brown	Hunter
Bublely	Walter
Byrd	Julia

Cermak	Bridget
Chandler	Alexander
Cody	Richard
Crandall	Chelsey
Cromwell	Lawrence
Crosson	Scott
Cushner	Sascha
DeFilippi Simpson	Julie
DiJohnson	Alex
Drexler	Michael
Dubniczki	Hayden
Dunn	Courtney
Dunn	Russell
Dyar	Ben
Eckert	Anne
Farrell	Delaney
Fields-Rivera	Kayla
Floyd	Brad
Franke	Emilie
Geeslin	Dakus
Gentner	BRAD
Gialanella	Tiffany
Glaser	Danica
Goldfinch	Stephen
Gray	Alisha
Griffin	Aimee
Griner	Tim
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Hadley	John
Hale	Robert
Hallas	sara
Halonen	Ryan
Harrell	Ryan
Harrison	Alana
Haymans	Doug
Herrick	Daniel
Heyman	William
Hollensead	Lisa
Horton	Chris
Humphreys	Aaron
Isbell	James
Judy	Gabrielle
Karnauskas	Mandy
Keener	Paula

Kent	Russell
Keppler	Blaik
Kersting	Anne
Klibansky	Nikolai
Klibansky	Nikolai
Kolmos	Kevin
Laird	Skylar
Laird	Skylar
Leavel	Lillie Callaway
Lee	Jennifer
Locke	Charles
MCGOVERN	Jack
Macek	Amanda
Mallory	Ryan
Matzen	Eric
McCaffity	Chris
McGuigan	Charles
McIntosh	Kevin
McManus	Brian
McMullen	Ryan
McWaters	Mark
Mcclees	Matthew
Melz	Stephen
Merck	Nicole
Miele	Valentina
Miranda	David
Moir	James
Muffley	Brandon
Neer	Julie
Nejjari	Amber
Nuttall	Matthew
OCain	Elijah
ODEN	JEFF
Ott	Emily
Owens	Marina
P	Jeff
P	Jeff
P	Jeff
Pace	Sara
Papacostas	Katherine
Perkinson	Matt
Pineiro Soler	Eugenio
Poland	Stephen
Porter	Mark

Rathke	David
Reed	John
Rettig	Adam
Ricken	Joshua
Riley	Richard
Rodgers	Phil
Rodriguez	Jessica
Rothschild	Molly
Runde	Brendan
Rutherford	John
S	Emma
Salmon	Brandi
Scheffel	Trevor
Schlick	CJ
Schliewe	Stacy
Schmidtke	Michael
Seeley	Matthew
Seeley	Matthew
Smart	Tracey
Smillie	Nick
Smit-Brunello	Monica
Smith	Brad
Solinger	Laura
Soltanoff	Carrie
Somereve	Jake
Stein	Max
Stewart	Mark
Takade-Heumacher	Helen
Treece	Andrea
Trnka	Maureen
Vecchio	Julie
Waldo	Jennifer
Walia	Matt
Warren	Camilla
Welch	Rob
Williams	Travis
Willingham	Darrin
Wilms	Olivia
Wilson	Jackie
Woodward	Spud
Zapf	Daniel
cErffJdjJMKukaXrW	IJjqPCdpjELSGqDaCOS
cox	Jack
curtis	Joe

gwin
huber
leonard
marinko
monk
moss
sandorf
shaffer
vincent
young

earl sonny
Jeanette
edward
jeff
Melissa
david
scott
charles
matthew
Jerome