

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL SESSION II

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

March 7-8, 2024

Transcript

Council

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Observers and Participants

Other observers and participants attached.

The Full Council Session II of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at The Villas by the Sea Resort, Jekyll Island, Georgia, on Thursday, March 7, 2024, and was called to order by Chairman Carolyn Belcher.

DR. BELCHER: We're going into Council Session II, and we're going to start off with a litigation brief from Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Thank you. Since our last meeting, the council, the service, has been sued on the snowy grouper, Amendment 51, and so, on December 29, 2023, several Southeast commercial entities filed a lawsuit in the D.C. District Court challenging the final rule that implemented Amendment 51. The plaintiffs to that suit are North Carolina Fisheries Association, Southeast Fisheries Association, SFA East Coast Fisheries Section/Creek Water Works, Inc., and Tilman Gray, doing business as Avon Seafood.

The plaintiffs allege the rule violates various provisions of the Magnuson Act, the Administrative Procedure Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act. Essentially, their claims assert that the Fisheries Service's failure to adequately manage the recreational harvest results in violations which adversely impact the commercial interests, and so we have filed an administrative record, and an answer, and a supplement to the administrative record.

Because of some really similar claims to the South Atlantic red snapper case, the parties have asked the court to delay briefing in the snowy grouper case until the court rules in the red snapper case, and it's before the same judge. He has both red snapper and the snowy grouper case, and the judge agreed, and so, in the red snapper case, the case is briefed, and we're just awaiting the court's decision. As I mentioned, it's the same judge as the snowy grouper case.

Then a couple of cases that are not -- That don't involve the South Atlantic Council, but kind of do in a way, right, because of decisions you all make, is that there are several cases in which plaintiffs have raised claims that the fishery management council structure is constitutionally suspect, because, in the plaintiffs' view, the council members must be appointed according to certain procedures under the U.S. Constitution.

Two courts have ruled on these cases in the last month, and both courts upheld NMFS' actions, but one of the courts identified flaws in the council system, but that court still ruled in NMFS' favor and did not require any remedial action regarding the final ruling issued in that case, and that was Gulf amberjack. NMFS continues to vigorously defend the issue in a third pending case, and, at the present time, the service -- Well, really, at the present time, no court has ordered that the council operations, or procedures, need to be changed.

The second case, that was just -- I guess the opinion was issued last week, February 28, was out of the District of New Jersey, and, in that case, the court found that the council membership, and those kinds of things, were not an issue, and so we've got one court saying it is an issue, sort of, and another court saying it's not, but both of those cases have been appealed already.

Probably the last case that I might mention is the Gulf red grouper case. If you remember, that case was based on Amendment 53, the Gulf Reef Fish Amendment 53, and the district court issued a decision on January 6, and so over a year ago, that all the plaintiffs' claims, and their motions for summary judgement, were denied, and finding for the government.

That case was appealed up to the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals, and last week was a busy week for courts, and so, on March 1, the Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit issued a decision that affirmed in part and reversed in part the district court's decision, but they kept the underlying rule in place for red grouper, but they wanted the Fisheries Service to address an economic analysis issue in the amendment in the final rule and then what the implications of that analysis were for National Standards 4 and 9, and so there will be more to come on that case.

Then I'm assuming you all listened to the oral argument before the Supreme Court on the -- What is it called? The Relentless and the Loper Bright fisheries, and the court heard -- I brought this up before, and so the court heard arguments about the certain standard of review, and what you should demand of agencies, and those happened to be fisheries cases, and so I would assume that we might get a decision on those cases, maybe before the court breaks for the summer, but maybe I'll be able to talk with you about it at the June meeting, and so that's my update right now.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Monica. Questions for Monica at this point? John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Monica, I appreciate you pointing out the appointments issue, and the difference between that Gulf case and the summer flounder case that just came up, and so is this likely headed to a higher court for resolution, given that we've got two courts with different opinions?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: That would be my guess, although we'll see what the appellate courts say, but I think eventually it could end up at a higher court.

DR. BELCHER: Any other questions? Okay. Thank you, Monica. The next item is staff reports and John Carmichael.

MR. CARMICHAEL: All right. I will go through this fairly quick. You have the report, and it gives you a good overview of things that are happening in particular outside of the meetings, which you may not see, and staff is always running around doing something. They keep quite busy all the time.

The first item that I'll hit on is the IRA funding update, and we've talked about this a lot. You have, in Attachment A1b, the proposals that we submitted to NMFS at the end of January, and the proposal we submitted at the end of December, and we've not heard anything back yet from NMFS, as far as funding, but we are going to likely proceed with soliciting for a projects coordinator to be funded through the \$375,000 that was in the December 30 submission.

While we don't have the funds, we are allowed to begin spending funds on a grant like ninety days before the funds are received, and they have told us to expect that we should receive these funds by April sometime, and then NMFS Grants was actually trying to work on permission for the councils to spend those funds as early as December this year, because some councils are already on them, and so you see the information that we've submitted. We're waiting on word of those projects, and I expect to hear probably the next bit of news, either that we'll start getting some money by April, or, if not, we'll get an update at the CCC meeting in May.

The stakeholders meetings planning continues, and one of the things that we included in the IRA project that I highlighted is some money to hire a facilitator, who will help develop those meetings and do the follow-up, which will really take some of the burden off of staff, because this is going to be a great project, but a great time-requiring project, and so that's -- Hopefully we will get funded for that, and we can provide some support to Christina and crew for that.

Then we would like some input from you guys on a couple of things. What outreach are you able to provide, and so can your folks help our outreach folks, you know, spread the word, get folks involved, that sort of thing, and then are you comfortable with us visiting two states per year on a rotating basis? Remember that we talked about trying to hit all the states, and that's really looking like an intensive workload, on top of everything that we have going, and so we're thinking it's more realistic that we could spread this out over a two-year period and hitting all the states, and so any feedback on those two topics would be much appreciated.

DR. BELCHER: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, and so, of course, FWC would love to be involved and help out however we can. We've done something like this in the past, and I guess I was seeking a little bit of clarification on what we mean by two states per year, and does this mean like ten workshops, you know, at a time, and like is it because you're going to double-down, and have even more workshops at every little, you know, inlet in the state or what, and so can you talk about that a little bit more?

MS. WIEGAND: So I think that's probably something that the planning team, that we put together at the last meeting, will discuss, but, broadly, staff's thought was to sort of do, quote, unquote, road shows, like we've done before, similar to like what we're doing for port meetings, where we would spend a week in North Carolina, working our way up the coast, and then, you know, a week in Georgia, working our way up the coast, and those would be the two weeks that we spend doing stakeholder meetings that year, and then, the next year, we would do South Carolina and Florida, or some combination like that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So I think that sounds great, and I guess my other question would be does this mean that you're going to do this in perpetuity, and so it's not like you're just going to do this say this year, and next year, but you would always be doing these two states per year, from now until the end of time, or is it just for these next couple of years?

MS. WIEGAND: Some of that is probably funding-pending, but the idea has always been to start this process and have it be something that the council does in perpetuity, understanding that sort of building relationships with fishermen is a long-term goal that takes, you know, a significant amount of time and effort and continually going out and visiting these states, and these communities.

DR. BELCHER: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I was going to say that North Carolina, of course, will be very glad to help with outreach, and, when you come to North Carolina, we can help with meetings and stuff too, and so thanks.

DR. BELCHER: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Awesome. I'm so excited. I love the fact that you're thinking long-term with this, and absolutely, and South Carolina will be all over that. Is the idea of, once this gets established, that the subject matter will change from year to year, and that it will be a rotating schedule, and that this council will have some input in that, and then how would you manage being able to share that information, if it changes every year, between going to two states one year and two states the following year?

MS. WIEGAND: So I guess a couple of things. One thing is we did establish a sort of council -- A smaller council group that's going to be addressing some of the things that you just talked about, and so staff is working on a structure right now, and the thought would be that we would work with whatever state we're in to identify, you know, one, two, or maybe three, of sort of the most salient topics at the time for that state, and there would be sort of a section of the stakeholder meeting where we would focus on those issues, and then there would also be a more unstructured section that would include sort of an opportunity for people to wander around from stations, quote, unquote, where there would always sort of be a management 101 station, and a, hey, my particular topic of concern wasn't addressed station, and sort of a couple of other ones, and we would work with the states to identify those. That's what staff has sort of been throwing around, when we've met, but, again, that's something that we'll be working with the broader stakeholder planning team, with council members on it, to determine.

DR. BELCHER: Speaking for Georgia, I mean, we have one PIO, and so I would have to talk with him, and his supervisor, to make sure that we can extend that, but we'll do -- You know, again, with what we have, we'll do what we can do to help, and, yes, I mean, whatever it takes for you all to be able to have a good, balanced workload, and, I mean, every other year, to us, is perfectly fine. Other comments from folks on these two particular highlights? Okay. John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: All right. Thanks, and I appreciate that feedback, and, you know, we may, as we were just talking, struggle sometimes to be innovative in our management, but this crew is very innovative, when it comes to outreach, and has done just some really great things, and we're excited to get this going. Part of this goes back to Kerry saying, some years ago -- We just don't go out like we used to, and we need to go out and talk to people, and we need to hear from them, and Christina was like, I absolutely agree, and we should be doing that, and so it's great to see this, you know, getting off the ground, and the port meetings are a similar type of approach, that will get going even sooner, and so it's good to be doing this.

The next big topic is citizen science, and there's always a lot going on in citizen science, as you can see here with the many things listed. I do want to highlight that the Release 2023 data summary is complete, and so it's on the webpage, if you're interested in the amount of information that came in through Release, and it's all there, and it's a nice report that they do at the end of each year, and they're working on a participant recognition program, just as a way to try and encourage people to participate more in the program.

One of the challenges we run into, with so much of this, is just the federal bureaucracy, and the limitations on what we can do with people, but these guys do a great job of, you know, getting people engaged, and keeping them motivated, despite the many restrictions that we do face.

We're pretty excited, and, if you guys recall, there were a lot of FISHstory scanning events being held at AP meetings, and the council meeting in December, and, you know, Julia was there, and they've come up with 650 new photos that were digitized of historic fishing, and we're really excited about that. This is another project that has been, you know, decades in the making, from the idea, and from Rusty Hudson and his pictures, and just, you know, pushing this concept, and we really hope that this gives us some good historic insight into our fisheries, as all the information comes together. There is a lot, as you can see. There's a lot of citizen science projects, and it's never a dull moment with those guys. They're always out doing something, and usually six things at one time.

Now, here is a really exciting thing on the website, and I think that was a great testament of the website a few minutes ago, seeing the fishery performance reports, and the visioning is all right there, and it's easy to find, and I just want to point out that Nick has archived all the advisory panel briefing books, dating back to 2010, and so we have council meetings, we have AP meetings, and we have SSC meetings, going way back, and so, if you're interested in any of the history, it's there. It's a great archive, and it's a great resource. You know, it really removes the need for people to shoutout to us when they want to look at some information. The FMPs that are on there are just spectacular, and I myself turn to them quite a bit, and so it's just -- That website just gets better and better all the time.

Coral 10, we're working on resubmission. Kathleen has been working with the IPT, and mapping out the work that needs to be done, and we'll get a more thorough update at the Habitat Committee in June, but we're, you know, hoping to get this turned around and get it to you for consideration for resubmission this year.

Good news on the allocations review. If you recall, we had a GAO job to basically address some things in an allocations review report, and we have completed that, and we have addressed what they wanted us to address. We've included information, and policies, on the website, and so they've closed out that task, which is good, and it gets us off the hook there, and it addresses their concerns.

Just a couple other meetings that staff went to are listed here, and a few of us went over to the NOAA recreational coordinators meeting. They meet once a year, and all of them get together, and, if you don't know, there is rec coordinators nationwide. It's a pretty good crew, and there's a lot of folks working on rec fisheries. They were in Charleston, and so Chip and I and Amy Dukes, from South Carolina DNR, went over one afternoon, and we were invited by Russ to present, and I think we had an excellent time speaking with those guys, and sharing our thoughts on, you know, challenges and unique things that go on in our region, and I felt like I got a lot out of it, and I'm pretty sure that Amy and Chip did as well, and so, you know, we appreciate the opportunity to speak with those guys, and it was a good exchange of information.

The Florida Keys blueprint is still underway. We made some good progress initially, at the start of the year, on the fisheries MOU, which is one of the big things left to be done, and that basically lays out how the various entities involved in fisheries down there in south Florida work together on fisheries regulations.

Unfortunately, there's been a bit of a snag in working with some of the language in the blueprint that they're working on, and what would go into the MOU, really as it pertains to the authorities

of the state, and the councils, to have control, and influence, over the fisheries regulations. Basically, who does what, and how, and what is our role on the fisheries that are in the sanctuary, but also in the South Atlantic area, and what is FWC's role, and so that continues to be a work in progress. There's a lot going on behind the scenes, with a lot of lawyers, some from FWC, and many from the sanctuaries.

Once this is done, our plan is that we will bring the MOU to you, and let you see it, because it's something that we would sign, and so it's something that we want to make sure the council gets a chance to see, and to review, and, when that's going to happen, I'm not exactly sure, but I keep continuing to monitor it, and I will keep you guys up-to-date as it plays out.

Then there's a few things about some other reports that are available, and I do want to highlight dolphinfish, because we don't do that much with dolphin, as we've talked about, and we really want to do more, but we have mentioned this Western Central Atlantic Fishery Commission and having a working group, and we're encouraged, because we've struggled with this being a stock that we only see a portion of, and this is around the Atlantic, and this is a way to get information, get more information, from some of these entities that we don't really know what's going on, as far as their dolphin fisheries, and so this working group is going to have a meeting in Puerto Rico in June, and start thinking about what's the nature of this group, what are they going to do, what are their next steps.

Hopefully, it's going to be a mechanism for us to get more information about dolphin around the whole Atlantic basin. Again, it's another one of those things that just takes a long time to get going, but it is continuing to forge ahead, and we keep track of it, and we hope to eventually get some information that helps us better management dolphin through it, and so that's the highlights of the report. Any questions?

DR. BELCHER: Questions, comments, feedback for John? Okay. Seeing none, thanks, John. The next item on the agenda is the National Marine Fisheries Service's presentation on equity and environmental justice, Ed Glazier and Heather Blough and Brent Stoffel.

MR. GLAZIER: Hi, folks. Good afternoon. We too have recently gone out and done a lot of chatting with fishery folks all along the Southeast region, and so we'll talk a bit about that in this context of advancing equity and environmental justice in the Southeast. My name is Ed Glazier, and I'm presently working for SERO, and, in recent years, I've also taken on some work with the Science Center. I'm part of a small group of fishery anthropologists who focus especially on the social and cultural dimensions of fishing, and marine fisheries, around the nation.

We really appreciate the opportunity to discuss our EEJ work with you today. We've divided this presentation into two parts, to make the most of our time here, and, first, we'll recap the purpose and objectives of the NOAA Fisheries' EEJ initiative, and then we'll review the engagement strategy that we used last year to gather stakeholder input on the initiative, and we'll provide key takeaway conclusions from that effort. We'll then pause to take some questions, if you have them, before Heather takes on the second-half of the presentation, which reviews what we've done with the resulting information so far, and that's with the goal of teeing-up discussion about the draft action items included in your briefing book. We also have Dr. Brent Stoffel, from the Science Center, attending virtually, and he can chat a little bit during the Q&A.

As a reminder, NOAA Fisheries released its first National Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy last May. The strategy establishes a national framework for advancing EEJ objectives across all facets of the agency's mission-related work. While the framework helps to promote consistency and clarity in objectives and approaches across the nation, it also emphasizes the need to address the unique aspects of each region, and, more specifically, it requires development of a joint Regional Office and Science Center implementation plan. We're currently working on that, a draft for that, and that's due this coming April, early April.

With regard to fundamental aspects of the EEJ initiative, the national strategy defines, and incorporates, three key terms, and the first is "equity", defined as the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who are part of underserved communities that have been denied such treatment over time. This derives from Executive Order 13985.

Please note that this graphic distinguishes equity from equality by illustrating that equity is focused on equality in terms of outcome, rather than on input, because equal inputs only lead to equal outcomes if everyone is starting on a level playing field.

The second term is "environmental justice". NOAA Fisheries national strategy adopts EPA's definition of the term, which has been in use for some time now, and the definition emphasizes not just equitable protection from environmental hazards, as EPA tends to focus on, of course, but also equitable access to environment-related decision-making processes and opportunities.

The third term of note here is "underserved", and the definition here also derives from EO 13985, and it addresses both geographic communities and populations that share particular characteristics that have led them to be systematically disadvantaged. I will linger here for a minute, so you can read this slide, and the definitions of all three terms are provided at the end of Attachment 2b in your briefing book, should you wish to refer to them later.

Last June, Andy pre-reviewed with you our strategy for engaging Southeast communities in the development of our regional plan, and we have subsequently conducted twenty focus group meetings, and related scoping work, with underserved persons, and liaisons, in and with communities across the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and U.S. Caribbean. The main point here was trying to reach folks that normally don't have a voice at the table.

In the South Atlantic, we undertook scoping work, and focus group meetings, in Morehead City, Wanchese, and Belhaven in North Carolina. We did extensive scoping work in and around Little River, Georgetown, McClellanville, Beaufort, and St. Helena Island in South Carolina, and we did focus group meetings, and related scoping work, in Darien, up the road here, and adjacent rural areas elsewhere in Georgia here, and also in Jacksonville, and adjacent rural areas in northeastern Florida, and, finally, in Islamorada and Key West in the Keys.

As noted above, scoping work was undertaken, to some extent, in all communities, and I think it's worth defining that a little bit. This involved informal, open-ended conversations with local leaders and persons in local commercial and for-hire fleets. There was a basic observation of waterfronts and fishing operations, and, wherever possible, some secondary source research in libraries and museums and that sort of thing.

Using these varied approaches, we connected with hundreds of persons from and/or familiar with a wide variety of underserved communities, geographic and sociodemographic alike, with the latter including persons of differing language groups, ethnicities, cultures, genders and sexual orientations, ages, and manners of participation in regional marine fisheries and aquaculture. We had a few aquaculture folks.

Importantly, commonly, the identified themes resulting from this overall engagement effort include a series of things, like the perspective value of further diversifying agency, community, and outreach platforms, to more effectively meet underserved communities where they are, in terms of location, with the lesson here being go to them, especially in rural areas, and, with regard to timing, that is we need to consider people's fishing schedules, particularly during certain critical seasons, and we also need to better consider people's education level, and that is we need to use plain language to reach everyone, and we also need to consider folks' technological capabilities, and, in other words, we need to recognize that some people still have varying access to the inability to use cellphones, computers, and broadband internet.

We also learned that we need to improve our attention to language, and this is some persons in the region do not speak English as a first language, and, thus, translation services are indispensable in certain places and situations. We also heard much about the need to increase the agency's presence in various communities, the invaluable nature of trustworthy and knowledgeable community liaisons, such as Sea Grant reps and port agents, and the need to more regularly work with local NGOs and knowledgeable persons in underserved communities.

Our work also made clear the need to better understand local cultural and historical community context and its importance in shaping the present state of involvement in regional marine fisheries, reported difficulties in acquiring permits, problems with local fishery infrastructure, and the range of challenges that typically follow, in this region, significant tropical storm events, such as subsequent gentrification processes that tend to alter working waterfronts. Various potential solutions to such problems were also advanced by various constituents, and we need to attend to those.

For many stakeholders, contemporary conditions reportedly are very challenging, just in general, in marine fisheries, including federal fisheries, and many expressed gratitude for our attention and interest in their situations. Notably, many of the commercial harvesters, and owners of related support businesses that we contacted, assert that it may not be possible to continue fishing if infrastructure issues, and economic pressures associated with imports, are not addressed in a timely manner. Further, certain individuals made clear that some fishing-oriented families in the South Atlantic cannot afford basic services and that youth today often do not see fishing as a viable career option, and are foundering for that reason.

Notably, many persons with whom we interacted assert that decision-makers often don't understand, consider, or represent their perspectives and viewpoints, and, again, we were seeking folks who don't often show up at meetings, and they just can't get there, for whatever reason. Further, many are not fully aware of the council's role in fishery management. Others, who are aware, state that they can't readily engage in decision-making processes, for various reasons, as I said, including extensive distances to meeting locations, coupled with, you know, technological constraints that make virtual attendance difficult. Yet others discussed a lack of confidence to participate in open forums, and we encountered this many times.

Certain underserved stakeholders also describe overarching environmental challenges, such as those related to the persistent development of coastal lands, degradation of vital estuary groundings and spills, and we've talked a little bit about SpaceX, and SpaceX has some issues with offshore access. Folks, not too far from here, talked about the grounding of the Golden Ray transport vessel during 2019 as a big issue.

Discussions around the region clearly indicate that communities of underserved persons are depending on us to partner with each other, and with other state and federal agencies, to identify solutions to such problems. While our engagement work was not intended to represent the totality of perspectives on EEJ, it does provide an important set of insights with which to aid in the development of our plan, and so we're really focused on trying to inform the development of our implementation plan for the region.

A little bit of a -- Or a big elephant in the room there, but, while underserved communities in the region responded very positively to the strategy as a whole, and to our regional engagement efforts specifically, we do want to acknowledge that not all of our stakeholders are quite as supportive. Much of the feedback we received in response to our request for our public request for information, or RFI, for instance, opposed the idea of spending time and resources on this effort generally, and some others we've connected with, throughout this process, have expressed concerns about the overall purpose of the effort and how it might affect them.

Environmental justice is not a brand-new topic for our agency, but this is the first time we've undertaken such a coordinated effort to establish common definitions, and objectives, in a national strategy. The effort is relatively new to many in our agency, and we recognize that the same is likely true for many constituents, and so, you know, it's no surprise that there are lots of questions, and probably some fear and uncertainty as well, but we think the best way to have a healthy discussion about the topic is to promote open and honest conversation. We're learning as we go, and we look forward to your perspectives on all of this. With that, if you have any questions, or insights, we're open.

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

MS. MURPHEY: I was wondering -- What kind of turnout did you get at your meetings?

MR. GLAZIER: Pretty good. It was pretty good, and we had some challenges organizing some of the sessions. We had a pretty tight timeline, and we had to get clearance from OMB regarding the questions that we could ask, and it came a little later than we had hoped, but we did pretty well. We ranged from probably five or six to twenty folks, depending on the community, and the focus groups -- You know, you like to have between about six and thirteen, ideally, and so we got a little bit less, and a little bit more, in some places. We did pretty well, in terms of gathering together diverse audiences, and I think that was -- Audiences that we don't normally hear from, and that was the main objective.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you. The reason I asked was -- And you did point out that, you know, some of the suggestions were to partner with the different agencies, but the reason I asked that was, in North Carolina, someone called me asking me about your meeting, and I had no idea what they were talking about, and so that was one reason why I asked how your turnout was,

and I think, if you had -- At least in North Carolina, and I'm just speaking for North Carolina, and, if you reached out to us, I think -- I'm not sure how many you did have turn out for North Carolina, but please feel free to, you know, reach out to us.

Our department itself is also working on EEJ-type of stuff, and that's one of the Secretary's projects as well, and we've done -- Something else, and another thing to reach out that I learned, with doing some resilience-type of work with underserved communities, is churches play a very big role in EEJ stuff, and so, you know, I think that would be something to also consider when you move forward in your work.

MR. GLAZIER: That's terrific. Thank you. One of the things we learned was that folks in some of these places are still reliant on very local sources of information, such as, you know, printed newspapers, and it's becoming a rarity these days, and churches, right, and we learned as we went, and so I think, if we get a shot to do this again, we'll have a little more experience in what works.

DR. STOFFEL: I just wanted to respond to that. One of the problems we had, with North Carolina, was I actually did make a call to a lot of the churches, and we were really -- As Ed mentioned, we were almost going to have to delay the entire effort for another year, because we were at the time when we couldn't get the PRA clearance to get into the field, and we weren't sure we were going to get it, and so, as soon as we got that clearance, we were in the field a week later, and so we did what was our best efforts to get folks, because I actually did make a number of calls to the churches.

Though I didn't get anybody to respond to my calls, I think you're exactly right, and that's a perfect source for reaching out to folks who are engaged in environmental justice efforts, and I appreciate you confirming that for us, and we will -- I assume that you're with NC DMF, because I can't see anybody there, and I only have the presentation on my screen, but I assume that, when you said no one contacted us, and we will make sure, 100 percent, the next time, that we don't miss that opportunity.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, sir, and I'm with DMF, and it's Trish Murphey, and so please feel free to contact me.

DR. STOFFEL: Thank you very much, Trish. I really appreciate your interest.

DR. BELCHER: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Thank you, Ed. That was really good, and I'm really glad that it seems like the people at the top are taking an interest in us. You know, we talk about -- You hear us talking about red snapper, and gag grouper, and, you know, all these glamorous ocean fish, but, you know, we also provide cheaper protein, you know, to people that can't afford to pay a lot of money for red snapper, you know, and so we sell spots and croakers and sheepshead and mullet and stuff like that, but I'm looking at your key-takeaway slide, and I agree with the three bullet points that you have here, and so it's great if you identify these issues, but is there like a step-two now, for NOAA to come in and try to help find solutions to these key takeaways? Is there a part-two of this program?

MR. GLAZIER: Yes.

MS. THOMPSON: Okay. Good. That's great news.

MR. GLAZIER: We'll put Heather on when you're ready, but we developed quite an exhaustive list of action items that would respond to some of these challenges. You know, we held the group meetings, and they tended to be fairly -- They moved quite -- You know, we would invite people to talk, and they would express issues, and problems, and then we would kind of try to get them to narrow down to thinking about how we might solve some of this stuff, and so we actually generated I think 317 prospective action items, but we've had to winnow-down quite a bit, and so Heather is going to talk about that.

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

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Ed, for the presentation, and, really, thank you to the team. I mean, it's just a tremendous effort. Knowing kind of the wide geographic distribution of the South Atlantic region, right, from Key West all the way up to North Carolina, and the takeaways that are presented here, did you see kind of some regionalization of any kind of key takeaways, or challenges, and what were those, or what were you hearing in the different geographies?

MR. GLAZIER: Great question. We did indeed, and I -- You know, Hatteras north is -- These are a little bit different fisheries, and different resources, because folks are affected by, you know, numerous regulatory bodies, as we know, and so that was part of it, and we would hear different things, and, also, the -- You know, the offshore terrain is much deeper more quickly up that way. Down where I live, in southeast North Carolina, Wrightsville Beach, we've got a much broader shelf, and so, you know, you would hear about more inshore and state fisheries, depending on where you are, but that would vary quite a bit. Then, down here, for instance in Darien, there was a lot of discussion of shrimping, and so it depended on what folks were focused on.

DR. STOFFEL: Ed, do you mind if I jump into that one as well?

DR. BELCHER: Go right ahead.

DR. STOFFEL: Thank you. Some of the things, more specifically, were things that we heard in today's discussion in Snapper Grouper, which was the discussion of the two-for-one, and we had that one throughout the South Atlantic, all the way from Hatteras to Key West, and that was a common theme, as well as infrastructure. The loss of infrastructure, and the competing desires for the coastal waterfront to be redeveloped into other sorts of uses, was tremendously frightening, especially for people -- For these underserved communities, people that are so reliant on the existence of these places, and that not having access to them could mean traveling extreme distances to offload catch, thus increasing costs, and a long list of other issues, like safety and things like that.

Then disaster relief, the impacts of disasters and recovery, was something, because, of course, you know, this area, the South Atlantic and Gulf and, of course, the U.S. Caribbean, all prone to hurricanes, everywhere, and massive ones, and so it's -- You know, there are some very -- I think we'll hit on some of these in the actionable solutions, but I think you're going to find that some of these themes run consistent throughout the entire region, and they even run into the other subregions, and then some of these things are very regional-specific, and like Ed mentioned shrimp. You know, shrimping is a big deal there in Georgia, and parts of North Carolina and South

Carolina, where it wasn't such a big deal, but yet then had a connection with the folks in Key West, who are dealing with shrimp, and so, yes, there were some regional variations and some similarities.

DR. BELCHER: I had Amy and then Kerry.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Ed, for this presentation. I'm Amy Dukes, and I work for South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, and I was curious to ask you how your scoping, in and around the cities of South Carolina, went, and sort of where you focused your efforts, and were they mostly just commercial docks, or tackle shops, and I'm just curious about how that differed, in your opinion, from gaining positive feedback for this mission, which I applaud you for, and how that scoping went, versus those focus groups.

MR. GLAZIER: Well, we -- It was handy, because we could -- We had the flexibility to be able to go to very rural areas, and so, you know, McClellanville is out there, and we started in Georgetown, and we realized -- We chatted with some folks, and, coincidentally, I think it was one of their last days to be able to moor at the Georgetown docks, and I think that's been a hot item in the news lately, and so we talked to them, and then they would suggest that, hey, why don't you go talk to the guys up in McClellanville, and then St. Helena, and they were all very interesting, and different, cultural settings. It went quite well, and I can only say so much about it, because of our limitations under PRA, but I think Heather will have more to say that's pertinent there.

DR. BELCHER: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I've been thinking a lot lately about our headboat sector, and I'm wondering how much you heard, and it seems, to me, that that's sort of like, you know, a place where people with limited means still have access to get offshore and go fishing, and there are so few of them left, and we've lost a lot in South Carolina. A gentleman last night was talking about how few there were left on the east coast of Florida, and I'm wondering how much that topic came up, and then how -- Obviously, maybe you were dealing with headboat, and, if you talked to anybody that might be involved actually in operating headboats, versus the people who utilize them, which often aren't even people that live on the coast, and how you --

MR. GLAZIER: Right, and what I do remember hearing there was that -- Headboat operators emphasizing the importance of folks coming from inland areas to utilize the services, and the importance of that both to their operations and to the folks who don't normally get a chance to get on the ocean. Brent, do you recall more?

DR. STOFFEL: Yes, and we worked with headboats pretty much -- I think, with headboat captains, or owners, it was pretty much in every state, and certainly the for-hire sector, but the headboats is really a fascinating group, and they really did express not only issues with policy, but the importance of their existence in providing an opportunity for folks, and it's not just an opportunity to share fishing, or the joy of fishing, the leisure activity, but it's also the stories of church groups that send folks onto the boat, to fish on like a thirty-six-hour trip, to load up the meat fishermen, the ones that go up and load up the coolers full of fish to bring back for the church bonanza, or the carnival, or whatever it may be.

There's a cultural connection to the consumer, not only in terms of the fishing, but in terms of the resource itself, and, also, that goes back to what somebody else had said about people in North Carolina fishing, and I went to East Carolina University, and so I know that 100 percent it's true, that the fishermen fish to feed everybody, including people on the lower economic scale, and so this is a great way for folks to have access to that wonderful resource, and I think that they were concerned about their livelihoods, due to regulatory issues and a variety of other issues, one being the unchecked pressure, they felt, the unchecked pressure of private recreational fishermen. Anyway, I will let that die at that, but we did make sure to make sure that we got the headboat industry, and, in fact, there was probably -- It's hard to believe, but there was probably very little that we missed, in terms of across the backgrounds, in terms of sociodemographic or occupational.

DR. BELCHER: Other questions or comments at this time? Okay. Seeing none, Heather.

MS. BLOUGH: Thank you. I will share a bit about what we've done with all of the information, and the takeaways, that Brent and Ed just reviewed with you. After we completed the engagement portion of this effort, a small team of folks from our Southeast Regional Office and Southeast Fisheries Science Center worked together to capture what we heard in this consolidated list of action items for consideration in our implementation plan.

We binned each of those items under one of -- Each of those items under one of the six objectives in the National EEJ Strategy, just to ensure proper alignment there, and then we incorporated several ranking criteria to help us with prioritization, because, as Ed mentioned, we had started with over 300 action items, and so there was a lot there to work with.

The ranking criteria were things like use to distinguish long-term from short-term items, assuming that we might want to incorporate a combination of both of those in our plan, and we also tried to identify the various resources that would be required to implement each of the items, so that we would be able to distinguish maybe those that we have the capacity, and the resources, to take on now in the short-term from those other ones that we are referring to as the unfunded items, and we certainly have a lot of those, also.

Then we also color-coded the items, to try to differentiate the types, or the categories, of issues that were raised throughout the process, and so those highlighted in green are things like translation services, you know, that are seemingly pretty straightforward ways that we can increase access to opportunities and decision processes, assuming that we have the funds to do that. We highlighted, in yellow, things that seem to be more challenging to implement, like maybe because they're not fully within the scope of our purview, and so we have to partner with others to make it happen, or they might require a more substantive policy, or maybe even a statutory change, to implement.

The items in pink are things that we pulled down from the National EEJ Strategy that we just thought might make sense to adopt, and to implement, at the regional level, and then there are several items that you'll see in blue in the table that we provided you, and those are things, and issues, that were commonly raised throughout this process, and most of them, across all three of our council regions, that we wanted to acknowledge that we heard in the plan, but we don't feel are properly addressed within the scope and under the EEJ umbrella.

This is just a screenshot of the resulting document that we've been working with over the last several months. After some preliminary vetting, and consolidation work, we were able to get the

list of items down to about 170, and that's what we're working with now, and the subset of items that we shared with you all in that briefing book table are just the ones that we thought most relevant to the work that you're doing, and that you would be most interested in, and there may still be items, in that table, that we determine are inappropriate, or unfeasible, to carry forward in our plan, after we complete our internal review and vetting process, and also hear back from you and the other councils and your perspective on some of what you're seeing there.

I understand there's a lot to digest in that table, and so I'm going to spend a few minutes just providing a high-level overview of the types of actions that we're considering under each of those objectives, to hopefully tee-up some -- Well, to provide you an opportunity to ask questions about what you're seeing, at the end, and then, also, hopefully tee-up some preliminary feedback that you guys can provide us on maybe some initial priorities.

Under the research and monitoring objective, we have several types of activities. Some of them focus on just continuing to better understand the various communities that are impacted by the work that we do, and the barriers they face in accessing our fishing and aquaculture benefits and opportunities, including examining equity issues that they face across the fisheries value chain, and that just essentially means, you know, from the fisher catching the fish all the way up to the consumer.

Other activities under this objective focus on improving and expanding the scope of our impact analyses, by enabling us to evaluate, you know, our fishery regulations actually impacting communities in the way that we predict that they will, and also helping -- Collecting the information, and doing the research, to help us better prepare communities to respond to more external factors, like related to seafood markets, climate change, fishery disasters, large-scale energy projects, things like that.

We have items here that would focus on helping us to better integrate local and traditional ecological knowledge into our decision processes, including through the co-development and production of stock assessments, research and monitoring, and then there are several other topics that communities asked us to study and report on, and those relate to exploring and emphasizing the importance of enabling fishers to participate in multiple fisheries, better understanding subsistence issues in fisheries, and, also, literacy barriers and addiction issues.

You guys are already doing like really fabulous work in the area of outreach and engagement. You know, enabling people to participate in meetings and provide public testimony virtually, recording meetings for people who aren't able to join at the scheduled time, posting your public hearing presentations online, and we heard, from Ashley on Monday afternoon, about all the great outreach, you know, best practices outreach, work that you're doing, including partnering with Sea Grant to help get the word out through the YouTube platform, and so there's so much -- And the stakeholder meetings that Christina talked about right before here, and so there's just a lot of work going on at the council level related to this.

Items that we're looking at exploring under this objective include, you know, looking at even more additional new approaches, and strategies, for reaching communities who continually still are facing communication barriers, and, also, maybe tailoring some of our strategies, depending on the information that we want to convey, and so we might want to use a different approach to get

the word out about potential grant opportunities, versus send communities updates on the status of fishery disaster assistance determinations or notify them about potential regulatory changes.

We have other items here that emphasize the importance of ensuring that all of our staff who are developing information products are writing, and speaking, about the information products in plain language, and translating those products into appropriate primary languages, and we're looking at using special strategies for reach communities in rural areas, and also reaching certain target underserved populations, like women, and we're looking at partnering with community liaisons to facilitate some of that direct engagement, and interaction, and help us extend our reach.

We have suggestions to hire more multilingual staff, so that they can serve as liaisons for our stakeholders whose primary language is not English, and then we also had several suggestions to incorporate more educational messaging into our outreach material, along with the language that better demonstrates that we're listening, and so, you know, explaining to constituents, and stakeholders, how we are using the information, and the feedback, that they are providing. Then, finally, we also want to explore the opportunity to work with addiction and mental health support organizations in communities, to help guide fishers, and their fishing families, to these services, and we heard that our colleagues in the Northeast might be doing some work in that area.

Under policies and plans, we have quite a few activities there focused on ensuring equitable access to our aquaculture and cooperative research opportunities, along with fishery disaster assistance, seafood and permit markets, and, you know, we heard about the permit markets from John earlier today, and then, also, just decision processes in general. We would like to work with our observer program to explore ways to improve cultural awareness of our fishery observers, like mainly through possibly new training policies, maybe a dress code, and also look at the possibility of taking cultural issues into account when we're assigning observers to vessels.

We have activities in there to develop like more formalized strategies, and policies, for incorporating community feedback into our science and management decisions, and I think the port meetings, that Christina talked about Tuesday morning, are just a really great example of that, and then, finally, the -- Most of the remaining activities in that section focus on really simplifying our survey and fishing permit application processes.

Under benefits, we're looking at ways to maybe identify staff, or partners, to provide technical assistance on applications for grants, fishing permits, and fishery disaster assistance. We have a request to establish new, or support existing, vocational training programs, along with scholarships, internships, and mentorship programs.

Communities have asked us to look for ways to provide additional financial assistance, and so maybe in the form of grants, or by working with our Fisheries Finance Office, to explore options to help them increase access to capital, so they have better access to permits, and then other supportive measures here are looking at collaborative projects across the federal government, and with the states, to preserve working waterfronts, proactively protect some of these communities from the impacts of major infrastructure and energy projects, and then, also, strategies to remedy identified disparities or repair some of those barriers that have been determined to be creating some inequities.

Under inclusive governance, we are looking at ways to access -- To increase access to public meetings, input processes, and science, and most of those largely focus on better accommodating logistical barriers, and so looking at whether we can hold more meetings closer to underserved populations who have trouble traveling far distances from home, partnering with community liaisons to facilitate engagement, and so, for example, looking at maybe using partners to establish hubs, technical hubs, where people could convene to participate in virtual -- Meetings virtually, where they don't have access to do that at home. Then, also, exploring the possibility of providing financial assistance to support some of that engagement, where possible.

Other actions focus on further diversifying our various advisory bodies, and committees, to ensure like a broad range of perspectives is considered in our decision-making, and then we're also looking at using existing programs, like the Marine Resource Education Program, to help us address some of the educational barriers that were flagged throughout this process as things that were challenging people's engagement in council meetings and decision processes.

This last objective, empowering environment, this is really about creating our own internal support structure, right, to support all of this work, and the types of things we're considering there are specialized training for observers, port agents, and grant reviewers that is really focused on the work that they do. Plain language for all of our staff, which we might contract John to do, after that fabulous black sea presentation that he did for us yesterday, and then providing training to all of our staff, along with council staff and all of our other advisory bodies, on our EEJ objectives and implementation plan.

We have items there to either organize or participate in interagency workshops, and this is really to facilitate information sharing, leverage resources, and really forge those partnerships that would be required to address some of the more critical and long-standing cross-jurisdictional challenges, because many of the issues that these communities raised will require that kind of work to address, and then, finally, and probably most importantly, there's actions in there to pursue resources to support all this work, including additional anthropologists and EEJ coordinators, at really all levels throughout the region.

Next step, we're hoping to hear from you today, and we'll answer any questions that you have about the kinds of things that you're seeing here, and we'll get your perspective on this, and then we'll hopefully hear some preliminary feedback from you that we can incorporate into our draft implementation plan that is due April 5, and so it's a very tight timeline. We also have invited the council to submit -- Because we know you won't get through all of this today, and I think Christina is going to help us get a letter, or some input, from you to us by the March 14 deadline, and we will take all of that into account, and consideration, when we're developing our final implementation plan that we send to Headquarters on the 5th.

Now, we totally intend for this to be a living document. We are learning, and growing, everyday too, and a lot of this is new to us, and we expect it to be continually modified, and adapted, in response to lessons learned and the more information that we obtain, and so we're looking forward to your continued collaboration, as we keep moving through this process, and we did put a few questions in there, just to prompt discussion.

One of the things that we're going to cover in our implementation plan is what we're already doing in our region to support EEJ, and we think it's really important to capture that, and we want to

make sure that we're accurately fully capturing what this council is doing in that area, and so we would like to hear about that, and we would also like your perspective on how you would prioritize the types of activities that I just reviewed with you that are in the table in your briefing book, and then, if there's anything else that you guys feel like you would like to do to support this initiative, that you would like to partner with us on, and you would like covered in the plan, we would like to hear about that, too.

I want to give like a huge shoutout to Christina Wiegand for all of her like perspective, and insight, and she's been really engaged, and helpful, to us throughout this process, and so we're grateful for her support, and then also to -- Well, Ed is obviously here, but to Brent Stoffel and Anthony Mastitski from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and Anthony is no longer with us, but you know that Brent is on the lines, and is contributing, and the three of them really did all of the focus group and scoping community engagement work in the South Atlantic region, and so I want to thank them for that.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Heather. Questions, and comments, for Heather at this point? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: This is great, Heather, but, you know, we can't even get money to do stock assessments, and where is the funding going to come from? I think it's admirable, and needed, you know, that you get some more social scientists and coordinators and funding to the councils, you know, so that they can do this kind of work, but where is that funding going to come from?

MS. BLOUGH: We have put requests in the president's budget for the last few years, and, unfortunately, they haven't been funded to-date, but I can say that, like at the national level, they are allocating funds to this work, and like they've done a pretty good job. They funded all of the engagement work that we did last year, and they just -- They just had like a little internal competition for a million dollars of funding across, and so all of the regions, right, are struggling with the same issue, because we don't have dedicated resources for this work, but there is definitely, I think, a commitment to do whatever we can with the resources we have.

I mean, we're, right now, thinking that we'll separate actions in the plan, those that we think we can take on now, right, and they just require staff resources, but we need to understand, internally, whether we can prioritize that, and that's what we want staff to be working on, right, and then we're going to have a long list of other unfunded items that we don't want to throw out, because we did a lot of work to collect them, and they're good ideas, and that maybe we can use that list to pursue additional resources, you know, to support them over time.

DR. BELCHER: Clay.

DR. PORCH: Thank you very much for the presentation, Heather and Ed, and I just have to say that I hope that everybody is as impressed as I am with this. This is the most comprehensive list of action items I've ever seen, and this team put a great deal of work into it, but the issue of resources to accomplish all of this is a legitimate one, and there is, as Heather mentioned, not a ton of funding coming down the pike, but a lot of these things have more to do with us getting out in the community, understanding their needs, and just being cognizant, and so not everything here is going to cost a lot.

The other point that I wanted to make is, you know, as a federal agency, we have a relatively small footprint. I mean, in total, there's only a few hundred of us in the Southeast, but, collectively, all the agencies represented in this room, and in the other parts of our jurisdiction, like the Gulf of Mexico, that is a much bigger footprint, and, if we all work together to kind of tackle some of these pieces, I think we can really have an impact on the community.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks, Clay. Other comments from folks? John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Just a couple, and thanks. That was great. You know, we were very interested in what you guys were doing with this, and particularly what you were learning, and where it was going, and so this has been a great presentation, and I think you mentioned PRA being a limitation, and dealing with that, and we run into that all the time. It's been something that we've run into, I guess, a little bit, in our efforts to just about go out and do anything in the communities, and I agree with, you know, Clay. We all need to get out in the communities more, and we just talked about our townhall meetings, which is exactly about getting out and going into the community more.

The only reason we don't do more stuff like that is the people and the money and the expense and the travel and everything to do it, and so, you know, I definitely think the funding is foremost in this, but then, also, it's just so frustrating that PRA is a limitation on our ability, and we're so tightly constrained by funding, and it's particularly frustrating that, you know, you virtually can't even just put a survey out there and let people voluntarily do it, despite all of these amazing electronic resources we have to do that kind of thing, and so I really think something like that needs to be a priority, to review that, and change it, and stop having PRA be a limitation to us letting fishermen voluntarily tell us about what they're doing, and what they're experiencing, and what they're concerned about. That's just, you know, so frustrating.

Then I think the communication is definitely tops. It's a lot of work to present technical information in, you know, plain language, and the reality is there's a lot of really bright scientists that can't speak at that level. You know, I'm not one of those. I'm not writing stock assessment programming, you know, programs and that sort of stuff, and I'm not that kind of statistician, and I've always struggled, a little bit, to understand it, and I think that's why I've been able to present it more at a council level, just because of my own struggles to understand it, and I can relay that, but it is really hard to get those people.

I think, you know, really, more outreach resources for the agency would be really great, you know, and you guys are very stretched for outreach people, and I think you share outreach people between the Regional Office and the Science Center, and, you know, just like a technical, skilled outreach person for science would be, you know, to me, in a lot of ways, a great resource, somebody to help with, you know, sort of translating between the scientists, who are deep into the modeling and, you know, running Bayesian statistics, and then communicating with the fishermen, but, you know, there's never -- There's never resources for those kinds of really helpful type of positions, because, as people have said, we're all struggling to get stock assessments done.

We're struggling to get the basic data that we need, and I definitely think that more sociologists should be a priority, the anthropologists, and economists in that, which is something that, you know, we're concerned about, is staff at the Regional Office, with people retiring, and who is going to be filling them in, and, you know, we struggle to have positions like that, and I don't think we've

ever felt like we have enough people in those positions in the region, and certainly not enough resources to do the research that's needed and to collect the data on the social and economic characteristics.

I think doing that, and then getting information on the communities, is a great step here, and you guys sure went to a lot of great places, and identified a lot of communities that we probably haven't even really touched, you know, but just updating community profiles, getting more information, because that's -- Not just is it necessary here, but it's fundamental to our FMPs, and it's information that we're supposed to have, and, you know, there is some effort, from many years ago, about identifying communities, and characterizing them, but, you know, it's grossly out-of-date.

When we talked about this at the CCC, I think Sam mentioned some of the things that were out there, and I went and checked it, and, you know, for my home, Charleston, South Carolina, looking at one of the communities they have, it was like Edisto Beach, South Carolina, and it was totally not representative of Edisto today, and it was like ten-year-old information, you know, and we have coastal areas on the Atlantic that have changed so much, even just since COVID, with the influx of new people, and, you know, these communities are getting squeezed, and we all see where we live at home, and, you know, every day, we're missing more of that, and so I think it's really imperative to try and get out and capture these communities, and grab them and understand them and, you know, describe them, while we have the opportunity, because, yes, we are probably losing a lot of them every day.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks, John. Other comments from folks, or questions? I've got Andy, Amy, and Trish.

MR. STRELCHECK: When we were at the Gulf Council meeting in January, I know, Heather, you had a good conversation with Carrie Simmons and Emily, and I'm curious if you can kind of just share some of the -- I don't want to say concerns, but more like logistical challenges, or things they were raising with us, because certainly I think, some of the thing we're proposing, we want to make sure they can work with council processes, right, and they're not going to impede, you know, the work that you're doing, and so can you share a little bit of that, Heather?

MS. BLOUGH: Yes, and, I mean, we haven't yet received like the full feedback from them, but the principal one they were concerned about, and I actually heard it from Graciela too, like a week later, was we have an item in there that's like explore, with the councils, the possibility of holding more council meetings closer to underserved communities, right, and she was explaining all of the difficulties, and challenges, in finding hotels that will offer per diem, and like the contracts are already done through 2025, or 2026, and she was concerned about managing expectations, really, that we're going to put things in a table, right, and set them out, and then people are going to like have a lot of expectations that things are going to change, and that some of them aren't going to be possible.

We did have a -- I think the Fisheries Service wants also to manage expectations, and like there's a lot of stuff in here that we -- It's already happening, and we have a lot of stakeholders kind of tracking and following this, right, and wanting to see where it's headed, and so I do think we need to be careful in how we write-up the plan, right, how we're communicating about that, and we do want to make sure we're working with the councils in advance of that April 5 deadline.

If there are like big-red-flag issues, or concerns, right, that we know about that and don't -- We really tried to write everything in a way that's like explore the feasibility of, consider, you know, so that there's really a lot of -- Like we can talk about it, and report back why it might not have been an option, things like that.

DR. BELCHER: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Heather. All of these action items were really impressive, and a couple of them definitely made me kind of think about it from a state perspective, in the fact that there are, oftentimes, where I think we are already supporting EEJ efforts, and it just might not be necessarily in the forefront, and it might be in the background, and, in looking at these action items, I'm kind of going, gosh, we're kind of already doing that, but I'm not really thinking about it from an EEJ perspective, and so kind of taking that and flipping it is extremely helpful, and so thank you for that.

The idea of the training was also really interesting, and, just from a selfish perspective, if you do proceed with some of these specialized trainings for observers and port agents, I would ask that you also include those state employees that are executing federal projects, with cooperative funds, and include them in your training, because they would also benefit from this, especially if they're actually implementing a federal program, but just at the state level.

DR. BELCHER: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: So this was very good information, and I have an interest in this, but I just have a question, and, if this is an in-the-weeds question, we can talk offline, but what exactly -- How do you do an equity assessment? Is that a series of surveys, or how does that work? I can't picture that.

MR. GLAZIER: As you saw on one of those slides, there are many groups that fall into the category of underserved, including rural residents, and, I mean, that's quite a few people in the South Atlantic, and so I think you would have to look closely at a variety of data sources, you know, census data, and it, ideally, would involve some field work. You know, we would have to get some PRA clearance to do that kind of thing, to talk with people in-depth, but I think, you know, a holistic approach to that would be necessary to really tackle it.

MS. MURPHEY: Because that just sounded like an interesting concept.

MR. GLAZIER: In fact, we had a meeting of social scientists in Miami, earlier in the year, and we've talked about it since then, and it was, you know, a high priority to do it, and how to do it, and how to do it correctly, and so we may hopefully have an answer soon.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Well, you know, you all have really good action items and stuff, and so I was wondering, and is this the time to see if, you know, we could get staff to draft a letter to NMFS, and I guess Christina, with our comments on your action items, and is that good?

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Does anybody object to that? Okay. Any other questions, or comments, at this time, on the EEJ? Heather.

MS. BLOUGH: Just one other thing that I wanted to mention, and, you know, Clay had brought up like we will be working together, and this also applies across federal agencies, right, and I talked about the interagency coordination efforts, and we're already working on that, and we've been using like regional bodies, where we're meeting with, you know, federal agencies working on these issues together, and John Walter had actually asked me to bring up -- So there is a port infrastructure development program, right, and this is a DOT program, and it has received billions of dollars for port infrastructure development work, and Representative Hoyle, and she's I think from Oregon, recently passed some bill text, and I think it was included in like some Navy authorization program, that added seafood, the seafood sector, as an eligible project for that kind of port development work.

There is so many different things like this going on, but we're just all so busy, and if, somehow, we can find a process, or a way, or a coordination mechanism, to like keep track of these things, and like take advantage of them, right, and like get the word out, and these are huge grants, and I think it's open right now, and I was just trying to pull it up, before we came up here, but there's just a lot of different things going on like that that I would love to find a way that we can take advantage of them, especially right now, with all the IRA and bill funding behind them.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks for that. Other comments, or questions? John.

DR. STOFFEL: If I could jump in, whenever there is an opening, I would be happy to.

MS. BLOUGH: Go ahead, Brent.

DR. STOFFEL: Okay. Thank you very much. Let me address a couple of the things that I've just heard, and this feedback, which I think is fantastic, and we are working on a PRA package which will help expedite the process, something that will be a general package to be used, and it can be done across the regions. It's something that, if we're doing work in Hawaii, or if you're doing work in the U.S. Caribbean, you will be able to utilize this package, and either the package will be expedited, or you will automatically get the clearance.

Another thing is we talk about the notion of getting out into the field to do these things, and, if we have community liaisons that we're partnering with, or folks that are already there, we can get access to a lot of that information before we have to go through that rigmarole, and the logistics, of actually doing a formal survey. We can get out there and access these folks, through these groups, or through these individuals, and so while, yes, there are a lot of barriers, financially, and human resources, we can find ways to work around it.

I think it's a time to be creative, and I think it's a time to find out what kinds of things that we can do that just simply have us changing our focus in what our day-to-day job is, and, additionally, putting on maybe a different set of lens when we're doing something, maybe one more analysis, or one more question, and then I think we can figure out to how access a lot of this information, to demonstrate to the stakeholders that we're very concerned about improving our service to. Anyway, I appreciate you guys, and all your feedback today, and it's been wonderful to hear.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks for that. Okay. John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I just want to say, you know, relative to the training, it would be great if there was some training for the folks who are in the community, and they're on the front lines, and, you know, you feel for those port samplers and such, a lot of times, that they're out there facing the music for the things that are happening around here, and we have, as staff, at times, talked about ideas of, you know, it would be nice to be able to reach them, and let them know about the various tools that, you know, we've made available, such as the website and Fish Rules and things like that, that just helps with some of the basics, like what are the regulations, and just being able to tell them what the council is about and maybe, you know, issues that are important. If something like that were to come to be, we would be more than glad -- There's a lot of people around the perimeter of this room that would be very glad to get to know those folks and, you know, share more about the council and the efforts that we've made to reach folks as well.

DR. STOFFEL: I think building those connections is absolutely essential, if we're going to move forward with this, and so I think that's a great point.

DR. BELCHER: All right. Again, thank you for your time today. All right, and so, moving down the agenda, we now have the Southeast Regional Office report. Andy, before you do that, are we going to need to talk to Jenny? I saw that she was -- Okay, and so you're going to just do that? All right. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: It's been a long day, and so I will keep my report very short. There are three protected resources updates. We listed queen conch as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in February. We also pushed out a Nassau grouper critical habitat final rule, in January of this year.

Then many of you probably are paying close attention, obviously, to what's going on with North Atlantic right whales, and so we've had a fairly good calving season, with nineteen calves born. Unfortunately, we believe three now have been lost, and the most recent washed up on Cumberland Island, just south of here, and necropsy confirmed that it had been hit by a vessel, and it had lacerations on the head. We had observed it several times still doing okay, with its mom, but it washed up dead here just in the last week, and so sad news for that, and so we continue to, obviously, work on North Atlantic right whale protections and conservation, to recover that marine mammal population.

The other news, which I understand some of the South Atlantic Council staff are not happy about, or maybe they are happy about, is Frank Helies has been selected as our Gulf of Mexico Branch Chief, and so congratulations to Frank. I'm sure we'll still use his talents here in the South Atlantic on occasion, but he decided he wants to work on Gulf of Mexico red snapper, and that's all for my report.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks, Andy. Questions for Andy? Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Queen conch, I was a little perplexed at the idea that we needed to list this as threatened, given that it's already illegal, and I just wonder what the next kind of steps are, and is the intention ultimately to ban the sale of conch within the United States, and where is this headed, if you know, Andy, and then I will just kind of tie it back to the, you know, diversity discussions that we're having, and that's a pretty important component of where I come from,

culturally, conch chowder, conch fritters, and other, and so there's a lot of folks that have been asking the question.

MR. STRELCHECK: Good question, and so we -- You're correct, right, and it's prohibited for harvest in the continental U.S. We do allow some harvest in the USVI and Puerto Rico. We made the listing decision based on queen conch status throughout its range, right, and that includes the entire Caribbean Basin, including the United States. The rule itself just listed it as threatened at this point. Any sort of kind of regulatory actions, like you're suggesting, restrictions on imports, other restrictions to conserve and manage the queen conch populations, would be in a latter rulemaking that we would be doing, but, at this time, we haven't proposed anything.

DR. BELCHER: Other questions for Andy? John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Andy, something I just noticed the other day, on the status of stocks for the end of the year, the December 31, and scamp wasn't in there yet, and is that still hung up in getting the D.C. website updated, because we got the letter back in the fall.

MR. STRELCHECK: You and I noticed the same thing, and I don't have an answer for you, and so I don't know if it was an oversight or if it's because of the fact that we don't have the status criteria for scamp/yellowmouth, right, and so I don't know if my team has an answer, Rick or Jack.

DR. MCGOVERN: I had the same question, and I asked Headquarters, and it's because it was assessed as a complex, and the complex doesn't exist yet, and so I guess, once the complex is established, then that determination will be made.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Thanks. That's a good answer, and it's not altogether surprising.

DR. BELCHER: Any other questions for Andy? Okay. Thanks for the update. Clay, would you give us the Science Center report, please?

DR. PORCH: Sure, and I will also be short. I just wanted to impart some news about our efforts in improving recreational fishing data, and, as you know, we have been -- We've launched an initiative to improve state-federal partnerships, and, as part of that, NOAA Fisheries, and the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Information Network, GulfFIN, have released the GulfFIN Regional Implementation Plan.

That plan will guide the allocation of agency and partner resources, with the goals of improving the timeliness and quality of recreational catch and effort data, improve discard data, and also streamlining for-hire data collection, and so a lot of this will be funded through the \$20 million red snapper IRA fund, but, of course, that's mostly focused on the Gulf of Mexico. Even so, a lot of what they're doing is going to be very relevant here in the South Atlantic.

One of the ways that it will be relevant is, in the spring or summer, and we're still working on dates, we'll be holding two different workshops. One of them will focus on getting sort of the gold standard for recreational effort estimation, at least a point estimate, but it may lead to flavors of advanced-technology-assisted estimation for effort that could be used in the future, to get away from this kind of survey approach, and so the workshop will focus on the best ways we can estimate effort. Like I said, at least as a snapshot, that would sort of be the standard that we could measure

all these survey approaches against, or, eventually, maybe something we can chop up as a new way to estimate effort, replacing those programs.

The other workshop will focus on the best way to estimate private recreational discards, and so they'll be looking into things like cellphone apps, and other technologies, to get that sort of information, and that's something that I hope some representatives from this region can participate in. Like I said, the dates haven't been set, and it's being administered through the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, and I hope that information will come out pretty soon, but, again, that's something that potentially could be a game-changer, taking advantage of some of the technology, some of which we've already talked about, and like the State of Florida puts cameras on inlets, in places where that's possible, but other places, where you have lots of private recreational access points, that you can't just use cameras, we'll look into remote sensing technologies and other ways to try and get at that offshore fishing effort, and so stay tuned for that.

The other thing that I want to say, that's even more relevant to here, is that we're working with the two commissions, and all the states, to try and implement the most comprehensive for-hire observer program there has ever been. At this point, there's only been a couple of states that have had regular observer programs. In the Gulf of Mexico, we have IRA funds that we're putting towards it, and all the states are in agreement, and we're working on putting the contracts, or the grants, in place to get observer programs in every state, and it's the first time it's ever happened.

We're also working with the four states in the South Atlantic region, to get observer programs in place there, and so we're still having conversations about that, and a couple of states are already onboard, and we'll work out the details, hopefully in the next week or two.

We have \$500,000 to put towards the four states in the South Atlantic, as part of that \$1.8 million spend plan you all worked on, if you remember that, and so \$500,000 was retained for that, and we also may be able to use some of the IRA funds for it, but, in addition to that, we're looking at possibly funding some projects that come out of those two workshops in the South Atlantic with IRA funds, and so stay tuned. That's all in development, and a lot will depend on what the workplans are from these two workshops, but I'm cautiously optimistic that we'll have certainly much better data for the for-hire fleet than we've ever had, and hopefully some ways to get better estimates of discards and private recreational boats.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks, Clay. Questions for Clay? All right. If you all will bear with me, we've got a couple of items left to catch us up tonight, and I don't think we will be here forever, and so if you are willing to do it, and it's either that or we come in early in the morning, and so I say keep the momentum, and let's finish this. John Hadley is going to walk us through the council workplan.

MR. CARMICHAEL: We'll do the workplan, and I'll dispense with the next item, the meetings, and you see the list. Take a look at it at your leisure. It tells you what's going on, and so now we've got one more thing to deal with.

DR. BELCHER: So John Hadley is your hurdle to the end of the night, just to let you know.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Well, a revised workplan was just added to the website, and so it is available on there, and so this is a slightly-revised version of what was in your original briefing materials. I will kind of run down the list here, and there's no major, you know, items of note that

we need to switch around, or what have you, but I did want to highlight a few changes. Up top here, as usual, you have your workplan, or your amendments, that are underway. We did add Regulatory Amendment 35 to June, if that discussion -- That's sort of to encompass whether or not Reg Amendment 35 moves forward, that sort of larger red-snapper-related discussion, and so that item was added to your June agenda.

Also, moving further down, in the planned amendments, Coral 10 was tentatively added to the September meeting, for resubmission, and so part of that plan -- You will kind of hear it in detail in June, but, as part of the Habitat Committee discussion in June, Coral 10 will be brought up for additional feedback, guidance, discussion, and the idea is that that will take likely two council meetings for review, and so the plan is to look at it in June, and the council will see it again in September, for potential approval for resubmittal, and so that was an additional item that has been put on there under the planned workplan.

Moving further down to the other council activities, the Citizen Science Committee was originally scheduled for June, and that has been moved to September, and then, further up, you do have your AP and SSC Selection, and so that usually takes up a good chunk of Monday morning, and I did want to note that that's on there, and then, moving further down on the list, we sort of have placeholder items for the discussion in relation to the snapper grouper permits. Sometime between the latter half of this year or early next year, depending on data availability, we will bring that back, and so we just sort of noted that there are some placeholder items there, and we just don't have it really narrowed down, as far as which meeting that will come back to you.

Then, also, we added a SEFHIER improvements discussion, and so that's captured for June as well, and that's an additional item that was added on there, and so, when you look at everything towards the bottom, we're at 8.5, and that's a metric to help gauge how full of a meeting agenda you will have, so to speak, and so usually that -- As John said before, that 0.5 above eight, that's typically your Monday morning, and so we're probably looking at a full week, a full meeting week, starting Monday morning and ending around noon on Friday, but there's no items that necessarily have to come off the agenda, but it is going to be fairly full. Any questions on any items or anything, you know, you see that's missing on there, or needs to move around, those sort of comments and feedback?

DR. BELCHER: Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: John, Coral 10, Coral Amendment 10, and so it's the intent to bring it back in June, and is that correct?

MR. HADLEY: Yes, and so that's going to be -- The discussion is -- You know, that's sort of restarting the discussion on Coral Amendment 10, and, there again, it will be captured as part of the Habitat Committee discussion at the council table.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: So, obviously, it was disapproved, and so the amendment will have to address the reasons it was disapproved, and do you anticipate putting together an IPT team for that?

MR. HADLEY: Yes, and I think the IPT will have to be updated, and so I imagine that Myra and Rick will discuss the IPT members, and any updates to that member list, since it has been a while

since that was submitted, and make sure that that list is still applicable, and I think Myra might have a few additional details.

MS. BROUWER: Not very much, but there was -- The original IPT has been sort of relooked at, and the plan is to convene that IPT sometime between now and June, and I think they already -- Frank has been assisting Kathleen with that, and so there is already a plan of action to address the deficiencies that were noted in the letter that NMFS submitted, and so we're working on it, and the plan is to bring that progress report to the Habitat Committee in June, which, you know, there were -- I think the IPT will be able to accomplish everything that needs to be done to have it ready for the council to approve for resubmission in September.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Other comments, and thoughts, from folks on the scheduling? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Two comments, one with the scamp/yellowmouth, and we did have some discussion, in Snapper Grouper, about possibly trying to take final action in September, and I don't know if that's feasibility, but kind of addressing Tim's issue of the timing of implementation and how that might affect the 2025 year.

Then it would be great if you could share this out, and, you know, we still have some committee reports to go through, and I don't know if there will be any changes tomorrow, but, if there's anything that come up tomorrow, it would be good to kind of have that conversation again and reassess the schedule. Typically, we do this at the very end of the meeting, and so I'm a little surprised that we're doing it now.

DR. BELCHER: John, to that point?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and this was intentional, actually, because we wanted to make sure you guys had a picture of the workplan as it stands, and so, as you go into committee reports, you understand that, if you were to add something to this, then something has got to come off, and so we really felt like sometimes waiting until the end -- That you didn't see the consequences of some of the things made in the committee report, and we didn't get to consider them within the context of the workplan.

One thing I will comment on June is we have a lot of things that are set for approval for public hearings, and that could be a burden of doing public hearings, and so just -- You know, we'll have to think about how we approach those, and which ones are webinar and which ones are in-person, and spreading that out, so that we aren't -- So that staff can actually do the public hearings in the time allotted. Then, yes, looking at scamp, if scamp is going to try to get done early, then that's going to have consequences as well.

DR. BELCHER: Anything else, Andy? Okay. John Hadley.

MR. HADLEY: I meant to -- Andy, thank you for bringing up the Amendment 55, the scamp and friends, and so that's on there, and it is certainly a September approval, and I just left it on there for December, in case it does slide, and it is accounted for time-wise, but, ideally, that will be moved up to September.

DR. BELCHER: Other thoughts, in looking at the schedule?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Just look ahead and see the reds there in the bottom third bar going across, and that means we have probably, you know, more scheduled than what we can really practically do, and then the other -- The other trainwreck there is a whole bunch of assessments starting on a similar cycle, which often works itself out, with the assessment schedules themselves, but we are keeping an eye on that.

DR. BELCHER: Any other comments relative to the schedule? Okay. Well, so much for thinking that we needed extra time. It's 5:04, and so unless -- If everybody is good thus far, we'll go ahead and recess for today, and we'll reconvene tomorrow morning at 8:30, with committee reports, and, if we need to, we can pull the workplan back up at the end of reports, correct?

MR. HADLEY: Yes.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. All right. Have a good evening.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on March 7, 2024.)

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MARCH 8, 2024

FRIDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Full Council Session II of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at The Villas by the Sea Resort, Jekyll Island, Georgia, on Friday, March 8, 2024, and was called to order by Chairman Carolyn Belcher.

DR. BELCHER: Okay, folks. We're going to go ahead and get started. Welcome to day five. Ms. Myra's birthday is today, if everybody would like to wish her a happy birthday. We are on time, and I know we do have a couple of things, I believe in Snapper Grouper, that we're bringing back to Full Council, but, otherwise, we should be able to go through our reports. Our first report is the Full Council report from Monday.

The council approved the agenda for the meeting and the minutes from the December 2023 meeting. We received reports from the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, and Scott Pearce gave us a rundown on the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel activities, and the Mid-Atlantic Council and Gulf Council representatives provided their reports, and then we also received the Coast Guard report. State agency reps provided their reports as well.

The next item we went into was best fishing practices and the 2024 outreach update. Staff provided an update on the What It Means to Me video project and the upcoming Best Practices Master Volunteer Program. We also received an update on the completed council and Sea Grant outreach activities for 2024 and what is planned for the upcoming months.

Potential modification to the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting program was also discussed. In December of 2023, the council approved the following motion, which was to initiate an action to modify SEFHIER to improve compliance, strengthen reporting requirements, and explore validation. The Law Enforcement AP discussed compliance with reporting requirements, and they had no specific recommendations, but noted the state agencies depend on the guidance from OLE for enforcing the program.

Amy Dukes, from South Carolina DNR, gave a presentation on South Carolina's for-hire reporting program, and a lot of that was talking about the specifics of how they've worked towards getting to their compliance rate, and so there's 600 vessels that are licensed and reporting. Approximately 200 are permitted in federal waters. They had an increase in reporting in 2020, and e-reporting is not mandatory, but 90 percent of vessels are reporting through the VESL application. As of 2023, 84 percent of the vessels with federal and state permits are compliant with reporting. South Carolina has one fully-dedicated staff, and five additional staff, to assist in monitoring compliance, and they have not conducted data validation at this time. Data elements have remained the same as the implementation for SEFHIER.

Ken Brennan, with the Fisheries Science Center, gave a presentation on the Southeast Region Headboat Survey. Upon the program's implementation, headboat operators were paid to report. In 2008, NMFS sent a letter to permit holders notifying them their permits would be on hold unless they complied with reporting requirements. The action was instrumental in increasing compliance. Non-compliance protocols were developed with OLE and General Counsel. Monitoring and maintaining compliance requires constant communication. They have twelve port agents that spend 25 to 30 percent of their time monitoring compliance. When a permit is placed on hold, it is not suspended, and it indicates the permit is at risk of not being renewed until the reporting requirements are met.

Michelle Masi provided an update on the SEFHIER program, based on the council's feedback from the December 2023 meeting, and the program is hiring additional staff to contact people who are out of compliance. Calls continued throughout the year. A list of non-compliant vessels is sent to OLE for compliance assistance, or a citation, every six months, and the agency plans to reduce this time window and send a monthly list. They currently cannot account for misreporting, because data are not validated. The Gulf Council has requested a presentation from agency economists to learn more about how the agency uses the economic data that is submitted through SEFHIER.

The council noted a discrepancy between the 2022 data that were presented to the council in December of 2023 and the 2022 reminder summary included the presentation from the meeting. The council noted discrepancies between the data presented by SEFHIER and those from South Carolina. It is not clear what is causing the discrepancy, as South Carolina DNR submits data to the SAFIS database daily.

The council provided the following guidance regarding potential modifications to SEFHIER, to assemble an advisory panel, specifically at the June meeting, to obtain insight on how to improve compliance with SEFHIER, as South Carolina has with their for-hire reporting program, request information on how the AP in the Gulf was structured, to have equal representation for each state, and consider representation from existing APs, et cetera.

Currently, the draft AP structure is all members would be for-hire captains, meaning that they possess a U.S. Coast Guard captain's license and own, operate, or be a hired captain for a for-hire fishing business, at least two members from each South Atlantic state, one member from each state is on an existing finfish AP, either Snapper Grouper, Mackerel Cobia, or Dolphin Wahoo, and one member not on an existing AP. There is at least one member from the New England region, there is at least one member from the Mid-Atlantic region, and at least one member is dually-permitted between the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic, and at least one member is dually-permitted between the South Atlantic and Greater Atlantic region, and at least one member from each of the existing finfish APs, again Snapper Grouper, Mackerel Cobia, or Dolphin Wahoo. At that point, we came up with a draft motion, and so would somebody like to make that motion? Go ahead, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Just to give you a little bit of background, this draft structure is just something that, you know, we quickly put together, and so it is, by no means, intended to be the way that it should be done, and so please feel free to tweak it as you see fit, and I guess just confirmation that what we're trying to do is get the structure in place, so that then we can advertise for those seats, and hopefully we'll get applicants to you in June, so that you can populate this advisory panel.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: So I guess my question here is -- I think this is kind of an interesting, and good, draft AP structure, and do you want us to provide you with all the feedback right now, to move forward, or do we have the flexibility to look at who applies, in June, and see like how we want to structure it, based off of interested applicants, and not --

MS. BROUWER: I guess either way, and it's really entirely up to you. I mean, either way is fine.

DR. BELCHER: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So I'm going to go back to what I said earlier in the week, and I'm just a little concerned. I thought that there was going to be one AP that was going to work on SEFHIER and then a separate AP that was going to talk about limited access, and so it looks like we're talking about all one, and I was hoping that this was going to be two, and I thought that we were putting the SEFHIER one ahead of the folks talking about limited access.

DR. BELCHER: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I still contest that these issues do not have to be separate. I know we're going to fundamentally disagree on that, and I am viewing this as a way in which -- When I sit at this table, whether it's my state commission or on this council, I ask what can we do from this table, and I still view the best way to get enforcement, through SEFHIER, is some semblance of limited access. What that looks like can be a lot of different things, and I think we need to ask that of the industry. Our APs come to us all the time, saying they want to consider that, and I don't think it's necessary to separate those conversations entirely. That does not mean that we can't discuss SEFHIER and using limited entry, limited access, in some way to enforce compliance, and then asking, down the road, what limited access looks like for the industry, and I still view them as combined issues, and not separate.

DR. BELCHER: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Then I'm going to vote against this motion, because I really think that this should be separated. We also heard, in addition to the discussion that we had Monday, was some of us wanting this SEFHIER to go first, and limited access to come behind that, and I understand that some of us want it to be together, and we heard comments, during public comment, that this should be a proceed with caution on limited access, and some people that spoke against it, and I think we need to solve the SEFHIER issue, and then come back to limited access, and so, if this motion -- If someone makes this motion as-is, I'm going to vote against this motion.

DR. BELCHER: Okay, Jessica. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I understand what you're saying, Tom, but I think, when you put "limited access" in the title of this, it conveys a completely different impression about what this AP is going to be doing. It doesn't mean that you can't talk about limited entry as a mechanism to solve perceived, or real, SEFHIER problems, but I think, when you -- I think, in some ways, it will actually distract, and it will create a pushback from folks saying, well, okay, this isn't about SEFHIER, and this is about limited access, and so it's as much about the optics of it as it is the actual performance of the AP, and that's my perspective, and so I think this is the wrong direction to go. That doesn't mean that limited access is off-limits as a discussion point, but it just means, when you put it out there as a title, it's going to create a completely different impression about what this AP is doing.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. To that point, Tom?

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Spud, for your comments, and I think you articulated that in an effective way, and I'm going to kind of go back to which way I'm going, and how you articulated that is I'm thinking that we can get to something that we can all agree on, and my point is I think limited access has to be a discussion within the SEFHIER compliance, and I am willing to agree to that, right, but I just think it needs to be part of that discussion, but I do agree, in a sense, that we need to figure out, as soon as possible, how we get better compliance in SEFHIER and what we do under that program.

I do believe that, and I still believe that, limited access should be part of that discussion, but I do agree with the optics of it. If we believe that this is going to potentially -- To potentially have an optics issue, where we're going to have pushback against better data, I'm amicable to having a discussion around that.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. I've got Andy, Trish, and Robert.

MR. STRELCHECK: I think the way we could address this is by putting something about limited access in the items to consider in future discussion, because I think, Tom, you're exactly right that this is going to come up and be related, obviously, to the improvements in compliance and enforceability of the program, and kind of incentivizing, obviously, reporting. The other thing, I guess, that I would mention, right, is I'm always cognizant of administrative costs, budgetary costs, right, and we don't have to make a decision today, in terms of seating a limited access AP, and this AP might serve that purpose down the road, and we could always modify the charge of the AP, if we wanted to use this same group of people to work on limited access.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Trish and then Robert.

MS. MURPHEY: I was going to -- It probably doesn't matter now, after the further discussion, but I was actually thinking, you know, if we did two -- This is just about the APs, and, if we did two APs, how would the structure differ, and so, you know, versus maybe if we did a SEFHIER AP, and you might need more scientists on it, but, anyway, I was just wondering, if you did make two APs for this, is the structure going to be that different that this AP could handle both, and so that was my only comment.

DR. BELCHER: Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I was going to ask a different question, but, unless anybody else has any comments, I'm ready to make a motion. **I make a motion to improve the For-Hire Reporting AP structure and to make appointments in June 2024.**

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Do I have a second for that motion? Spud. Okay. Any further discussion on this? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Just to be clear, this motion will include limited access for discussion as part of the AP?

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I don't think you're going to -- Well, however the AP wants to talk about options for getting to the goal of increasing compliance is fine with me, and I think that should be discussed, but I think, you know, in the -- The primary goal of this was trying to get better compliance with reporting, right, and so I think that, among all the tools, limited access should be discussed, and, yes, I agree.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. Just to clarify for the record. Thank you, Robert, and I will support that motion.

DR. BELCHER: **Any objections to the motion?** Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I'm not objecting, but I just wanted to -- Can you scroll up, just slightly? Just a point of a clarification. Since all members will be for-hire captains, I just want to make sure it's explicit that those are for-hire federally-permitted captains, correct, and there is no intent to have non-federally-permitted captains?

DR. BELCHER: Thoughts from the group on that? Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Since you're talking about limited access, I think there should be.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, we're not. We just took it off the table.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Well, it's going to be discussed, and so, if you have a group of people, that already have these permits, as the only ones talking about options, and limited access being one of them, I think you're going to miss the perspective of people who may have a different view on that.

DR. BELCHER: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy is kind of getting to the point about why I think this should be two separate APs, and so, when you're talking about limited access, I think that you should have some people that don't have the permit now, but maybe have the intent to get it, and I think it gets into leasing, and all sorts of other, whereas SEFHIER -- I don't know that you need an individual that doesn't currently have a federal for-hire permit, and so that's why I see it as two separate pieces here, and I also agree with what Andy was saying. We might keep some of these same folks, and give them a new charge, but I would like to see some additional people added, once we really dive into limited entry, that I don't think need to be on the one to get at SEFHIER. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. I'm going to go to Robert, quick, and then to John.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I don't disagree that they could be separate APs, but I think, timing-wise, we should proceed with the reporting one, so that it can inform what might go into the other AP, if it's determined that, you know, exploring limited entry is a tool that needs to be, you know, deployed here.

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

MR. CARMICHAEL: I was going to comment, and I came up when Trish made the point, because one way I think this would be very different than limited entry is you do have to include people who are not federally permitted, absolutely, but, in this one, this is about people who are permitted and have to comply with these requirements.

If we're going to find out how to make these requirements work better, we've absolutely got to look at the people who are under those requirements now, and we need to get this going, because we need to find out if there are things that require council action that are necessary to be done to make this better, and, so far, we haven't heard about a whole lot, other than limited entry, but then, with a limited entry group, we need to also -- Don't forget climate change and EEJ, and we've got reach out to some of these other groups that we haven't traditionally reached out to and let them know that this is a possibility, and find out how it's going to impact them, and we probably have to look at some of those state-permitted fishermen, that we've heard rumors, for years from the AP, that are out there fishing in federal waters, and get them in this group as well, and so I think there's different expertise that you need to bring to bear.

DR. BELCHER: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I agree with John's points, and the only other comment I will make about the AP structure, and I don't know if we need to be explicit about it now, but the Gulf, when they did their application, they did ask for passenger capacity, and then I believe my staff verified that, in terms of the permitting requirements, and so I think that's really important, so that we don't get all six-packs or, you know, a lot of headboats that are dominating the advisory panel.

DR. BELCHER: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I agree with that comment. My question also is that, if this AP is going to be all for-hire captains, I think we're going to make -- I think they're going to have to hear from data scientists regarding what validation looks like. People really need to understand what this permit can do, as it's structured now, or as it could be structured in the future, and so do we want to include that as part of the AP, or is the intention for the council to make sure that they hear from these people, hear from these scientists and people within the fisheries community?

DR. BELCHER: Myra, or John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: We think it's probably best to let those people come and present, and not have them as part of it, and then I think there shouldn't be any headboat operators in here, right, and they're reporting under a whole different program, the Southeast Region Headboat Survey, and so this needs to be people that report to SEFHIER.

DR. BELCHER: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: But I do think, if this evolves into a discussion about limited access, that's where the headboats become extremely important, because they are a mechanism for people to get to the water that can't get there otherwise.

DR. BELCHER: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, I disagree with John's comments, because, at least in the Gulf, they were one and the same, right, in terms of them were all under the umbrella of the same reporting requirements when the Gulf program changed to SEFHIER for for-hire vessels, and I think it's worth including them as part of this process. Whether or not we make changes to the headboat survey or not is the question.

DR. BELCHER: Other thoughts from the group? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I think some of this we can solve in June, when we get down to the nitty-gritty of this, and I think we're at the point where we all generally agree on the approach, and we can move forward.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Just for the record, because I've been trying to capture -- From your discussion, I've added a sentence here that clarifies that the intent is for this AP to discuss SEFHIER initially. In the future, the AP membership may change, to allow for a more well-rounded discussion regarding limited access, and I have also included, under the draft AP structure, that all members would be for-hire, federally-permitted captains that report through SEFHIER. Are you all okay with that?

DR. BELCHER: Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I would like to suggest that we would discuss whether it be limited access or other mechanisms to improve -- Isn't the intent here to improve compliance?

DR. BELCHER: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I would say it's improve compliance, but also improve data collection, and that goes back to my point, and I just want to make sure that -- One of the frustrating things I hear about SEFHIER now is there's a lot of people in the industry who are frustrated, because they thought the data was going to be able to be used in ways which it cannot, and I think that they really need to understand what needs to be done to make that data usable.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Other comments? Okay, and so back to our draft -- Well, actually, it's not a draft, and it's a motion now, and we've got the motion and a second. **Any objection to the motion?** Andy. Still not an objection, but a comment?

MR. STRELCHECK: Sorry, and so Clay and I are talking, and he, obviously, oversees the Southeast Headboat Survey, and so, based on the wording of the motion, are they included, or are they excluded?

DR. BELCHER: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that we should have a couple on there. I agree with Andy, and I don't know that we're intending to modify the headboat survey, but they might have some helpful insights, and so I would say include them.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Does that require a change in the motion then? No? Okay. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Just real quick, and I just -- For the record, I think that this is just going to come down to who applies to this, and I think that we can have an ample discussion about who is on that and who can provide good input, whether that's one headboat or three or whoever wants to be involved.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Any other comments? Okay. Again, back to the motion that's on the table. **Any objection to the motion?** Okay. **Seeing none, that motion passes.** There is a list that follows, that has items to consider in future discussions, if you all would look at those and see if there is other ones, and, obviously, Myra has been adding to that list, as we've suggested, but are there other things that we would like to see added to the list? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, I would like to see discussion of alignment between the South Atlantic and Gulf programs. The Gulf, obviously, is revising, or developing, theirs, and so it's a work in progress, and so I think there's opportunity here, if the South Atlantic has great ideas to influence the Gulf, and if the Gulf has great ideas to influence the South Atlantic.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Andy. Other thoughts? Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you. You might just want to also add -- Just looking at the actual data being collected, we heard, during public comment, that there were some potential needs for additional discard, shark predation particularly, and so just maybe looking at the data elements and seeing if there's anything that they feel would be helpful to be added to the program.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Others? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I feel I have to bring this up, because it was brought to me by several stakeholders, and there is concern regarding SEFHIER, because people leasing permits are no longer the permit holders, and so I think that we need to discuss some of the current loop -- I don't want to call them loopholes, but it's just like bureaucratic language, and we want to make sure that people aren't being excluded from the data reporting, but also aren't excluded from anything that -- I don't know how to word it, but I think you know where I'm getting at, and I'm looking for advice here from the rest of the council.

DR. BELCHER: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, I agree that that needs to be discussed. I don't know how to word it either, but something about leasing of vessels, and how it's handled, but I would let the group discuss it, and offer their ideas for this council to consider, but, yes, I think we're going to have to open this leasing can of worms here.

DR. BELCHER: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I think it also will be useful to get this group to provide some opinions about how best to collect the socioeconomic data, because that's a real -- It's a real deficit in the decision-making process, and, you know, you've got privacy issues, and you've got things like Jim described of, well, you know, I don't always fill my boat up after a trip, and so it's hard to figure out what my fuel burn was, but, you know, get these folks that are living in that world to tell us what's reasonable for them to provide that can be used, because, you know, it's in their best interest to have their economic and social value quantified.

DR. BELCHER: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I appreciate Spud bringing that up, and Amy's comments, and I think the other thing that has been productive is also looking at data elements that maybe we should not be collecting, right, that we're currently collecting, but should be removed from the logbook, and I know there's recommendations for the Gulf to do that right now.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you for that, Andy. Anybody else have additional thoughts on what should be on the list? Okay. It seems like it's a good start. All right. Further on into the report, we looked at the consideration of limited entry in the South Atlantic for-hire fisheries. In December of 2023, the council directed staff to initiate an amendment to consider a limited-entry program for the for-hire components of the snapper grouper, dolphin wahoo, and coastal migratory pelagic fisheries. The council requested a control date of December 8, 2023, and they stipulated that permit holders that had not reported catch to the SEFHIER program on or before December 5 of 2023 might not be assured future access.

Council staff presented available information on the number of permits for the three fisheries from 2008 through 2020. Subsequent years of data were not available, due to issues affecting the electronic permits system at the Southeast Regional Office. Additionally, staff summarized information from Snapper Grouper Amendment 47, which considered implementing a moratorium on for-hire permits in the snapper grouper fishery. The council provided the following guidance, and, actually, is this the committee that provided the guidance?

UNIDENTIFIED: (The comment is not audible on the recording.)

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Sorry. You're right. I'm forgetting where I'm at. Consider moratorium options and start with actions that were scoped on Amendment 47. For moratorium and limited access, provide additional information on what could be implemented geographically, as well as temporary or permanent. Look at the purpose and need of Amendment 47 and see if it's still relevant. Include actions addressing new entrants and eligibility criteria. Identify the goals of an amendment, taking into consideration the MSA discretionary provisions.

Acknowledge that the council has heard the Snapper Grouper and Mackerel Cobia APs request to consider limited entry. Hold off scoping until post-2020 data are available later this year, once the SERO permits system issue is fixed, possibly in May of 2024. Request the APs that are meeting this spring have more in-depth discussion and address pros and cons of limited entry. Consider fishery performance reports for the for-hire sector of each fishery.

Staff to bring a discussion document for the June 2024 meeting, including a list of details the council will have to work out as they move forward, such as equity and environmental justice impacts from climate change, governance shift considerations, et cetera. Bring back comments submitted on the ANPR for the December 5, 2023 and December 8, 2023 control dates. The comment period is through March 11 of 2024, and that's bringing the comments to the council in the June 2024 meeting. There is a draft motion on the board there. Do have someone who is willing to make that motion? Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Not to make that motion, and it looks like Myra is working on it too, but to make that first bullet more similar to what we just worked on, so that we're separating these two APs. I just want to be clear on that.

DR. BELCHER: All right. Are there other comments? Okay. Does anybody, at this point, want to make the draft motion? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: **I will move to direct staff to do the following: advertise for seats on the For-Hire Reporting AP for review in June of 2024; prepare a discussion document with items to begin to improve SEFHIER compliance for review in June of 2024; continue work on for-hire limited-access amendment for discussion in June of 2024.**

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Do I have a second for that motion? Amy. Further discussion? Okay. **Any objection to the motion?** Okay. **Seeing none, that motion carries.** With that, we will move into the summary report for Mackerel Cobia, and so Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. On Tuesday, March 5, the Mackerel Cobia Committee convened. The first thing we did was approve the minutes of the December 2023 meeting and the agenda. The first thing we heard is we heard the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel report. The Law Enforcement Advisory Panel met on January 29 and 30 in Charleston, and the AP Chair, Captain Scott Pearce, provided the summary of the AP discussion and recommendations related to king and Spanish mackerel tournament sales, and they expressed their appreciation for the advisory panels' in-depth discussions and recommendations.

Our main item of business was the mackerel port meetings, and, based on the advice from the Mackerel Cobia AP, the council directed staff to begin work on a plan to conduct port meetings for king and Spanish mackerel to gain an in-depth understanding of the fisheries to improve management efforts. The committee reviewed the goals and objectives and discussion topics for port meetings, and staff presented the committee with the final meeting structure and locations, and there were some changes here, obviously, from what we originally had.

Based on the comments from the ASMFC, we moved the Connecticut/Rhode Island/Massachusetts port meetings to a virtual format, and we will hold the virtual meetings during the month of May, as originally planned. We will consider holding the New York port meeting in conjunction with the Mid-Atlantic Council meeting in June, which will be in Riverhead, New York. Also, to work with ASMFC staff, and state agency staff, to identify locations along the inside of Chesapeake Bay to hold a port meeting.

We had one motion here, and I can move on behalf of the committee on this one, and so the first motion was to approve the king and Spanish mackerel port meetings plan for implementation, which was approved by the committee. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Is there any discussion on this motion? No discussion, and is there any objection to this motion? Seeing no objection, the motion passes. I don't believe we had any other business, but we do have a timing and tasks motion here, if anyone would like to make that motion. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I move to adopt the following timing and tasks: to begin conducting port meetings for king and Spanish mackerel and update the council on the North Carolina and New England port meetings at the June 2024 council meeting.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Spud. Do we have a second for that motion? Robert. Is there any discussion on this motion? **Seeing no discussion, is there any objection to this motion? Seeing no objection, the motion passes.** With that, Madam Chair, I conclude my report.

DR. BELCHER: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: The Law Enforcement AP had, obviously, some pretty strong recommendations with regard to tournament sales, and refresh my memory, and are we going to kind of hold off on doing anything until after the port meetings, with respect to the tournament sales, and is that the plan? Okay. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. At this time, I am in committee, and not in Full Council, and this is the SEDAR report. The council approved the agenda for the meeting and the minutes from December of 2023. We received an update on SEDAR 89 and SEDAR 92, which are the two tilefish. Staff updated the committee on the two SEDARs. Data will be reviewed after data scoping has been completed, and staff will brief the committee when more information becomes available.

We reviewed the terms of reference for SEDAR 90, which is red snapper, and SEDAR 96, which is yellowtail snapper, and staff presented the TORs for 90 as a research track assessment, and they described how the terms of reference would need to change for a benchmark assessment. The committee discussed the pros and cons of changing the research track assessment to a benchmark. The committee recommended changing SEDAR 90 to a benchmark assessment. Staff will bring

a revised terms of reference back to the committee in June of 2024 for a benchmark assessment that will include recommended changes for the research track assessment terms of reference.

We have a motion that was made by the committee, which is to change SEDAR 90 to a benchmark assessment, and so, on behalf of the committee, I so move. Is there any further discussion? **Any objection to the motion?** Okay. **Seeing none, that motion carries.**

Staff then presented the terms of reference for SEDAR 96, which is an operational assessment. The assessment would include a topical working group to explore the Florida State Reef Fish Survey to inform private recreational landings for yellowtail snapper. The committee approved the terms of reference.

The committee also made the following motion to approve the SEDAR 96 terms of reference, and so, on behalf of the committee, I so move. Is there any further discussion on this motion? **Any objection?** Okay. **Seeing none, that motion carries.**

We received the SEDAR projects update, and staff provided an update on the ongoing South Atlantic and Florida SEDAR projects and SEDAR projects in their planning stages. Statements of work for 2026 SEDAR projects were discussed, and statements of work for gag, king mackerel, and snowy grouper were submitted to NMFS for 2026 SEDAR project slots. The agency did not have any recommended changes, but did advise the council that the snowy grouper operational assessment would benefit from the inclusion of the South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey, which may result in starting the assessment late in 2026. The MRIP-FES study may result in delays for gag and king mackerel. King mackerel would be changing from Stock Synthesis to the Beaufort Assessment Model.

The committee discussed the need to continue to move forward with these assessments, and the king mackerel assessment may need a bridging exercise to demonstrate the change of assessment model is not resulting in changes in assessment findings.

SEDAR projects for 2027, the committee was briefed on the proposed SEDAR projects for 2027. Due to changing red snapper to a benchmark assessment, an assessment for black sea bass may be possible in 2027. However, the red snapper benchmark assessment will consider several new data sources, including the South Atlantic red snapper research project. This may result in taking additional time to complete the assessment. The current SEDAR projects for 2027 are greater amberjack, which is a benchmark, red porgy, which is an operational, and black sea bass, which is an operational, time permitting. The committee recommends a black sea bass interim analysis in 2026. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: I think Chip intended for you all to discuss that highlighted, and see if perhaps a motion would be appropriate here.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks for that clarification. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I was just going to remind folks that this came up during the Snapper Grouper Committee, and we said that we would come back to it in Full Council, in the SEDAR Committee, and I believe it was Amy that brought it up.

DR. BELCHER: All right, and so discussion on this? I've got Judy with her hand up. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: This is -- You guys had mentioned the possibility of requesting an interim analysis in 2025, and we originally had it at 2026, and so I just wanted to point it out, that it was listed as 2026 here, and make sure you guys had the opportunity to talk about this, to see which year you prefer.

DR. BELCHER: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Chip, if it was in fact 2025, and not 2026, then my notes from the SSC meeting were incorrect, and so I appreciate you correcting me, that the interim analysis suggestion from the SSC was 2025, and I'm happy to make that change, and actually make that motion.

DR. COLLIER: Sorry, Amy, and it was -- The SSC did recommend 2026, I believe, and Judd can correct me if I'm wrong, but, in the discussion yesterday, if you wanted actions to be taking place in 2026, it was pointed out that you might need the interim analysis done in 2025.

DR. BELCHER: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I am kind of immediately thinking about the timing issues that we might run into, because we will probably be working on black sea bass for the better part of -- Well, this year, as well is into next year, with implementation late in 2025, or maybe even early 2026, and so we're implementing a rebuilding plan, and then to get interim analysis, potentially at the same time that we're implementing that rebuilding plan -- There is implications, obviously, in terms of when we would want to get the advice and how that influences any management action.

DR. BELCHER: Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think this all stemmed from my comment that the SSC has given catch levels for 2025 and 2026, and, if you want to have something in place in 2027, to change that catch level from 2026 to 2027, you need to start that interim analysis to inform that before 2026, or you will not get it done. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you for the clarification, Shep. Okay. Is there discussion from the group on this? Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I mean, as long as folks think that they can get it completed, I do agree that, if we're intending to take action in 2026, we're going to need this, you know, at the very least, by the fall, the end, of 2025, and so I agree with changing the date, if we're intending to use that in 2026.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Thanks for that. Other comments on this, or discussion? Okay. So does anybody want to make a motion to this? Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: **I move that we request a black sea bass interim analysis in 2025.**

DR. BELCHER: Do I have a second for that? Amy. Any further discussion on this? **Any opposition to this?** Okay. **Seeing none, that motion carries.** Okay.

During the SEDAR Committee closed session, the committee reviewed participants for SEDAR 90 and 96, which is, again, red snapper and yellowtail snapper. Due to the changing of SEDAR 90 to a benchmark, the committee would approve participants in June of 2024. The committee recommended reaching out to the SEDAR pool and advisory panel members to recruit participants for SEDAR 90.

The committee recommended Jim Gartland, Kai Lorenzen, Steve Turner, Bev Sauls, and Tiffany Cross to the topical working group for SEDAR 96, and I have the draft motion up in front, and would somebody like to make that motion? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I move that we appoint Jim Gartland, Kai Lorenzen, Steve Turner, Bev Sauls, and Tiffany Cross to the topical working group for SEDAR 96.

DR. BELCHER: Do I have a second for that? Jessica. Any further discussion on this motion? Any objection to this motion? Okay. Seeing none, that motion carries.

The committee also reviewed participants in the System Management Plan Workgroup, and there has been a turnover in some of the state seats, and the committee recommended Garland Yopp to replace Jason Walker, Jess Keller to replace Alejandro Acosta, and Ryan Yaden to replace Bob Matore to the System Management Plan Workgroup. The committee recommended filling empty seats from the commercial South Carolina seat and the coral biologist in June of 2024, and so we have another draft motion on the board. Do I have someone willing to make that? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I move that we appoint Garland Yopp, Jeff Keller, and Ryan Yaden to the System Management Plan Workgroup.

DR. BELCHER: Do I have a second? Trish. Any further discussion on the motion? Any objection to the motion? Okay. Seeing none, that motion carries. That is the end of the SEDAR report. Let's go ahead and take a ten-minute break so we can get ready for Snapper Grouper. Let's do fifteen, so people can get their checkouts done.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

DR. BELCHER: Okay. We're moving into Snapper Grouper. Jessica, it's you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to dive into the Snapper Grouper Committee report. We have a lot of notes and direction and stuff in here, and so I'm going to do more reading of this report than I normally do. The committee approved the minutes from the December 2023 meeting and the agenda for the March 2024 meeting.

The committee received an update on the red snapper Notice of Funding Opportunity and Exempted Fishing Permits. Florida FWC presented information on their applications for exempted fishing permits, and the committees received the EFPs favorably and provided the following comments to FWC for consideration, including reducing the maximum red snapper vessel limit, ensuring no commercial sale of fish harvested from the EFP, and reconsideration of trips lost due to poor weather. The committee asked and received clarification from NOAA Fisheries that the red snapper harvested in these EFPs for 2024 would be excluded from the 2024 ACL.

NMFS also gave an update on recreational season announcements for gag and red snapper. For gag, the recreational season is projected to be open, in 2024, from May 1 to June 15. Because there was a 65,000-pound overage of the commercial ACL in 2023, the commercial ACL for 2024 will need to be reduced by the amount of the overage. The adjusted ACL for the commercial sector will be approximately 62,000 pounds, and the season will be open May 1 and end when the ACL is met or projected to be met.

For red snapper, NMFS has not conducted a recreational season projection for red snapper. The agency is evaluating whether to take interim measures to end overfishing of red snapper. The agency will make an announcement, later this spring, regarding how the red snapper catch levels will be adjusted, likely to levels considered in Reg 35. NMFS can't currently say whether there will be a recreational or a commercial season in 2024. Wreckfish, which is Snapper Grouper Amendment 48 -- Yes, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Just one clarification, and it should say "interim measures to address overfishing", and not "end overfishing".

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Myra is making that change. Thank you for that catch. All right. Anybody else? Okay. Back to wreckfish, which is Amendment 48. A review of the wreckfish individual transferable quota program was completed in 2019, and it included recommendations for improvement, including stakeholder concerns with offloading site and time requirements. At their June 2023 meeting, the council established a Wreckfish Subcommittee to discuss continued development of Amendment 48, and the subcommittee met to discuss Amendment 48 on February 8, 2024. The subcommittee selected preferred alternatives for most actions, and they requested additional information on wreckfish reporting requirements and prelanding notifications.

Staff presented the Wreckfish Subcommittee report and the requested additional information for committee discussion. The subcommittee developed three motions, which are shown here, I guess, and there is some text missing there. All right, and so, Myra, I'm assuming this motion, since it says "draft", that it wasn't actually made, that we need to make this motion to revise this language, and is that right?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, that's correct.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Let me read the motion, and then someone can make it. **This would be Draft Motion Number 1 to approve the revised language for Action 13, Preferred Alternative 2.** Would someone like to make this motion? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: **I so move.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Do we have a second? It's seconded by Kerry. Any discussion? **Any objection?** All right. **That motion carries.** All right. **There is another draft motion, Draft Motion Number 2, to approve all motions and recommendations made by the Wreckfish Subcommittee, as presented in the February 2024 subcommittee report, and this is also in the bottom of this document, if you're looking for that.** Would someone like to move this motion? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: **I so move.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. It's seconded by Kerry. Any discussion? **Any objection?** All right. **The motion carries. We also have a third draft motion to approve all additional wreckfish motions passed by the Snapper Grouper Committee at this March 2024 council meeting. This is Motions 5, 8, 10, and 11 of the appended subcommittee report.** Would someone like to move that motion? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: (Ms. Thompson's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Do we have a second? It's seconded by Carolyn. Any discussion? **Any objection?** All right. **The motion carries.** All right.

Then the committee moved into scamp and yellowmouth grouper, which is Amendment 55. Snapper Grouper Amendment 55 is being developed to reorganize the other shallow-water grouper complex, establish the new scamp and yellowmouth grouper complex, and then establish a rebuilding plan, catch levels, allocations, and accountability measures for this new complex. The committee passed the following motions and provided the following direction to staff.

Motion Number 4 is approve the purpose and need statement. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? **Any objection?** All right. **The motion carries.**

The committee then made Motion Number 5, which is to select Alternative 2 as the preferred alternative for Action 5. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? **Any objection?** Tom, are you objecting or discussing?

MR. ROLLER: I am objecting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: **All right, and so the motion carries with one objection.** Wait. Sorry. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: And one abstention.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. **The motion carries with one objection and one abstention, and I'm making sure that Myra is capturing that.** All right. We have that captured. Thanks, you guys. All right.

Motion Number 6 is move Alternatives 4 and 5 from Action 5 to Considered but Rejected. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? **Any objection?** All right. **The motion carries.**

Then there was direction to staff to remove the commercial sector from Action 6, and just a reminder that this was the season action, and so you can see there on the screen, in the committee report, that this has been deleted, and that the season action is focusing on the recreational fishing season.

Then the committee made Motion Number 7, which is to move Action 6, Alternative 2, to the Considered but Rejected after modifications to the action and alternative language. On

behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? All right. The motion carries.

The committee then made Motion Number 8, which was to select Alternative 3 as the preferred alternative for Action 6. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? All right. The motion carries.

Then there was some direction to staff to modify the Action 8 alternatives to even pounds gutted weight and display the commercial annual catch limit in pounds gutted weight under Action 5, and so there is some strike, add, deletion there, and just a reminder that this is the goal of trying to get this to be even numbers, and we were trying to get it to be 300 pounds, because that was similar to what was, or the same as what was, adopted for gag. There is also a table there that you can look at that is showing a side-by-side comparison.

Then the committee made Motion Number 9 to select Alternative 3, which is 300 pounds gutted weight, as the preferred alternative for Action 8, after modifications to this alternative language. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? All right. The motion carries.

Then the committee made Motion Number 10, which was to select Alternative 3 as the preferred alternative for Action 9. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? All right. The motion carries.

The committee then made Motion Number 11, which was to select Alternative 5 as the preferred alternative for Action 10. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? The motion carries.

The committee then made Motion Number 12, which is select Alternative 2 as the preferred alternative for Action 11. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? All right. That motion carries. All right.

Then we went into gag and black grouper recreational vessel limits and on-demand gear for black sea bass, and this is Regulatory Amendment 36. This amendment considers revising gag and black grouper recreational vessel limits and revising commercial black sea bass pot requirements to accommodate the use of on-demand black sea bass pots. The Law Enforcement Advisory Panel Chair presented the Law Enforcement AP's comments concerning enforcement of on-demand pots, and council staff presented the decision document summarizing scoping comments and describing the issues being addressed by this amendment, including some drafted actions and alternatives, and the committee reviewed the information and briefly discussed considering the opening of areas closed to pot fishing due to potential whale interactions, and they recommended continued development of the amendment as scheduled. All right.

Then the committee moved into the black sea bass assessment and response, and this is Snapper Grouper Amendment 56, and so SEDAR 76 indicated that the black sea bass stock in the South Atlantic is overfished, with persistently declining recruitment, and the committee received a presentation from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center showing the revised projections and future catch used for setting acceptable biological catch and a rebuilding timeline.

The SSC Chair presented the SSC's ABC, OFL, and rebuilding recommendations and comments, and council staff presented initial management issues to be considered while developing Amendment 56, based on the results of SEDAR 76. The committee requested the following information to be compiled to inform discussions and consideration of the amendment for scoping in June of 2024. All right.

There is a number of bullets here, and so this includes additional information on MRIP estimates and SEFHIER data; information on phasing-in ABC changes; tradeoffs in projections from reducing dead discards to increasing landings; evaluation of size limit changes, bag and trip limits, and seasonality, and there are some specifics there; discard mortality, and this is rates and numbers of fish by depth; gather information on catches between inshore and state waters; consider angler metrics for success; spawning areas; information on the use and impact of subaquatic vegetation for juvenile black sea bass; cooccurring species that can affect black sea bass discards, and vice versa; and commercial data by gear and time of year; and interactions with red snapper, and this would be any updates on Ecopath/Ecosim. All right.

Then we moved into the private recreational permitting amendment, and that's Amendment 46, and this amendment considers establishing a private recreational permit and education requirement for the South Atlantic snapper grouper fishery, and the council has developed Amendment 46 over several meetings, with the amendment being most recently reviewed by the Law Enforcement AP, at their January 2024 meeting. The committee received the AP summary report from the AP Chair, and they provided the following direction to staff and passed the following motion.

The direction to staff is to allow the IPT to incorporate the committee's guidance into the amendment's actions and alternatives, and so you will see some highlighted language there for a number of different actions. I am going to move down, and you can see some bullet points, right there that Myra has on the screen, and this is under Alternative 3, and then Action 4, some additional points, and Action 5, some additional points.

Then there was some direction for the advisory panels, to convene the Outreach and Education AP, the technical AP, and the private angler AP, ahead of the council's June meeting. Additional topics not included will be added by staff to the AP's discussion materials. Then there is some specific bullets for the Outreach and Communication AP, so they can work on the education program. Then there is some bullets there for the technical AP, on specific actions, and then there is some bullets there, and questions, for the private angler AP.

Then the committee made the following motion to approve Amendment 46, and all actions, as revised, for further development. On behalf of the committee, I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? All right. That motion carries.

Then the committee went into red snapper, which is Regulatory Amendment 35. In December of 2023, the council rescinded its approval of Regulatory Amendment 35 and directed staff to compile information for consideration of other actions. NMFS informed the council that an interim rule to reduce overfishing of red snapper is being considered, and council staff presented the requested information. The committee discussed wanting to wait until a few months of EFP information is ready before considering additional management in a council amendment.

The committee also discussed that further information on management options is necessary to determine the best path forward for managing red snapper and snapper grouper discards. The committee requested the following information: ask the SSC to review scientific merits of the Shertzer et al. management strategy paper and evaluate to what extent strategies discussed in that paper could be expected to meet council goals for reducing discards and rebuilding; request MSE planning team bring an initial prioritized list for council review to the June meeting, and that would consider the Shertzer et al. paper and discussion by the SSC in prioritization; prioritize viability of strategies to reduce discards while preventing overfishing and optimizing access; and note whether strategies are likely to be short-term or long-term for their development timeframe; for the June council meeting, compile and prioritize management procedures and options for Blue Matter to evaluate in the MSE; and, when available, have a presentation of preliminary information from red snapper discard studies, and that would include FWC, South Carolina, Mote, and/or MSE later in 2024. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I didn't want to disrupt this, but, scrolling back up a little bit, in consideration of the Shertzer paper, I also understand, in 2001, or thereabouts, the SSC made some recommendations to the council about size limits, and I would like to have that information brought back to us as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Okay, and I was going to ask for clarification, in terms of the timing, and so that's twenty-plus years ago that you're asking for information, and I guess my concern would be how much new information, you know, is available, and how much has it evolved over time, and whether that's going to be helpful, or relevant, to us, given how dated it is.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I agree, Andy, and, ultimately, I think I may be asking for some update of that. If we could kind of look back in time, and consider the implications of size restrictions on our fisheries management, and the outcome, that's what I'm really interested in, and so, you know, I don't know if it's preferable to do that work now or if we need to think about where we started, or at least some work that had been done in the past, but that's just a general question I have, you know, from black sea bass to all the other snapper grouper, you know, complexes, and what has been the outcome, and did we reach the intended goal of size limits in that fisheries management plan.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Laurilee and then Tom.

MS. THOMPSON: If that information, you know, resulted in the complete closure of red snapper in 2010, I do think we need to look at it. You know, any kind of information that resulted in this drastic closure, that put us where we are, I think we do need to look at it, and it's relevant.

MS. MCCAWLEY: This is specific -- Just to be clear, this is specific to size limits? Okay. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I just want to point out that I brought this up, and not this paper, but this idea, regarding king and Spanish mackerel, to this council, and it went nowhere.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks for those comments. Anything else? All right. Moving on to the snapper grouper management strategy evaluation, Blue Matter Science presented a

progress update on the development of the snapper grouper MSE, including a preliminary tool structure with some management strategy examples for red snapper and gag, and the SSC reviewed, and discussed, the snapper grouper MSE at their February meeting, and the SSC Chair presented the SSC comments.

The council provided feedback on additional, or initial, management strategies to evaluate, and the council requested a comprehensive table of management options that are being considered under each broad topic, such as size limit, effort control, spatial closures, bag limits, be brought to the June council meeting for the council to review and prioritize. The council will continue to provide input for the MSE in future meetings, up to the expected completion of the project in December. All right.

Snapper grouper commercial permits, at the council's December 2023 meeting, the council directed staff to update the commercial two-for-one discussion document, as well as information on 225 commercial permits, in response to the Snapper Grouper AP's discussion on the topic of commercial permits. The committee was provided background information on the creation of commercial snapper permits, summary AP discussion, and recent information on permit trends, as well as vessels that are active in the fishery.

The committee provided the following direction to staff, when available: provide additional information on vessels active in the fishery, leasing of permitted vessels, trends in imports of snapper grouper species, and permit trends. At a future meeting, ask the Snapper Grouper AP about innovative and new ideas to improve returns in the commercial fishery and focus on factors that the council can control or modify.

Then, relative to visioning, summarize and identify aspects that are still applicable to the current fishery, and then I see a highlighted item there of consideration of potentially commercially-focused port meetings, with a question-mark, and I think that's something that -- I would look to Kerry, and I think that's something that we would want to think about, like how do we want to update the visioning going forward, and I guess one of the reasons why it might be highlighted is when do we want to do this, and when do we want to have these discussions, and so let me pass it over to you.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, I would like to have them very soon, but I'm also a realist, and I know that's not entirely possible, and so that -- I guess, for me, I would want to talk to staff, whether you want to address it here, or, you know, you all talk about it, and look at your overall workplan. I am the last person to want to put more on their plate than necessary, but I do feel like -- Well, I guess -- I'm trying to picture the workplan yesterday, right, and how can we work those into that, without burning people out, especially given the fact that there's the mackerel port meetings and then the other -- What are we calling the other ones, the constituent -- I forget, and those are focused -- Because that's IRA money, and that is climate-change focused, and I guess my question is can those -- Can we ask snapper-grouper-commercial-related, or is that just muddying the waters too much?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Well, I mean, they're going to be fairly general, and we want to hear -- You know, as Christina said, there are sort of two aspects of it, and one is what are the issues within a given state that the folks -- You know, you guys in that state think that we need to talk about, and then the other is open time for them to tell us whatever they're interested in, and so we

could factor some, you know, directed questions to the commercial issues, and I think we absolutely should, and I can't imagine that these would go out and we would have these blinders on for the recreational fishery, and so I think we will definitely do that.

What I don't think is we can add some other whole separate going out and doing meetings to people any time before, you know, 2028-ish, because of -- Or maybe 2027, and, you know, we're doing mackerel port meetings, and then we're going to go out and do townhalls, and then we're going to -- That's going to take two years, and so it's 2024, 2025, and 2026. Before we can do something else, we're probably talking about 2027, to have the staff time to go out there and do it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, then that gets into my question about this whole MSE thing, and eventually there was a plan, after the recreational component was done, and we were going to look at the commercial component. Maybe what happens here, because we're not going to solve it, is the direction to staff is to maybe think it over, and I have no doubt that you all understand my concerns, and what I'm looking for, and not just myself, but what we've talked about, and maybe, at the next meeting, it's just like here's a rough idea of how we think this could go, and it doesn't necessarily have to be -- If you start looking at the calendar, or the work, and you start saying, well, we're going to run up against doing the commercial MSE anyway, and so then we don't have to have port meetings, and so I trust you all's judgment to say maybe here's a good way to tackle looking at moving forward, and maybe you could just give us a little idea.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think a quick long-term strategy on this would be we go through the port meetings, and we understand that we need to get feedback on commercial issues, through the port meetings, or the townhalls, and we're going to get these totally confused, and then we can use that to inform maybe where the commercial-oriented MSE goes, and we're armed with that, and then we also have, at that time, thinking about is there some type of focused effort that we need to do toward commercial fishery community areas, to get more impact, so that we --

You know, I'm thinking of the townhall meetings being like the big-picture view of what are your major issues, and then the next step is, you know, can we focus in on some of those issues, better refine them, and find things that we can analyze through the MSE, so that all of this would sort of happen, and so the net result would be, you know, we're saying that our next big push, ideally, once we get through this first round of townhalls, is to, you know, devote energies to focusing-in on the commercial fishery issues.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, that sounds reasonable, and let me just say what my concerns are, real quick, and it's that, in the meantime, we're going to get -- We're going to need to respond to the triggerfish assessment, and we're going to be getting, I don't know, obviously, a red snapper update, and we're, obviously, going to be working on black sea bass, and I forget -- There's going to be multiple assessment responses between now and then, and we get in this cycle of get an assessment, get busy responding, and, for our industry, that just means get an assessment, figure out how we can make the trip limit low enough, just to, you know, not have the season close, right, and I don't know how, if we wait that long, we're going to get out of that cycle.

Also, you know, we had the visioning, back ten years ago, that had some ideas that we haven't had an opportunity to act on, and so I'm not trying to like push it, and I'm not trying to be obstinate, but I also have been around long enough to know exactly -- It's just going to keep getting pushed, and so I just ask that we're cautious of that.

MS. BROUWER: Yesterday, Kerry, you mentioned potentially adopting the subcommittee approach, or maybe it was Amy, or, whoever brought it up, I think that's a really good thing to do in the meantime, and so, you know, while we plan how these meetings with stakeholders can happen eventually, you guys can be meeting, as a sub-committee, and fleshing out, you know, everything else, and so we don't need to just be waiting for three years for the work to make progress.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Before I go to Andy, is there a way to bring back kind of a concept discussion item, for the June council meeting, that maybe looks at using a subcommittee to talk about some of these concepts, visioning, et cetera, because, to me, it wasn't just Kerry, and there was a vision put forward by Andy, and he also referenced the, you know, original snapper grouper visioning that's old, and so maybe we could have a specific discussion topic on this at the next council meeting, but I will look to Andy, because you've had your hand up.

MR. STRELCHECK: Ditto. That was what I was going to essentially ask for, was at least a little bit of time on the June council agenda to kind of lay out a path forward, whether it's a subcommittee or something else, and hopefully we can continue to spend time, and maybe put a timeline around this, right, so that there's more certainty surrounding how we're going to move forward, not only on recreational issues, but on commercial issues.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: What I think we can also do in June, and I think this subcommittee could be useful in providing guidance to the commercial issues for the townhalls, and so I think getting that going, and getting them engaged in that, because that's going to -- That's a planned activity, and it's a first chance to hear from folks, and then I think we can look at our workplan, and the way to keep us from falling into all the other things that come up is that we put this project on the workplan, even if it's a couple of years out, and, I mean, that's the intent of that, is to say, if this is a high priority, this goes at the top, and some of the other things that are down at the bottom --

Then, you know, there's things that have been down there and pushed back, and you may decide that this is more important to you than some of the other things that are on that workplan, and so we can look at the workplan, factor in the timing of these outreach meetings, and probably put them on there to help us, and then say, okay, where do we think we're ready to initiate this amendment, with, you know, being informed by the MSE, and the feedback from the fishermen, and then we put that at the top, if you say it's a priority, and then other things have to work around it. That's the way we intend the workplan to function for you guys.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I would just ask that maybe staff can think about using the subcommittee concept, questions for the council, other things, you know, in a short document for the June meeting, because, to me, it's not just talking to the fishermen, but I think that we, even if it's with a subcommittee concept, are seeking to go back to those original visioning documents. If we need to develop a new vision, or an amended vision, I think that that's part of what we're saying here,

and so it's not just about the public workshop process that might be further into the future, and so, if you would like to bring back some sort of strawman, or a list of questions for us, I think that would help guide this discussion. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I think we're on solid ground with that, you know, going from the visioning document to the subcommittee, because that stuff that came out of visioning was bottom-up, and like, you know, we all feel very strongly, and I don't want to sit here, as a subcommittee, and come up with ideas, because then that's very top-down, but, if we use that as our platform to spring off of, I think that we're on good ground, and I also think that this is a fishery that tends to be very actively engaged. I mean, they're paying attention, right, and so I think using, in the future, and maybe it doesn't have to be in-person, and maybe there can be webinars, because this is a crowd of people that are used to participating in the council process, and I think would be more comfortable, and so we have some flexibility, in other words, in my mind, even though I'm a big in-person person, and I think that this is an opportunity to use that, and so I'm thankful for the subcommittee idea, and I think that's exactly where we need to go, and I appreciate everyone's time in hearing me out on this, I really, really do.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and, from my vantage point, right, I'm a huge proponent of visioning efforts, of strategic planning, but I'm hearing an urgency from Kerry, and many of the commercial industry members, and I don't want this to get bogged down in other like we're creating a new visioning document, or we're creating a new strategic plan, right, and let's use what we have, and maybe improve upon that, but really come up with more of that action plan as to how we can benefit the commercial industry.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you for that. All right. I appreciate that, and I think we had a good discussion on this. Myra has captured some of these notes on the screen, and I'm going to keep going through the committee report.

Then we went into agenda topics for the March 2024 AP meeting, and the Snapper Grouper AP meeting is scheduled to convene on March 26 through 28, and so we have a list of topics there. In the interest of time, I'm not going to read all of them, but we also have a note, and I will look to Myra, and is this to figure out if we want to discuss SEFHIER improvement at the AP meeting? Can you explain this note?

MS. BROUWER: I think that's what that means, yes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I think the answer is yes, and we are forming this AP, and maybe it's partly making the Snapper Grouper AP aware that, if they're interested, they should apply for this, and kind of informing them of this path we're embarking on, I guess. I see heads nodding yes. Okay. Myra is capturing some of that. All right.

Then we moved into Other Business, and we've already just had a good discussion on it, but the council, or the committee, briefly discussed snapper grouper visioning, the challenges facing the fishery, and the need to consider maybe non-traditional management approaches in the future, and then, also, you know, we had discussions, early in the week, on the EFP applications, and I will just remind you that it's Andy that approves EFPs, but, in the past, the council has written a letter

to the Regional Office about how they feel about these EFPs, and so I guess I would ask, and do we want to write a letter, and include some of the comments from the committee in the letter, and, Andy, are you wanting a letter?

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, it's up to you. I mean, it can be helpful, if you have specific recommendations that would be considered. To me, I think the main thing that I heard was questioning whether a sixty-fish red snapper limit was too high or not, and I know you and I also talked, and we didn't talk about this during council, but about potentially shifting the participation in trips between the two regions, and so I'm just curious if you have any recommendations, or thoughts, on that as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Not yet, but we will. I think that we're also going to talk about this with the Snapper Grouper AP as well, but I will look over here to our Chair and Vice Chair, and do we want to write a letter on this?

DR. BELCHER: I guess, if you feel it would be helpful, we can do it. I mean, it's -- It doesn't hurt.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: I mean, I'm not really sure a letter is necessary. This is a little bit different than our normal EFP process, and this is something that was solicited by the service, rather than just an outside entity coming to the council and asking for something, and so I see it as a little bit different, and I don't really think it's necessary. I think Andy knows what we want.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I appreciate that discussion. Thank you. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Yes, I agree, and I think it's been made clear, in our discussions, what the concerns are, and you understand it, and so I don't think we need to worry about memorializing it in a letter.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. All right. Then we have a timing and tasks motion here. I will read it, and then someone can move it. **This is to continue to develop Snapper Grouper Amendment 48 (wreckfish), as detailed in the timing and tasks motion from the Wreckfish Subcommittee report; continue development of Amendment 46 for review at the June 2024 council meeting; prepare the amendment for approval for public hearings, and I see question-marks.**

We discussed, at the last meeting, and I will look to Spud, because I know he was part of this discussion, that we wouldn't approve this for public hearings until after the APs met, and then we would review all of that, and then consider it for public hearing, is my recollection and so I think it's premature to develop it, or approve it, for public hearings at this point. All right. Spud is nodding yes.

Also, in the timing and tasks, convene the technical AP, the private angler AP, the Outreach and Communications AP to review Amendment 46 and convene the Outreach and Communications AP to request feedback on the education component; convene the Snapper Grouper AP; update commercial permit information and present to the committee in the

latter half of 2024 or early 2025, depending on the availability of updated permit, logbook, and landings data; continue development of Regulatory Amendment 36 for review in June 2024; send letters to black sea bass pot endorsement holders to inform them of the upcoming management changes for black sea bass; compile requested information for Amendment 56 and prepare for review in June of 2024; and compile requested information on management strategies for red snapper and snapper grouper discard reduction and prepare for review in June of 2024. Would someone like to move that motion? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: **I so move.**

MS. MCCAULEY: All right. Do we have a second? It's seconded by Carolyn. Any more discussion on this timing and tasks motion? **Any objection to this timing and tasks motion?** All right. **The motion carries.** Is there any other business to come before the Snapper Grouper Committee, while we're discussing Snapper Grouper Committee items? All right. I don't see any hands, and it's back to you, Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Okay, and so we are at the end of the committee reports. The last item on the agenda is Other Business. Is there any other business that needs to come before the council at this point in time? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I assume nothing came up this morning that changes the workplan, and so what we did yesterday is where we're at going forward, as best as we know, right?

DR. BELCHER: Does anybody want to look at the workplan, as a result, just to make sure that we're good to go, or not? No? Everybody is good with that? Okay. So anything else? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I have sad news. Some of you will probably remember Jerry Sampson, and he was actually a council member, but he was the head of the Organized Fishermen of Florida for more than forty years, and he passed away a couple of days ago, and so we're really -- The commercial fishing industry in Florida, you know, is devastated. He led the charge to fight the net ban, and he was a master at manipulating legislators, and Sherry and I learned a lot, you know, from following him around in Washington, D.C., and in Tallahassee, and we owe him a lot, but he -- Other than Bob Jones, there is no other person that has done more for the commercial fishing industry in the State of Florida, and we will miss Jerry.

The other thing I have is that remember Starship, that thing that blew up a couple of times off of Texas? Well, they are fast-tracking moving it to Florida, and so they just did three public meetings in Brevard County, and there is a virtual meeting regarding their EIS at 6:00 on Tuesday, and the public comment session is open from March 12, Tuesday, through March 22. If you are interested in the EIS, and the information that's available, it's all there on the website, and it is -- The website is www.spaceforcestarshipeis.com. You're welcome to go on and make a public comment.

You know, there is a lot of environmental concerns for impacts to the nearshore ocean habitat, the Indian River Lagoon habitat, the quality of life for space coast residents, and, you know, we're hearing reports of people are getting cracks in their houses from the launches, and, I mean, they're only launching three or four rockets a week now, and their goal is ten rocket launches a day within five years, and then escalating from that point, and so there is profound changes to our community

that are coming, and so, if you're interested, and I will say it again. It's www.spaceforstarships.com. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Andy.

MR. STRELCHER: Real quick, on the workplan, I thought it was mentioned that Coral 10 was going to come back in June as well as September, but it looks like it's only listed as September on the workplan.

MS. BROUWER: It's probably under the Habitat Committee for the June meeting.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Any other Other Business? Okay. Seeing none, again, I appreciate everybody's time and efforts this week, and we will see you all in Daytona Beach in June. The meeting is officially adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on March 8, 2024.)

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
April 18, 2024

Thur., March 7, 2024 SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Council Session II

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Representative
TBD

Thurs, March 7, 2024
Council Session 11

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Martha Guyas

Sherril McCoy

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Fri, March 8, 2024 SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
Council Session II 2023 -2024 COUNCIL MEMBERS

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Fri., March 8,
2024
Council Session II

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