

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

COUNCIL SESSION II

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

March 5-6, 2026

Transcript

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Observers and Participants

Other observers and participants attached.

The Council Session II of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Villas by the Sea Resort in Jekyll Island, Georgia on Thursday, March 5, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Trish Murphey.

MS. MURPHEY: We're going to convene Council II, and we've made a couple of -- Well, actually, I guess we can approve -- Do we have minutes to approve? No, we don't. Never mind. Okay. It's after lunch. Give me a break. We're going to do a couple of -- Move some things around, because we're early, and so we're going to go ahead and jump to Number 2 with John to go over the Executive Order response and what we had submitted before, and so I'm going to go ahead and turn it over to John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Okay, and so just a reminder that the reason we are talking about this is because the National Marine Fisheries Service provided an extended comment period for this, and they got additional comments from the public. They provided those comments to all of the councils. That's what you have in your attachment, the spreadsheet. You'll see there's many, many, many, many comments. One of the tabs in there arranges the comments by council, and so they ask that we look at the comments as councils and consider if we would like to make any changes in the items that we put forward that we would use to address this executive order in response to the comments received.

I just want to highlight, first of all here, that this is the things that we submitted that are in the letter that you have in your attachment, the removing or considering ecosystem component designations, which we are working on in Snapper Grouper 61, and I think I got that right. I forgot to double-check. Revising the policies and requirements for the permits, which we are doing in Snapper Grouper 60, supporting the development of state-led, state agency-led, EFPs for red snapper. The EFPs have been submitted, and we've talked about them several times.

The last item we highlighted was increasing knowledge of and engagement with science and management. This is certainly our Lines meetings that we are in the middle of, and MREP also applies to that, and I would say pretty much most all of our outreach and communication efforts fall under that as well, and so those are the four items that we submitted.

Additional comments that were submitted are highlighted as SAFMC, and you can see here 1 through 5. There's a whole range of things. Some, I think, are not really within our purview, such as stocking seafood, dealing with farming and public waters, those sorts of things. There's a mention of the splitting TACs before discards, which we have discussed a number of times, and remember was noted in our innovation plan.

Access to closed permit fisheries, which I think we're probably considering a lot of this to some extent in Snapper Grouper 60. I'm not sure what Number 3 is necessarily, talking about in all areas restoring access, and maybe that's the two-for-one. Maybe that's permits that are limited entry.

Number 4 highlights removing species from FMPs, and we're talking about that. Red snapper and shark management are all things that we've talked about that, and then, Number 5, and I think I pointed out that, addresses the Oculina Bank closure, which we've addressed. I don't know that we can suspend ESA consultations. That certainly well beyond our control, and it's something that falls under federal law.

So, in looking at these, nothing really jumped out at us as something that we would want to change our initial response on in response to these comments, and so we just wanted to put this before you, let you see, and see if you agree with that overall summary or if there's something else you would like to do and revise what we've submitted for this EO, but, you know, keep in mind that we're pretty far along on the implementation process, which was required under this executive order, and so that could be challenging if we were to come up with something entirely new.

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

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and thanks for putting this together. I think it's great. I say we stick with what we've already submitted, and I like how you put the amendment number or like, hey, the Lines of Communication, and this is kind of how we're fulfilling this, or MREP. I like how you put that on there, because, that way, if somebody asks, we can show them, you know, this has actually got an amendment number, and we're working on it, et cetera, and the EFPs have already been submitted, and so it's kind of like a little progress report of what we submitted that we said that we would do, and so I'm not inclined to change it, and I appreciate this document, and how it's laid out, in case they want a progress report.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jessica. Any other thoughts? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and, along those same lines, the agency is going to be tracking progress for this across all the councils, and so they've asked for the region's input, and we're in alignment with your recommendations. I had looked through the other comments, and I agree that I don't think there's really anything to add here at this point, but I'll report back out, obviously, as we make progress and accomplish some of these activities, and so that's really, to me, is the key, is that you already have things in the works, which is critical, and that we can show that we're accomplishing some of these goals over time.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. Any other comments? So I am going to take it that we are all in agreement to not change anything, and this is looking good, and we like it, and I'm hearing thumbs-up and head nods, and so, John, I think we're happy with what we've got.

Okay. I guess we have another thing that we're going to jump ahead on, is the topics for the Outreach and Communications AP, and that's Ashley, and so Ashley is coming up, and we'll go through that.

MS. OLIVER: All right, and so the Outreach and Communications Advisory Panel is planned to meet on May 5th and 6th in North Charleston. I wanted to provide a draft list of topics here for their discussion, and just kind of looking for you guys to review and -- You know, review and add anything, as needed.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Everybody is looking at the list. Any questions or thoughts on additions? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: The meeting is in the first week of May. Will we have a report from the North Carolina Lines by that time?

MS. OLIVER: Christina is shaking her head yes.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Great. Anything else? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I obviously don't want to be pre-decisional, and the EFPs obviously haven't been approved, but, if they are approved, timing-wise, I think it would be good for them to at least hear from the various states about the outreach efforts for the EFPs, as well as any other ideas that can help with kind of bolstering communication and support of the state EFPs.

MS. MURPHEY: Is that okay with the other states? I see heads nodding okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Does this need to cover the Return 'Em Right program that's coming to the South Atlantic, or was that discussed at the last meeting? I can't remember.

MS. OLIVER: So the advisory panel hasn't met for I believe like a year-and-a-half now, and so they haven't heard about the Return 'Em Right expansion. However, we are hoping that the council will hear from Return 'Em Right themselves in June, and so we're thinking maybe you guys get the presentation first, and then we can take it to the OC AP next time.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: You said they haven't met in like a year-and-a-half, and is the plan -- Do they usually meet every year, Ashley?

MS. OLIVER: It's usually once.

MS. MARHEFKA: They have a big agenda, and I don't necessarily want to add anything to it, but one thing maybe we can start planning is, you know, I have a big hang-up about public hearing attendance.

I'm certainly made no qualms that I'm old school in-person, but I realize that the world has moved on, but I would love, at some point, to use this AP to have a discussion, because, even when we do it online -- Like black sea bass, in my mind, should have been much better attended, because the cut was so huge, and I don't know how we figure out if, again, that gets to the issue of they just hate us, and they don't trust us, and they don't think showing up is going to do anything, or the method in which we're doing them. I'll leave it in your hands to figure out when that is an appropriate time, but I would love to begin a discussion with a panel of experts to say are there things we can do to increase our participation at scoping meetings and public hearings.

MS. OLIVER: I do think there is room for that, at least to begin the discussion for this meeting.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and I was going to say that North Carolina actually did some outreach to try to get people to attend, and I didn't get anybody, but, yes, hopefully we can do -- Get some ideas, and I've got Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Yes, and just a question. I mean, do we have any information tracking public attendance for webinars and scoping meetings and stuff over time?

MS. OLIVER: I believe, and I'm looking over to Rachael, but I believe they capture all the webinar and in-person information that people attend.

MR. ROLLER: I'm not asking for -- To put any work in anybody's lap. It's just something that we talk about a lot, and I think that we actually need to look at the data, to see if attendance is actually down from these things, because I ebb and flow between whether I think it is or whether it's like pretty stable, and it has just changed a little, but, at the same time, we still need to increase public attendance.

MS. MURPHEY: I've got Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and, with all due respect, I think this could be an episode of like shifting baselines, because what I know is it's certainly down from 2000s, and so, you know, I know it's down from -- The things that would bring people out and fill a hotel, you know, ballroom in 2002 are very similar action items to what surprises me that don't bring people out and fill them now, and that's where I'm confused.

What I wish we could do is, you know, along the lines of what we've done with citizen science, where we were able to like do this sort of baseline understanding of people's trust level, and, you know, you have a starting point, and, obviously, this would not be a starting point, but a way to assess the public's attitudes towards our public comment gathering process, take onboard what they tell us, see if we can change it, within financially and resource terms that we're constrained by, and then make the changes, because I struggle to figure out -- These things still affect people's livelihoods all the time, and the people I know whose livelihoods are affected are not showing up. I might have a biased opinion why, but that's not a real scientific opinion about why it's happening, and so, to the extent we can start exploring those things, is just really, really important to me.

MS. MURPHEY: So let me just make sure I -- How citizen science, how those folks explored the attitudes and everything, that's just do the same thing for attending public hearings or attending the --

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, that was, I think, really expensive, and covered by someone else's money, and, also, that was an official baseline, in that citizen science was kind of just starting, where we're kind of coming in -- We would be coming in at the middle, and so I'm not -- If that could happen, that would be great. I don't know that we have the funding to do that, but, if someone can be creative, and if people can put their hats together, and if we can draw on this team of people, and so it's not just Ashley, but it's a team of people who get -- This is what they're experts at, and that sort of -- You know, to the extent we can do that within our resources, but, if someone knows of a magic pot of money, where we can go out and figure out what people think about us, which we probably don't -- We probably know what they think of us.

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

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I probably could save you a lot of money.

MS. MARHEFKA: They hate us.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Well, you said, in 2002, your ACLs, and what you could catch, was a heck of a lot now, compared to now crumbs on the commercial side, and so this is a no-brainer. It don't -- I mean, I would not get wrapped around the axle about why somebody is not attending. You're doing everything you can do to get it out there, but just look at it. I mean, it doesn't --

MS. MARHEFKA: (Ms. Marhefka's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. HEMILRIGHT: For bottom fishing snapper grouper, there's less than 509 permits. A lot of them aren't active, and so I just think that, you know, people are kind of distraught over it, and the participation is kind of based on -- You know, we looked at an individual last night giving us public comment who leases twenty-one permits, and, in my time around here, I've never seen him at a council meeting, and so I'm just -- I mean, I just think it's people's angst of where they're at in their life, and where they're at in their job, and the crumbs that they get to catch, and what they put forth, and it's why should I go give comment?

You know, now maybe, if they had ten-times the catch, then they would be wanting to give comments, but I just think it's about, you know, what you have to do your job, and what you're trying to make, but, I mean, you can probably study it all you want, but I don't think you'll get any better results.

MS. MURPHEY: Well, maybe we can survey you. Christina is coming up, and so I'm going to go ahead and let Christina jump in, and then I'll get Jimmy.

MS. CURTIS: So I just want to note a couple of things that are sort of actively going on. First, we do have -- You know, I sort of agree with what Dewey is saying, and one of the things that we're doing to try to address some of the things that came out of that citizen science report is the Lines of Communication effort, which is going in-person to all of these different communities.

Second to that, earlier in the week, you'll remember Lara talked to you about the IRA projects, and the communities projects going on, and so, to provide a bit more detail on what that project will involve, it's sort of three separate phases. The first phase and the second phase sort of play right into some of what you're talking about here with the first phase, looking at really identifying communities, particularly those communities that maybe the council has been, you know, missing, or are newly getting involved in South Atlantic fisheries for one reason or another.

The second part of that, and the part that I really think is going to speak to what you guys are talking about here, is going to look at how to properly be communicating with these different communities, what their needs are, and then developing an entire communication plan for the council that we can utilize to do things like increase participation, hopefully, at public hearings, scoping, what have you, improve how we are doing those types of activities. That, you know, process will be ongoing all of this year, into next year, and they are scheduled to bring that to the OC AP, and not at this meeting, but at a future meeting.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Christina. I've got Jimmy, and I'll go back to you.

MR. HULL: Thank you. When I think of outreach and communication to the commercial sector, it's tougher, because we're all old guys. We're setting our ways, you know, and we're just not -- We're not striving for this new information, because we already think we know it all, and so -- But,

when you think about it on the recreational side, I've always felt like you should get into the high schools, the coastal high schools, because this is where these future anglers are coming out of, and these kids are already -- If you're interested in fishing, and, when I was in high school, and even younger, that's where -- We were already doing it, and so you could really reach the open minds in these younger generations, and hit them early, and then, when they interact with their adults, that are taking them fishing or whatever, then they can say did you ever -- I think it's the youth is where you've got to go on the recreational side. On the commercial side, it will be guys like Dewey going there, and Kerry, beating it into them, you know, and so -- That's what I'm saying.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jimmy. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I think, one thing, I've heard from probably seven snapper grouper fishermen that received a letter that was sent about the Amendment 60, and I think was very helpful, but, also, you've got to realize -- I mean, I think it was 2024 that we held port meetings, right, and spent a lot of money, had excellent staff out there, a lot of participation, and when are we going to act on that? Probably five years, and it's like, really?

There was nothing in that port meeting that was brought out that we couldn't act on until we get a Spanish mackerel stock assessment, and it's like folks are like, well, why the heck did we have a port meeting, and all this participation, all this money spent, all the staff spent, and we're not doing nothing, and so you brought them out for port meetings, with very good attendance from my understanding, and it was in Dare County where I was at. I didn't go to the one -- Well, Patterson and Dare County, but I didn't go to Hatteras, but, I mean, it's just like people are like, hey, where is that at, and we've heard other people call on the comments about what's happening with king mackerel, you know, and just other things.

There hasn't been no advisory panel meeting in I don't know how long, maybe a couple of years in Spanish, and I might be wrong, and Tom can probably tell me, and so, I mean, just little things that we haven't followed up on, and I realize the funds are low. You've only got so much time to do stuff, but then the public looks at that, and they're like, wow, we did this, we did this, and we got no response, and so what the heck, and so, you know, maybe we need to look in the mirror at the reason why we're not having participation.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Dewey. Those are good thoughts. Yes, I agree. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Sorry, and I don't want to belabor this, but I just want to say this, that the average age of a -- I'm speaking for the commercial guys, and the average age of a SG 1 holder is probably sixty-five to seventy, and I don't want to out anyone, but I know Mark, and Mark doesn't -- He wouldn't know how to get on a scoping webinar if I didn't help, and I'm not kidding. Like I'm not even -- Like usually I'm trying to be funny, and I'm not being funny.

He's not computer literate, and so that is my concern, is just that we're missing a segment of particularly that fishery that is old and did not -- Don't need those kinds of computers to function. A calling machine, you know, whatever, yes, but, like a home computer, there's still a bunch that aren't, believe it or not, and I worry sometimes that, because the shift has been so big, that people don't believe that there's that portion of the population out there, and they are very much out there.

MS. MURPHEY: No, and I concur with that. I think of my mother, and we think about those older, you know, fishermen, even in North Carolina, and that's why we've got some -- You know, for our mandatory reporting, we have it set so you can do paper, and so, anyway, I had Tom, then Charlie, and then Amy.

MR. ROLLER: I think -- I mean, this is really important subject, and it's something that's, you know, really part -- You know, it's important to me, because it's, you know, increasing participation in this universe that we work in, but it's important to remember how much has changed in the last twenty years. Twenty years ago, social media was barely in existence. If I missed a state commission meeting, they would burn me a CD at headquarters, and I picked it up. That was twenty years ago. It wasn't that long ago.

Now you can -- I understand there's a lot of people that really struggle with webinars and technology. I mean, I have enough trouble with GoToWebinar sometimes, right, but my point is like the accessibility of these meetings are a lot different. Back in the day, that was the only way if you wanted to know what was going on, was to be attendance.

When I look at this increasing public attendance at public scoping, I also hear about -- I think about it in terms of like alternative ways for people to participate. I think about the Gulf's anonymous voicemail program, which I think is amazing, right, and so I just -- I want -- I hear Kerry's comment, and I think about how can we get more participation, but I think about it in a slightly different way, right?

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tom . I had Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and Kerry is right. They're older fishermen, and I know, when we were trying to get people for our Lines in Georgia, I was pleading with people to come, but these are guys, you know, and not as old as me, but they were getting on up there, and, for various reasons, they, they didn't come, and so we -- They're going to need -- You're going to need to get them in a room where they can talk to somebody and feel comfortable. They're not going to feel comfortable getting on a webinar and holding up their hand and things like that. They're just not.

You know, Dewey talked about the port meetings, and we had our mackerels, and it was -- It wasn't a lot of people there, but, what there were, you know, was -- They were vocal, and we said what do you need us to do, and what needs -- There was really nothing that they needed us to do. Sometimes talking does not necessarily mean there's an amendment coming, but they -- We interacted, and their main complaint was, I think, one, they couldn't fish inshore, because the sharks would eat the king before it got to the boat, and, two, the kings happened to be in Florida or somewhere, but we still had that conversation.

That sets us up to have another conversation about something that we may have to turn an amendment from, but we don't always have to get an amendment, but keeping that conversation, and getting those guys in the room, and like the diver that was at our Lines, and he told me stuff that was super valuable to me, and it's a two-way street. They learn from us, and we learn from them, but, yes, we've got to figure out how to get people in the room. Thanks.

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

MS. DUKES: Thanks Madam Chair, and, Kerry, thank you for bringing this up, and thank you for this council table to be having this conversation on the record. I think it's very valuable for our constituents to hear this type of effort that we're trying to put back into increasing our public awareness, and as well as just simply programs that are going on.

Jimmy, you're absolutely right. Getting the younger generation involved is something that has been a practice of the South Carolina Sea Grant, and that's going to be talked about with the Sea Grant Reef Fish Fellow update at this meeting, which we'll read about if you aren't able to attend, but, also, the South Carolina Sea Grant has a commercial seafood apprenticeship program that's been very successful.

Perhaps other Sea Grants in other states can pick it up. It's a month-long paid job training program. It's based in McClellanville, South Carolina. When they graduate, part of -- They get on-the-boat experience, actual commercial fishing, mariculture, and I'm on the website, so I didn't miss anything, and classroom-based and boat-based training. Then, when they are finished with that program, part of it is helping them find a full-time entry-level job in the local fishing community, and so it's been really valuable in South Carolina.

A lot of DNR staff and council staff have been involved in it, helping provide conversations and teaching part of this system. I do a big thing on permits. It's a giant pain in the butt, both at the state level and the federal level, and we try to break it down so they can better understand it, and then have a local resource, with my staff or myself, and so you're going to hear about stuff like this. This AP is perfect group of folks to start that conversation, people that have the work experience and the quality knowledge to help set something up like this for us, and so thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Amy. I appreciate the discussion, the nice philosophical discussion that we had, and the thoughts of, you know, we don't want to let -- We try to address all our stakeholders at all ages, and so I think we had some good conversation there, and some good things to carry to the Outreach Committee, or AP. Do you have everything you need?

MS. OLIVER: I think so. Did I capture that last bullet there?

MS. MURPHEY: Is everybody good?

MS. OLIVER: I think we'll also touch a lot of that -- On a lot of that through the engaging the MREP graduates as well, and not just at MREP, but after MREP, you know, engaging them more in the council process, and then Nick and I are also developing a new, or just updated, just goals and objectives for our outreach and communications, and that is a goal that we are trying to still form right now, and we're looking forward to bringing it to this group, and then bringing it to you guys to review as well.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you. Just one other thought, and not to keep going, but so I look at this also like we just had public comment here yesterday, and so that's communication with the stakeholders, but there's a lot of events that I've gone to, fisheries events, where we have public comment and we get a summary of the comments, and so, you know, someone on staff

summarizes, and generally the ones I think of is Myra had summarized the comments of here's what came in, and, of course, we get to hear the verbal ones, but, that way, the stakeholders know that somebody at least read it, right, and that it was counted for, and that we heard it again, even though it's just in the summary, and so I think that would be something I would like to see.

When these people take the time to come and comment or submit -- When they come to comment, we get it, but, when they submit public comment in writing, you know, some type of a recognition that, yes, we received this, and here it is, and we summarized the comments at least, and presented them to the council, and just a thought that I think would be important.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you. Just to let everybody know, our dolphin MSE folks are online, and so I would like to go ahead and wrap this up, but I saw Andy, and then Dewey, and then we'll go to our dolphin folks.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and not necessarily specific to the agenda here, but I appreciated what Jimmy just said about public comment. One of the things that's a substantial difference between the Gulf and South Atlantic is that, during public comment in the Gulf, the council members will periodically ask questions of the people that are giving public comment.

It's not combative, and it's just for clarification, or it's to provide additional information that they may not have touched upon, and I know we don't do that as a practice here, but it's something that I would encourage the council to consider doing going forward, because I think it can be very valuable, in terms of gaining additional insights and input. There's certainly been plenty of times, where people said some really interesting things, that I end up having to kind of grab them in the back of the room and follow-up with them, but it would be good for everyone to hear that, and not just me going and asking that question, and so just a suggestion.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. I'm going to let Jessica respond, and then I'll go to Dewey.

MS. MCCAWLEY: If we're going to do what Andy is suggesting, then I think that we need to allot an additional amount of time, at least another hour or so, for public comment. I mean, the Gulf Council takes comments sometimes for four or five hours. You know, it's a really long time, and so I think that the one-hour time slot that we have isn't enough time allotted during the meeting to do that.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thanks. Thanks for the input for both sides. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I found myself, yesterday, wanting to ask a particular question, and not to go on forever, but I know that -- It's just fishermen, if you travel this far, and come here and took the time, they want to know they're heard.

They get three minutes, three-and-a-half minutes, and their emotions, a lot of times, they'll get the best of them, because they're not used to speaking, and they got so much to say, but I just think, you know, the fishermen want to be -- That they're heard, and something is happening, and something is going to be happening, or it's shown that we've heard them, and this is the process, whether we like it or not, how slow or how fast, and here it is, but I also think we should be able to, as council members, ask questions, a specific question, to somebody of, well, how about this, and then let them give us a short thing.

We should be able to do that, because, right now, they put out stuff, and I'm sitting there, and like I don't get an email from each one of them to go ask them a question, or send them something, and so I just think that would be a good thing, if we could ask some questions. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Dewey, and so welcome to your first outreach question list for AP topic, and so you are now broken in. Thanks, everybody, for all your comments, and I appreciate the comments. I've got John real quick.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think that was a great conversation, and I'll just say like it's your meeting, and it's your time. If you guys want to change how you approach public comment, it's your meeting, and it's your time. You know, I think this is something we should continue this conversation, and really think about it, but I will just say, you know, Myra and I just met with Jessica and Trish, as we always do at every meeting, to talk about the agenda for June, and it is always a scramble for every minute.

Many times we sit around this table and talked about how precious every minute is that we're here, and so keep that in mind. I fully support, you know, working better with our fishermen. I agree, and how do we find a way to make people who come in and comment feel like they're heard, and, you know, beyond just, you know, them waiting to see if we do exactly what they asked for, because we know, a good bit of the time, we can't, legally quite often, do everything people ask for, but I think that is an issue, and it's not just the comments here, but, you know, Jimmy mentioned this to me, that, you know, a lot of people submit written comments and that sort of thing, you know, and we get comments, and we do hearings, and we do scopings, and we do a lot of stuff.

You know, people send letters. You've got a whole bunch of stuff in your briefing book right now that are comments, and so I definitely think it's a big challenge, but it's super important, and I look forward to just continuing the conversation with you guys about how you want to handle things at your meeting.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thanks. We're going to go ahead and move over to dolphin, and so I've got John Hadley here to introduce everybody that's on.

MR. HADLEY: Yes, and so, Cassidy, I'm going to unmute you, and so you're free to mute and unmute yourself on the webinar, and, Tom, I'm going to do the same, and so you should both be able to mute and unmute yourselves. Additionally, Mike Pierdinock, I'm going to unmute you as well, and I don't know if you wanted to give a brief introduction to Mike.

Just for everyone in the room, Mike is a New England Fishery Management Council member. He is also the New England liaison to the Dolphin Wahoo Committee, and so he's attending via the webinar today, and so, if he wants to join the discussion, he's certainly welcome to do so. The chair will call on him, and so, Mike, please feel free to raise your hand, and we'll put you in the queue for the discussion, and so, with that, I'm going to queue up the presentation slides, and I'm going to hand it over to Cassidy and Tom.

DR. PETERSON: Thank you, John. Can you hear me?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes.

DR. PETERSON: Great. So, first off, thank you all for giving us some time today. We want to be fairly brief, and so we won't keep you too long, but we do want to talk about how we should refine our design for the management procedure.

MS. MURPHEY: Cassidy, we do hear you, but you're kind of wonky.

DR. PETERSON: Is it any better now?

MS. MURPHEY: Not really.

DR. PETERSON: Okay. I can try a new headset.

MR. HADLEY: We're having a hard time understanding you on this end. We can hear you, but it sounds like there might be an echo or something like that going on with the audio. Cassidy, are you using your laptop or headphones? We're trying to figure out which end of the sound problem is on.

DR. CARRUTHERS: Can I try a sound test on my end, because I'm all the way up here in Canada on a laptop with headphones.

MR. HADLEY: Yes, Tom, and we can hear you clearly.

DR. CARRUTHERS: Okay. Great.

MR. HADLEY: All right, Cassidy, and I unmuted you.

DR. PETERSON: So I'm here. Can you hear me?

MR. HADLEY: Yes, and that sounds much more clear.

MS. MURPHEY: That's much better. Thank you.

DR. PETERSON: Oh, excellent. Great, and so thank you so much for giving us some time today. We want to talk about the design of the management procedure for dolphin, and so we can go to the next slide, please.

Just to give you an overview of our key questions that we're looking to get out of today, we're looking for how we're designing the management procedures, and so we have a few different management levers that are built into the package right now. They include changing quotas, annual catch limits, changing trip and bag limits, and adjusting size limits, and so we also have the capacity to have these management levers be implemented in a static way, so they are constant over time, but we also have the ability to make them dynamic, so that they adjust over time. A clear example is if, you know, the spawning stock biomass for dolphin goes up, then our annual catch limit in the next year would also go up.

We've also built in some regions within the model, and we have a fleets as area approach, and so we do have the ability to make our management recommendations regionally specific, and so do we want our regulations for south Florida, for example, to be different or use a different control rule than in North Carolina? That's another question, and, lastly, we have the ability to vary our management by sector.

This means, you know, obviously, commercial will be treated separately, but do we want to treat private recreational the same as for-hire fleets, and so we're going to go to the next slide, and I'm going to hand it off to Tom. As a reminder, Tom is one of the leading MSE experts in the whole wide world, and we're very grateful to have him working with us as the analytical lead for the dolphinfish MSE, and so, with that, Tom, go ahead and take it away.

DR. CARRUTHERS: Thanks, Cassidy, and so, from this schematic that you can see here, this is -- You guys all know what MSE is. It's basically a recreation of an actual fishery system, but on your computer, so that we can test ideas for how to manage a stock, or a fishery, that we know are robust to uncertainties in that system.

The uncertainties in the system are those colored circles at the top, and we're going to collect data, analyze it, set some kind of control rule, implement it, and that's going to feed back into the fishery system, and, instead of doing this in the real world, where it would take as many, many years to test ideas and all the rest of it, we can do this very quickly on our computer, to make sure that we're not doing, A, something very silly, or, B, try to aim for something that's really appropriate and has a high likelihood of meeting our management objectives.

There's sort of three parts to a management procedure for mahi. There's the data that goes in, and let's say an index of abundance. There's the kind of levers you could pull, and that could include things like size limits and trip limits and ACLs and things like that, and then you've got like a part of that, which is like the control rule, which is going to link those up. We can talk about that more in a minute. We're also going to talk about what types of these management procedures should we be testing, and then, lastly, we're going to touch on some operational considerations.

Okay, and so we have a fundamental decision about whether or not to investigate static management, and so that's keeping something the same, for example a fifty-four-fish trip limit, for example, or a static ACL, that doesn't change, or moving to a dynamic management approach, and that could be based on some fairly simple information, and so the idea being that any management advice you get would be responding to a signal about how well the stock is doing.

This is a fundamental split, and the whole motivation of this adaptive approach is that you can sort of make hay while the sun is shining. You can do well when the stock is robust, and large, and maybe less, take things back a notch, when it's smaller, and so you get to meet your conservation objectives when things are not so great, but then you can really catch a lot of fish, and do well, when the stock is large, and, of course, we're dealing with a relatively short-lived creature that has unusual dynamics. That way, it's highly productive, and it is expected to go through quite large changes, potentially, in abundance, which would favor dynamic management over static management.

If we can move forward a slide, and so this idea of dynamic management procedures is basically the idea you take something like an index of abundance that's going up, or at least roughly tracking

stock behavior, and then you have some lever that you pull, like an ACL or a minimum size, or even you can have a maximum size or something like that, and then you've got a control that links it up. It says, for example, the index has gone up 20 percent, and, therefore, the ACL is going to go up 20 percent, or the index has gone down, and, therefore, we don't think that things are doing so well, and so our bag limit, the total amount we can take on those trips, is also going to go down.

You could set up a situation where you have that kind of responsiveness built in, but, of course, there's lots of different management levers you could pull. There's different types of data you could consider, and an infinite number of ways of connecting those up. What we're trying to do here is come up with some ideas that are based on what's done elsewhere and show you some really good options for something like mahi.

Here's an example of an index. This is one that was published previously, and here you can see it moving up and down. The data, which is what we would be responding to, are the black -- Is the black line and points, and you can see here, between these seasonal data, they can move around a lot.

Like sometimes they can be, you know, a third as high as the season before, and you can actually see, between years, they also move up and down a fair bit, and so do you want to navigate -- This is the history of the stock, but do you want to navigate this with a static rule, or do you want to navigate it with something that's responding to these fluctuations, and so that's what this idea of using a dynamic MP would be like. We would identify an indicator, or indicators, of stock level, and then we would start pulling our management levers according to some control rule. Here we're using -- We're looking at that derived index from a longline, but it could be something else.

Okay, and so, in terms of management levers, you've got your ACL, and you could, in theory, control access. You can do these things by fleet and by area if you want. You could have a vessel limit, or you could set up a minimum size limit, and, again, those can be set up by fleet or globally for a particular sector, and so you've got -- Because you can also do all these things simultaneously, or any combination, you have all kinds of different ideas that you could pursue.

Of course, this control here, this is the one I alluded to before, where increases in the index have proportional increases in the lever, but you can have something more complicated here, and so, for example, you could have -- You could say, well, it's going to change, like you see here, but we're going to have a minimum ACL, you know, where we can't really go below that. Otherwise, our particular industry is not viable, or we're going to have a maximum ACL, where we say we can't reasonably catch or process more than this, and so you could impose limits on this control rule as well, and, again, you could do it for any of these levers that we've described above.

The question is what management procedure? If you look at the status quo, with its current ACLs for the commercial and recreational fleets, and you look at its vessel limit that has been implemented, and the bag limit that has been implemented in the recreational sector, and you've also got that size limit in particular areas. If you look at those, all of those things are the status quo, and so the way we've set this whole thing up is that it starts off with a status quo like this, and you can then investigate alternatives.

You could like create a MP that, you know, has those initial ACLs for those things, but they have them fluctuating with respect to an index, or you could have one where the vessel limit changes. The observant amongst you will realize that we've built the functionality in here to address the Amendment 3 questions that have been raised, and so we've got that functionality, and we'll be doing those analyses also.

If you really look at the combination of data that you could use, and the levers you could pull, and how you could link those up, there's a huge amount of options, and so, really, a big part of what Cassidy and I have been talking to people about is trying to get some guidance or, you know, understanding of where people sit on what a suitable management procedure could look like with respect to these things. I think that was -- Is that the last slide you wanted me to present on, Cassidy?

DR. PETERSON: Yes. Yes, please. Thank you, Tom.

DR. CARRUTHERS: Did I miss something, Cassidy?

DR. PETERSON: I'm so sorry. My computer shut down and restarted while you were talking, and so I trust you. I'm sure you did everything.

DR. CARRUTHERS: No problem . I'll leave it to you.

DR. PETERSON: Thank you. Sorry for that, and so, moving into some operational considerations as we look forward, if you remember from the last time we came and presented to you all, we got approval on the conceptual management objectives that we're going to focus on for building a dolphinfish MSE, and those are sort of vague management objectives for dolphin.

Those included maintaining suitable stock status, abiding by Magnuson-Stevens, maximizing yield by fleet and area, where possible, maintaining stability of the fishery, maximizing catch rates, minimizing the probability of fishery closures or other accountability measures, and sort of maintaining high opportunity, and maximizing the size of fish caught by fleet and area, and these are our objectives.

In order to implement them in our MSE, we need to operationalize them, and so we basically need to put some hard numbers on them that make them measurable within our MSE calculator, and so just an example of what that might look like here is what operationalizing maximizing catch rate could look like for the charter fishery in one region, make sure that the probability of catching X number of fish per charter trip is greater than Y percent over the short-term, and so the next ten years.

Another example for minimizing the probability of fishery closure could be ensuring that the probability that the commercial annual catch limit is capped, e.g., triggering a commercial closure, making sure that that is less than Z percent over the thirty-year projection period. Now, it's impossible for us to really put definite numbers on X, Y, and Z right now. We need some preliminary results to sort of outline the biological limits associated with managing a natural resource, and so, in our next presentation, we're going to make sure we have some preliminary results, and one of our goals will be to go ahead and fully operationalize these objectives by putting

numbers on these objectives, and so it's important to sort of start thinking about what that might look like now.

Here is sort of a rough example of what it could look like when we implement an empirical management procedure, and so, basically, obviously, the MSE itself is going to take some time, and the initial adoption of the management procedure is going to take some time, because it's going to have to go through the full council process to be adopted.

Ideally, the management procedure would be adopted in a framework action such that, once the MP is implemented or adopted, it can be updated. We can update our management recommendations in a sort of automatic way, and this could be through a closed framework amendment or using abbreviated framework actions and categorical exclusions to basically make sure that, once we agree on the management recipe, the management procedure, we just carry that out every year, because it's already been pre-agreed upon when it's implemented, and this is an example of sort of what that looks like.

You know, it will take a few years to fully implement and adopt the management procedure, but, once we have it, we can go ahead and apply the management procedure to update our management recommendations every single year, and, to sort of quell any concerns, we are not just implementing an automatic management recipe without appropriate guardrails.

Every time we update the management recommendations, the ACL for example from the management procedure, we check for exceptional circumstances, and exceptional circumstance provisions are there to make sure that the management procedure is still operating as we expect, making sure that the dolphin resource is not sort of veering off the tracks, and so, anytime the real world is straying away from what we've simulation tested in our MSE, that's grounds for triggering exceptional circumstances, and the management procedure can be overridden.

Once exceptional circumstances are overridden, you know, it's sort of a scientific exercise to decide what to do, or, when exceptional circumstances are triggered, then we sort of need to decide whether we can still use the management procedure or we need to trigger a management strategy evaluation review or status check to update the management procedure.

Assuming that exceptional circumstances don't occur, we can go ahead and regularly update the management for dolphin on a regular basis every year, or every other year, depending on the management cycle for the stock, and then after, in this example, six annual catch limit updates, we would sort of undertake an MSE review.

This is an opportunity to sort of review all of the scientific advancements and updated data that's been collected since the first management procedure implementation, since the last time the MSE was run, incorporate any of those new data, or any new scientific understanding, into an updated management strategy evaluation, and it gives us the opportunity to sort of retune, or re-parameterize, our management procedure to make sure that we are continually maximizing stakeholder-defined and legally-mandated management objectives for the stock, and so that process can happen anywhere from sort of six to nine years, depending on whether it's necessary, and then we would go ahead and start managing with a revised management procedure, again at an annual schedule.

Here is sort of a draft timeline of the future of the MSE, and where we're at right now is, obviously, the March council meeting, where we're trying to identify management procedure options. We are on the calendar to present at the spring SSC meeting, and, at that meeting, we're going to go ahead and try to get some -- Try to get scientific sign-off from the SSC on the MSE framework and methodology, and we're also going to present scoping for Regulatory Amendment 3.

We'll then bring the Regulatory Amendment 3 scoping results back to you at the June council meeting. We will operationalize our management objectives, and we will present some candidate management procedures and give you the opportunity to reflect on what you like, what you don't like, and how we should be revising those management procedures in the future.

We currently are scheduled to undergo our CIE review of the MSE framework in July. We'll come back to you in September to pick your preferred management procedure, and, potentially in December, if we can get on the calendar, to define our exceptional circumstance provisions and set a calendar for a review schedule.

We can go ahead and pause here for some discussion and feedback. We want to know -- We want to know whether each of these management levers should be static or dynamic, whether they should vary by region, and whether they should vary by sector, and so thanks, and I'll go ahead and pause for feedback.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Cassidy and Tom, and so I've got a question from Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and not a question so much as a comment, and so thank you so much for this presentation. Very cool. I'm very excited about this MSE, but I'm just going to be honest that I didn't get this document in enough time for it to be reviewed, and I didn't understand that we were supposed to come to the council meeting ready to be able to answer these questions, and so I would prefer that we maybe convene the Dolphin Wahoo Committee at the June meeting, and be able to answer the questions in the committee, and spend a little bit more time on this, because I am definitely not ready.

This is a complex issue. I want to get it right. This MSE is really important to the State of Florida, to the FWC, and I need to also run these concepts through our agency, because that's part of our preparation as we prepare for council meetings, and I did not have time to do that, as this came so late, and so I apologize.

MS. MURPHEY: No, and thank you, Jessica. Other comments or feedback? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and just to say that I agree with Jessica. I don't think we have the time or the, you know, sort of prep to have this conversation right now at this meeting. It can -- It can get pretty deep pretty quick.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other comments? Okay. I'll get Mike online, and then Amy.

MR. PIERDINOCK: Thank you. Mike Pierdinock. Can you hear me?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, sir.

MR. PIERDINOCK: Thank you. You know, your comments about lack of connectivity due to lack of internet, and I'm in Downeast Maine, and I hope I don't get disconnected, and so thank you for letting me comment. I agree with the previous two commenters, and I just -- I have a more of a specific question about the regions, and whether it was set -- Which regions have been developed, if it's north or south of North Carolina, which then would be all-inclusive of New England, and that's one question I do have.

The second question is with the management procedures. I mean, as you all know, the objectives are very important, and public participation is very important, and the objectives of the recreational anglers, the for-hire fleet, and the commercial fleet are completely different, and I just want to make sure the public is able to provide comment on that to then include those objectives, where, once that you get that, and you run your numbers, and I was curious, because I've seen this elsewhere. You develop Kobe plots with the results, and you're able to look at the Kobe plots and see where the strengths and weaknesses are for that specific management procedure, and so a few questions there, and hopefully you can answer it. Thank you.

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

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair. I don't disagree with us holding off until June, as well as having the Dolphin and Wahoo Committee meet. I'm curious of though some of the efforts that can happen between now and then, but, more specifically, I had a question about the static versus the dynamic.

You define -- You kept saying change over time, and can you define "over time", as it applies to the MSE, and then how that definition can change to sort of balance these two static versus dynamic? To me, it kind of looks like you may be able to do static, based on the timeline at one point, and then be like, oh crap, and that didn't work, and now we're going to more shift to a dynamic management approach, and I worry about changing regulations too quickly for our constituents to be able to keep up, and be legal, to make sure they don't overshoot the bag limit, or misjudge the size limit, or not exactly know what region they're in, or what have you, and so I'm trying to picture that long-term too, and so thank you.

DR. CARRUTHERS: I can address Mike and Amy's questions now, or at least some of them.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes. Please, Tom.

DR. CARRUTHERS: Okay, and so, firstly, Mike, on the regions, we've broken it down into three areas adjacent to the states on the east coast, and so we've got south Florida and the Caribbean is one region, and that has, as Cassidy has explained, fleets within it, that operate within it, and so like a U.S. recreational and for-hire fleet in that area.

Then we have one that's between mid-Florida, but it goes through Georgia and the Carolinas and stops there, and then we have another coastal region north of that, and so we have three down the coast, and then we have two offshore areas, where there's quite a bit of international fishing as well, and so it's a five-area model explicitly, but, within each of these areas, there's different fleets that we can pull levers on and manage within those regions.

Indeed, we will be showing results in terms of things like overfished status, and that's the X-axis of your Kobe plot, and then overfishing, like how hard you're fishing it, and that's the Y-axis of your Kobe plot, and so, yes, you will be seeing those types of types of outputs, and so, if you're familiar at looking at those, and interpreting them, that's exactly the kind of MSE results output you'll get. I know I missed a question in the middle there. I didn't write it down in time, and so I'll just go to Amy.

Over time is an interesting one. What do we mean by "over time", and so you could have something that responds quickly between years, and you could have something where you say we, in principle, we want it to vary, but, like you're saying, we want to have some inertia. We don't want these really quick changes, and so it could say, if the rule doesn't detect much of a difference, don't change anything at all, and so it could actually remain static for six years, just because nothing particularly interesting happened with your indicators of abundance, or you could have one that's very moved around, or everything in between, because you can actually make these rules so that they have maximum and minimum limits of change, and so on, and different levels of responsiveness, and so, actually, we can go all the way from something that's ultra responsive down to something that's completely static.

It's a whole spectrum, and so -- We can even keep things the same for two-year blocks, and like it stays the same for two years, and then there's a change. Essentially, you choose, but we'll be investigating some options that we can put in front of you, and that got me to the end of what I remember that Mike and Amy asked. Cassidy, what did I miss?

DR. PETERSON: There was a question about management objectives varying by sector, and, yes, that is absolutely the case, and we are working with small stakeholder groups, and we've done some stakeholder outreach, and we are making sure that we are trying to accommodate commercial objectives, versus private recreational objectives, versus for-hire objectives, and we can calculate different metrics, performance metrics, by each fleet, to make sure that we are maximizing those objectives by sector. Thanks.

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

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Cassidy and Tom, for the presentation. I guess the first question I have is, given the comments made about waiting to discuss this in more detail in June, what does that do in terms of impacting your work and the progress you're trying to make between now and June?

DR. CARRUTHERS: I'll let Cassidy comment on things to do with interactions with councils and so on. I mean, as the analyst, I'm just going flat out towards a CIE review, which is one of those processes where you can almost never provide enough information, and so, you know, there's an awful lot of just documentation to be done before then, and so I'm going flat out, but I'm taking guidance from Cassidy about when what material should be produced for what process, and she's the person I think who is best positioned to talk about that.

DR. PETERSON: Yes, and thanks, Tom and Andy, and so, essentially, I mean, hopefully it's clear from Tom's presentation that the magnitude, or the number of configurations, of management procedures that we can put together is really, really numerous, and so we can make some executive decisions about what we think would be best in terms of, you know, providing an example of what

a regionally-varying management procedure might look like, versus one that is consistent throughout the coast, and demonstrate that for you, but it would be good to sort of give us some guardrails, if possible, leading into June.

We can absolutely come back to June with some demonstration of results across everything, but, if there was anything that was really important to you to make sure we build into our management procedure, knowing that now would be helpful. Otherwise, we will go ahead and continue to work with our small stakeholder group to make some of these decisions, and just present whatever we have, but, hopefully, at the June meeting, we're going to be able to present some results of what these management procedures look like, so that we can get an idea of how we need to refine them before we select the best management procedure for implementation. Hopefully that makes sense.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and that's very helpful, and so I'm going to -- I'm just going to throw out a few things, because I feel like it's important to have a little bit of direction and see if there's at least some initial like thumbs-up around the council table, with recognition that we need to get into greater detail in June, and have more substantive discussion, but I heard Amy's comment about kind of the potential for rapid pace of change and the annual changes.

I mean, I think that's something that we'd be a little bit cautious of, but, in terms of static versus dynamic, I mean, we often sit around this table and comment about how we're way behind what's actually happening on the water, and so I would hope that we would want to look at some dynamic management, specifically to ACLs. I have reservations about changing size limits, and trip or bag limits might be something that would be at least worth looking at, but I think the ACL dynamic management would probably be my top priority.

Regional variation, kind of a similar comment. I mean, we often are debating amongst the states, right, in terms of management of this resource, and the differences in how North Carolina operates relative to Florida or South Carolina relative to, you know, another state, and so I think that regional variation is actually an important component of this, and we've talked about it from the standpoint of bag limits and vessel limits.

Then, for sector variation, we're managing the sector as a whole, recreational and for-hire together. I guess my initial thought would be that we not model it separately, but I just wanted to kind of throw those ideas on the table. I want to try to not just have the ball in their court, where they're having to kind of guess at what they think they want, or that we want from them, and see if there's any reaction in terms of some of the things I just said. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. I think we have Mike.

DR. CARRUTHERS: That's very helpful.

MS. MURPHEY: We have Mike online. Mike, you want to go?

MR. PIERDINOCK: Yes, and thank you. You know, just to add to it, I just struggle with this North Carolina and north region, because, in New England, it's just -- It's not like it is in the Mid or all the way down to North Carolina. You either have a vessel that goes out to the canyons, which, as a result, that limits the amount of effort out there, whether it's private or for-hire, and, in many years, we don't even see the mahi. They stay down around Montauk, that area out by the

dump, and they don't come all the way up to or farther north of New England, and so they stay in the Mid-Atlantic, and so I just look at that.

That's where I struggle, because just where you find them, and the variability, and the short period of time in which one can target them, and less effort, and different goals and objectives between the rec and for-hire. To just clump that in with the Mid-Atlantic, as well as northern North Carolina, and that's Mid-Atlantic, but the Mid-Atlantic region -- It's just we're not comparing apples to apples, and so I'm concerned about that, if the outcome is such that it could be to the detriment of New England, and so I just want to point that out, and, as you mentioned, you wanted to get the input now, and I hope -- Hopefully there's a meeting, committee meeting, in the future to discuss this further. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: So, Mike, am I understanding that maybe you would like to see that region between North Carolina and New England broke up, but it would be like, and I don't know, but, just to throw out something, the council boundaries for the Mid-Atlantic and New England, and is that something you're looking for?

MR. PIERDINOCK: Well, it's always tough to get a line that everybody could agree to, but, you know, through my experience, it's typically that Montauk, and east of that is a place called The Dump, and I've got to go fifty miles from my dock to get down there. Some years, they come all the way up to Elizabeth Islands in the Vineyard and Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard, but it's all water-temperature-dependent, but then I don't go out to the canyons, and that's another group that can go out, but, once again, the effort, and the amount of vessels that are out there, is significantly less than what you're going to get in the Mid, and it's over a shorter duration of time. You're normally talking let's say July, maybe through October, that they're around for a short period of time, and so hopefully that helps.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thanks, Mike. I have Tom, and then Clay.

DR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, and so, just to respond to Mike, there's no doubt that people operating in specific ways in small regions often experience things that are not well characterized by these big models, and these big areas, but that is not to say that we can't actually do a job of modeling your expected outcomes.

Let's assume that there's a certain level of variability, like you described, just due to, for example, ocean temperature or something. If, however, we can show that your experience, your catch rates, that your particular sector, vessels, region, experience, is, for example, still correlated with abundance, we can provide performance outcomes, expected catch rates, expected for your particular fishing that includes the natural variability that we see historically, and so what it depends upon is to have individual, for example, catch rate, if that's what you wanted to see for your particular sector, vessels, and so on.

Then what we could do is we can see whether or not we can provide any kind of prediction, including the variability that we've observed historically, and so there's still a way that we can produce specific results, or outcomes that are specific, to local fishing operations, potentially. We just have to have the data to do it.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Thank you, Tom. I had Clay. Clay.

DR. PORCH: I thought you were calling on Tom Roller before me, when I heard Tom, and so a couple of questions. One, you know, one of the things I'm hearing, you know, that Tom was just intervening on was, you know, there's a potential to adding that, you know, extra area, and so I would have a question. If we actually did that explicitly, how much would it delay the process, because it seems pretty far along, and, you know, we're mostly concerned here with managing within the South Atlantic jurisdiction.

Then my second question has to do with the list of three questions here. It was suggested that, in June, you could come to the table with some examples of static versus dynamic regional variation or something, which could act sort of like straw proposals, which I think would help the council to think through what they would actually like to see. It's kind of hard to imagine it on the fly, and I can see why you have a little bit of concern there, but, if you use your judgment, based on the stakeholder workshops, to come up with a couple of straw proposals that you're analyzing, and the results, I think that will be really helpful to help guide the council's thinking on what scenarios they would want to see.

MS. MURPHEY: I want to say that all the stakeholder groups went all the way up to New England, because we are -- We are managing the whole, even though it's Southeast, and so, just from discussion, the whole Atlantic, Clay, and so that's why we had -- Why there was workshops up there.

DR. PORCH: So then that comes down to the next point, and do we really need to be -- You know, following Tom's comments, do we need to add that fourth area to really do it properly, and, if we did, what would that cost the process?

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Tom.

DR. CARRUTHERS: Clay, good to hear your voice. I'm getting PTSD from bluefin, especially as you're asking for extra things. No, but, in all seriousness, it can be done. I don't know, and the reason why it's more complicated than you might think is because the premise for the spatial distributions is a reliably estimated spatial index from VAST, and so one of the reasons why we revised the spatial definitions was because we discovered that, in the original nine and then seven-area model, that actually there were so few observations that, when we decided what the spatial -- We had to calculate what the spatial distribution was using VAST, and we were doing it in such a way that it was not reliable.

It's not as though it's not possible. It's that I really don't think we can do -- That we have the time to do that due diligence, where we make sure that we really are comfortable with the spatial model. It could be the kind of thing that we do -- We sort of put a pin in it and say this is what a revision should look like, and there's another thing that we can do, which I alluded to, was that we provide data streams for subcomponents of that northern area, so that, although they won't be explicitly modeled in the operating models, we can still provide our expectation of the outcomes, given what they've experienced historically.

Do you see what I mean, and so it would be a kind of get the performance, expected performance, outcome without doing the explicit spatial modeling, because I have a suspicion that we don't have the data to support it, but I don't know until we did the investigation, and I think we're out of time.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Tom. I had Kerry, and then Jessica.

MS. MARHEFKA: This is a frustrating conversation. I find myself, once again, not understanding the nexus of the council process and this MSE. I'm incredibly uncomfortable with both options, which is throwing out guardrails now in a de facto Dolphin Wahoo Committee meeting, quite frankly, is what this is turning into, with not a lot of preparation, and then the other flip side being trusting it to happen outside of the council process.

I get that we're going to get the blame for slowing things down. I was prepared for that when we had this conversation, but we will also be the people who get the blowback, and so, if anything gets out there about management procedures that are put in there that are outside of what this council would consider, and it becomes sort of -- Just because I get scientifically that makes it more robust, but that doesn't mean that that's something that this council would consider. We're the ones who are going to have to face the consequences of that, and so I this conversation makes me really, really uncomfortable.

This is -- You know, if this body needs to come up with guardrails, then this body needs the appropriate time to have a discussion about what those guardrails are, and this body, for those who have historical knowledge, does not agree on what those guardrails should be, or did not the last time we spoke about it, and so this is just a really frustrating conversation that I don't think we were prepared to have, and I'll leave it at that.

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

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I completely agree with Kerry. That's why I brought this up from the beginning. I'm not ready to throw out guardrails on this. In fact, I heard some things that Andy said that I would keep in here, but I'm not fully ready to react to that, and we've come so far on this, and we've put so much time and effort into it, and I don't want to make a flippant decision right now, you know, where I haven't really done my research.

I haven't really talked to stakeholders, haven't really looked at this, and I haven't gone to the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute. I mean, I just have -- I'm very uncomfortable with this discussion, which I agree with Kerry is really -- We're having a de facto committee meeting right now without all the committee members, but anyway, just --

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jessica, and I have Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I'm going to speak from a little different perspective, right, and I'm frustrated as well, because here we're having a meeting, and we're talking about the MSE, and we shouldn't even be talking about it if we're going to just defer to the next meeting, right, and so why was it on the agenda, right, or, if we're going to talk about these things, how do we better prepare the council to have these in-depth conversations, so there's not so much confusion over the MSE, because that's what I'm seeing a lot of, is people are baffled about what this is trying to accomplish, how it's going to work, and so I was just trying to forward the conversation along based on my knowledge and understanding, which I recognize is not the same as everyone else's, but it's not a good use of both our time, as well as the analyst's time, if we continue to deflect and kick these things down the road for another three months, right?

I get that, yes, we want to get this right, and we've got to get it perfect, but I feel like they could at least run with some of the guidance that we just talked about. It's not like we're locking this in. It's not like we're making a management decision. They're building a tool for us to evaluate options, and the key to that is that we have a wide enough range of options to consider. It doesn't mean that we're going to agree to them, but it's going to be a tool that we can look at and ultimately decide on what path to take.

To me, it's better to build a tool with more bells and whistles than less, but I don't want them to waste their time and build things into this tool that we don't see as needed, and so that was what I was trying to accomplish, and I'm a little more prepared to, obviously, have this conversation maybe than others, but I feel like we could give them some direction to go on between now and the next meeting, and we'll be better prepared to have the conversation.

Then I'll just end by saying, I think, you know, John Carmichael, and Chip, you know, we need to have a conversation about how we can better present this, so that there's better buy-in for the next meeting, and so I'm happy to work with you and Clay and others to try to accomplish that.

MS. MURPHEY: I've got Tom online, Tom Carruthers. Hang on, Tom. I'm going to let John jump in.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I think that's right. There's a real challenge there, and I'll fall back on what a number of council members have pointed out. There's a lot in here, and they didn't get it until late, and so I think it starts with getting the information as staff, as we request, before the briefing boat deadline, so we can see what's even being presented.

Then we can have a chance to influence how it comes to the council, and potentially focus it in on the things that we think the council is interested in, you know, and I think being able to make progress means -- How do we do better is getting the information of these guys. I think that's the biggest frustration, and, you know, we aren't in committee.

We have a committee member from New England, who is remote and not here. If we had a committee meeting, they would have been here, and so, you know, I think that's the kind of stuff that has to happen six weeks ago, and not here now, and so I fully support you guys. You know, we're planning a committee meeting in June. I think, you know, you've seen this. You have a chance to talk to your staff people, who maybe know about this stuff, and come back and really provide some input.

MS. MURPHEY: I think I'm going to add to John's comments. When this was put on the agenda, actually, we weren't even sure it was going to make the -- You know, it was going to be on. It was tentative, and then my understanding is it was an update, and so, I mean, you know, in defense of everybody around this table, I think everyone was caught by surprise by the key questions, but, to answer your question, Andy, it was on the agenda as an update, and it actually says "update", and so I thought -- In my mind, I thought we were just going to hear how it was going, and so just that's my two-cents' worth. as chair. I think we had Tom.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry wanted to speak.

MS. MURPHEY: Tom, can you wait one more time? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Sorry, and it's just because it's to that point, and, you know, I think, Andy, I understand where you're coming from, but I think you need to understand two things are happening here. One, MSEs are complicated, and this body has, for a while, been trying to wrap our minds around the concept of MSEs, because they are new to us, even though for two years we've been hearing about them. We don't hear about them every day like you all do.

The second thing is the intersection of the MSE, NMFS doing the MSE, versus how we're doing it in snapper grouper, where it's under the control of the council, also adds confusion. We're doing MSEs in two different paths, and so I think you need to give us a little grace as we learn how to do this process, please.

MS. MURPHEY: All right, Tom. Your turn.

DR. CARRUTHERS: Okay, and so these points are well taken, and it's not unusual to hear people, obviously, concerned about either limiting the direction that something can go in or presenting too many things, the likes of which may not be palatable, and so this is my question from an analyst perspective.

Let's assume that we don't do too much limitation here, because people haven't had the time to think clearly about where they would sort of prune this problem, and like we don't want this, and we don't want that, and let's just say it's quite a wide spectrum. Is there going to be a problem in presenting results which are for options, and like this is to go to Andy's point, and these are just options, and they can be seen as just scientific explorations, but is there going to be sensitivities to presenting, for example, a regional ACL type thing just as a point of interest, you know, and people can, at that June meeting, say that's just not something we're going to do?

I'm just a little concerned that -- This just ties into something that Kerry and Jessica were alluding to, which was a sensitivity in presenting actual options, which is just one of many, many options, but there could be sensitivities about just literally presenting that might be an issue, and so, yes, I'm a little concerned, because I -- You know, I don't know quite what to do with that situation from the analytical perspective.

MS. MURPHEY: So I'm going to just -- Kerry is our Dolphin Wahoo Committee chair, and so I'm going to look to her. She has weighed-in already, and we are planning on having a Dolphin meeting, a Dolphin Wahoo Committee, in June. It will be under her committee, and so I'm going to let her speak to what she may be looking for in June.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, I'll answer Tom's question, because I think it plays into that. Tom, the answer to your question, unfortunately, is yes, it is that sensitive, because what will happen is those -- Unless I'm mistaken, what you are -- What would come back to us in June would be available for a briefing book. Our briefing books are, obviously, and as they should be open to the public.

People look at what's in there in advance of the meetings, to see what the council is going to be talking about, and those individuals are going to be even more confused than this body is, and they're -- They might see something that one of those -- I'm going to throw out something I would be sensitive about, which is, you know, limiting to some aspect of commercial gear.

I understand that, but, without guardrails that we present to them, that could be in there, because that could have come up through the working group, and that will show up in a briefing book, and there are people who are going to be incredibly sensitive to that information, and we are the people who know what's sensitive and what's not, and, once it gets in that briefing book, we are the owners of it, whether we put it in there or not, and so, yes, for me, it feels very sensitive.

What I would like to do is have this exact conversation that's on this slide at the June council meeting, in committee, with our liaisons that are on the committee from the other councils, and, if the responsibility is then that we've slowed it down a quarter, then we've slowed it down a quarter, but I think you can do a lot more damage to the process by putting sensitive information out that this body was never even going to consider.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Well, like I said, I appreciate your thoughts on it as the chair, and it seems like people around the room, or at least those that have spoken, are not comfortable with any decisions today, and I think -- I don't know if anybody else, and I think Jimmy had his hand, just to hear a little bit more, and I know Mike has his hand, but I am sensing, around the room, hearing around the room, that we just cannot -- We're not in a position to answer these questions, and it's better set for the June meeting, and, if it takes too much time -- We'll do it at the June meeting, and so then I'll turn it to Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll make it quick, and so I may be a minority opinion here, but they're asking these key questions, and, for me, and this has to do with management principles, ideas that we would use through the entire region that's going to get thrown into the MSE, and so the first question, the status versus dynamic management, for me, it's dynamic management. I mean, we need to be able to toggle some of these things, you know, quickly, and not have static, and so that gives you some idea of where we're headed, possibly, if that helps them.

Regional variation, as you heard from Mike, these animals end up all the way off of Martha's Vineyard in certain years when the Gulf Stream is really strong, and so there are certain times where we may need to adjust bag limits and size limits accordingly, and regionally. It can be different there, and let people take advantage. For example, let people take advantage of this pulse of animals, you know, at that time.

The sector variation, like Andy said, we already manage private and for-hire together, and so that's -- I can't really do anything different there, but that's -- I agree that we need to talk about it a whole lot more, and learn more, because there's so many other variables involved, but I think giving them the idea that this is the way that we would think about management now gives them something to go with, and work with, and, obviously, it isn't set in stone, because there's a lot more information to come.

MS. MURPHEY: I think we had Mike.

MR. PIERDINOCK: Thank you. One last thing, just some food for thought, something for the toolbox. You know, the curveball I've thrown up here, unfortunately, with New England, just to use it as an example, there's New England Fishery Management Council species, such as pollock and cod and a few select others, that the catch is so negligible, from a recreational and for-hire standpoint, that there's no season or bag limits, and it's basically, you know, unlimited.

Now, I'm not saying we would change status quo for New England, but, if the catch is so negligible, or *de minimis*, and those words may have a certain definition that may be different, but, just from the conceptual standpoint, they're so negligible that doesn't make any difference, and that you keep it status quo, and that's maybe an easier way to set something in New England, versus the other states, and so I just wanted to throw that out there as another tool for the toolbox to consider. Thank you.

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

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I'm going to throw it out there, just because it's been mentioned twice now, where sector variants may not come into play, and I will tell the Dolphin and Wahoo Committee that the Snapper Grouper Committee just started a framework amendment for headboat trip limits that may be different within the snapper grouper fishery, and that same thought process should apply to all of our committees and fisheries, and so I don't necessarily like this idea of saying we wouldn't even consider it in the MSE. I think we need to be considering everything.

MS. MURPHEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Just to Amy's point, I think that's something too that's a different debate, because states all differ on how they want to do that. I know our current directorship is not in support of sector separation for the recreational fishery, and so, I mean, again, I'm not saying that it's not something that has potential consideration, but, at the state level, there's going to be a lot of open debate about that as well.

MS. MURPHEY: Clay.

DR. PORCH: I just want to give the team something to work with, and I think Jimmy said it very well. I think absolutely we would want dynamic management, so the ACL can change with an indicator of abundance, and so they talked about the VAST model and all that, and that's basically getting an indicator of abundance, and so wouldn't you want it to change from year to year if the abundance is changing, and so I think we can tell them, yes, go ahead and focus on that.

What I heard from Jimmy, which, you know, I would agree with, is look at some possible scenarios of regional variations in the ACLs, which could also be linked to that indicator. You know, if you're having changing abundance, you don't want it all to be taken in one area, and then, you know, we gave them some guidance on sector variation, and so that gives them something they can work towards to this June meeting, and actually have some examples for you to look at, and so, if we can agree on at least at that level, I think they can come back with something useful.

MS. MURPHEY: Does anybody have any comments to that? Carolyn, and Charlie.

DR. BELCHER: So, I mean, one way, and I'm going to look to Clay to correct me if I'm interpreting static and dynamic wrong, but I think about our projections, and how we look at holding different fishing levels and things like that. If that's something that's doable, the static versus dynamic, then maybe it's worth adding that to something to look at, but I still -- The same as the rest of the group. I mean, if there's things that require more conversation, then, I mean, I'm

in support either way, but I think, in that situation, if it really is fundamentally the difference between holding something constant and it time varying, it's not really going to hurt anything.

MS. MURPHEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I know we were kind of surprised. I'll use that as a lack of a better term, but, if we can give them just some basics, and nothing that we're going to lock ourself into, like static versus dynamic, and I think we pretty much could agree on dynamic, if we just -- You know, so at least we're moving forward, and we don't just totally stop for three months. If there's just anything we could do, then I would go along with at least looking at it.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thoughts on that? From what I'm hearing, there is a suggestion, and I think it sounds like it's supported by a few people, that you could look at the dynamic piece of this, and I guess that's going around dealing with the ACLs, and the trip and bag limits, and is that what I'm hearing around the table as something for them to do? I'm seeing some heads shaking. I'm going to go back to our Dolphin chair. Do you --

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, we're not in committee. We don't have the full committee here, and so I don't think right now I am the Dolphin chair, and so, no, I'm not comfortable. I'm not comfortable saying that. You can -- We can vote as a Full Council, and that's fine. I don't think -- I don't think I understand enough about, if you're choosing between static and dynamic management, do you then have to put guardrails on trip and bag limits and size limits, in order to get at that number, because, if that's the case, then I will -- Then I am not comfortable with that. Is that dynamic and static with regulations and status quo? Are they having to --

MS. MURPHEY: I don't know. I don't know, and they don't know. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I guess this is, again, back to the fundamentals of it, right? Are we trying just to see what happens? I don't think that there's any idea that what's coming out of it is going to be binding at this point for what our management is, and so it's, again, back to the idea -- To me, I think about our projections. If we want to freeze a catch level, or an F rate, and we look at what it does over time, and how it affects rebuild and that kind of thing, versus letting it vary over time, and how do we get there, and that kind of effect, and that's how I'm interpreting that. Is that the wrong way to interpret that?

I mean, Clay is giving me the thumbs-up that that's how to interpret it, and so it's just more let's see what it does, and like how does that work, and it may be so all over the place that everybody' is like, well, forget this. If we're changing it every six months, this isn't something that's going to be feasible for us to do, where, if it's something that's a little bit more laid back, and take some -- You know, a couple or two to three years to burn in, maybe it's something that's a little bit more understood, but that's the idea that I see it, is just see what it looks like, because, if it's a big old mess, then, obviously, dynamic is not the way to go, and so that's kind of what I'm thinking with that.

That, to me, is more safe. You're not locking in, and you're not saying let's do this ACL, this trip and bag limit right now, and it's just picking some examples, and what happens if we do these things, but I don't consider them binding, and that's just my take on that.

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

MR. HULL: Yes, and I agree with that, but you keep bringing up that we've got to set guardrails. Well, you won't even know how to set guardrails until you give them something to give us some examples to work with, and so, at the June meeting, then we can then we can further go into this, but we need a little more information, or, as you say, we need a lot more information, but give them some idea of the way we're headed, so they can give us some more information back.

MS. MURPHEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: So maybe a couple of suggestions, and so, one, before this presentation comes back in June with some examples of how they've run things, to have Kerry or others screen it and make sure that there's nothing sensitive in it that we think might get a very negative reaction from the industry.

With that said, I've talked to you probably a couple of times for years about this, and so my approach, and my philosophy, is I would rather have more information than less. I would rather have more alternatives on the table than less. I would rather avoid taking things off the table, because sometimes the results might surprise me, and I'll look at something that I thought wasn't going to work, or wasn't a solution, and then, ultimately, they've analyzed it and provided something to me that is a game changer for something we're doing around this table, right, and so that's, to me, where we should be going with a lot of these MSEs.

We look at all the alternatives, as many as we possibly can, and, if there's just something we can't live with, then, yes, we can take it off the table, but let's give ourselves some options. Let's have the healthy discussion and debate. Let's decide which are viable and which aren't, and then we can move forward from there, and so I think that's, you know, hopefully enough direction for the MSE group to where they can at least provide the starting point for some examples to us.

We can screen it for any sensitivity, and think about just the examples that are going to come before the council, and then I get back to my earlier comment. I mean, I think it would be good to have some conversations about how can we make the conversation about MSE, and kind of how this is being used more effective, so that everyone is kind of walking into the council meeting feeling comfortable about the process and the actual use of MSE.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So I can't believe we're still having this conversation, but anyway, but Andy already took one of the things that I would put on there off the table, and it was size limits, because I would like to see size limits analyzed for the states that don't have size limits, and so this was something that was important to the commission, but he already took that off the table, and so that's why I mean like I would rather have a more robust discussion about this.

MS. MURPHEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I will state on the record that I did not take anything off the table, that I was offering some initial ideas for discussion, and certainly, if you want to look at size limits, I'm open to size limits, based on my comments that I just made, and, from what I'm hearing, at least for

those that are speaking up and trying to provide input, people are wanting more rather than less, and it's almost like everything is on the table at this point.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. I'm going to see if I can get this wrapped up. I know there is a divide here, and I'm not really sure how to handle it, and so this is what I'm going to propose. Instead of the MSE team just sitting on their hands and waiting on to June, I heard recommendations on looking at dynamic management.

Several people did say something about examples, was kind of what piqued my interest, because I can't even picture what this is, and so, if you would at least bring some examples, maybe I can understand it, and then, if I can understand it, everyone can understand it, and so I would like to propose -- I think what, you know, Andy put on the table of looking at dynamic -- Well, the status versus dynamic management of ACLs, trip and bag limits, and we can add size limits, and is that too much for the MSE team for to give examples, or any thoughts on what you would like to provide as examples? Cassidy.

DR. PETERSON: Yes, and we can absolutely provide examples for all three. That's not a problem.

MS. MURPHEY: So is everybody okay with that, as I think they're not binding, and they're examples. At least, for somebody like me, I'll actually be able to visually see what is going to happen. I feel like this is somewhat of a compromise, and, when the full Dolphin Committee comes together, they'll at least -- At least have a visual of what this is. Now, if anybody does not like that idea, say so now, but I'm trying to get this moving and not have analysts sit on their hands. Mike.

MR. PIERDINOCK: A quick one. Does that also include providing the for-hire and private angler mode?

MS. MURPHEY: At this point, my take is there was not going to be -- That was not going to be split out, at this point, and that could probably be a better discussion at the Dolphin Committee. Is that okay?

MR. PIERDINOCK: Okay, in the interest of moving forward. If everything's beautiful, let's not worry about it, but I guess time will tell. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Thank you, Mike, and unless other people have -- My understanding was the sector who's not going to be separated at this point, and so anything else? Is everybody in agreement with this? Do we need a vote, or are we good? They are going to bring examples. I'm seeing heads shaking yes, and so one thing we do request, Cassidy and Tom, if that's possible, if you could get this stuff in time for the initial briefing book to go out, so that people can digest this. I think that's very important. I think the fact that things got here real late, I think that kind of through folks, and so if you could do the best you can to get this ready for the initial briefing book, and I can give you a date. Hang on.

MS. BROUWER: The briefing book deadline for the June meeting is May 22nd.

MS. MURPHEY: So at least May 22nd, but, if you can get things sooner, so that -- Hang on a minute. I've got Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I kind of recall Andy making a promise that we could review it for anything that would be extra sensitive, and so that would have to happen before the briefing book deadline.

MS. BROUWER: Right, and so the briefing book actually goes up on the website on the 22nd, and so things would be due at least a week before that.

MS. MURPHEY: Tom.

DR. CARRUTHERS: Yes, and that's no problem. I think we were planning on being sufficiently organized to get it well ahead of that, and so that doesn't sound like a problem at all.

MS. MURPHEY: Kerry, are you fine with that? Okay, because I'm not sure about the pre-review of the sensitive -- That kind of -- Okay, and so if you guys can meet that deadline, that would be much appreciated, which is May 15th is the deadline, to have it here before it goes up online.

DR. CARRUTHERS: That sounds very doable.

MS. MURPHEY: I mean, if you just -- If you can get -- If you don't have time to do all of the examples, at least if you can do some.

DR. CARRUTHERS: It shouldn't be a problem.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Thank you, guys, and we appreciate your time.

DR. CARRUTHERS: No, and thank you, everyone, for commenting, and your points are well taken.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. All right. It's 4:11, and we're kind of done for the day, as far as the agenda, and is there things we can jump ahead to or -- All right. We're going to do upcoming meetings. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I've got someone under Other Business that has to do with a Mackerel Advisory Panel meeting and where we're at, from when the council, before my time, decided to put it -- Put any of the things of the port meetings off until after, I guess, a Spanish mackerel meeting, and I was just wondering if there could be an advisory panel meeting of the Mackerel AP for any discussion that stuff could be done, or start to, before the Spanish Mackerel AP, or, I mean, the Spanish mackerel assessment, so that, once that happens, you're not sitting there flat-footed to do the amendment that you might be adding something to if it's going to take time.

MS. MURPHEY: Christina, is that you, or Myra or -- I'm not really sure what --

MS. CURTIS: The Mackerel AP is not scheduled to meet this year, because, the next time on the workplan that you guys look at, mackerel isn't intended to be taken up isn't until mid-2027, around the time we would have Spanish mackerel stock assessment results. When we met with the AP last year, and it would have been last -- I think it was the very end of March, or the beginning of

April when that AP met, and we presented them the results from the port meetings and went over some of the, you know, possible action items.

If you'll remember, that's a big document, with a lot of information in it, and they sort of had two separate discussions. They discussed the SEDAR 78 stock assessment. The AP passed a motion requesting that the council not move forward with any catch-level-related actions until a new stock assessment could be completed that had sort of the updated FES numbers included.

There are other actions within the port meetings document that are not necessarily tied to catch levels that could be discussed in more detail by the AP. They did discuss it a little bit. I will say, I am -- If we bring that group together to discuss management actions, I think it would be helpful for that information to come back to this body with an intent to move forward before 2027. I want to be respectful of AP members' time, and so, if they're going to be providing input on management actions, I think it would be helpful for them to understand where action on those management items might fall within the council's workplan.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Christina.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I mean, yes, and so there was discussion about mackerel at ASMFC, and Bob Beal was planning to be on tomorrow, and we were going to talk about it during the workplan, and so I think we should talk about that. He might be -- He was he had some travel, and some double-booking, and I don't see him on here now, and so I think we should talk about that tomorrow, and we can make sure that Bob is online.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John. I think that's a good idea, but thank you, Dewey. We'll talk about it at the workplan, and so we're going to go to meeting schedule.

MR. CARMICHAEL: There it is. Here we are in March. April, as normal, the SSC, Snapper Grouper AP, more APs rolling into May, and the CCC will be in May, and we'll give you a report-out of that when we meet there in June.

October is already looking pretty full, and so we always expect that to happen, and I expect there'll be other things filling in the rest of the summer, and we'll meet in Charleston, North Charleston, in September, and in Beaufort in December, and then there you see -- Mark your calendars for the 2027 spaces and dates and cities, and we're working on getting those locations finalized now. Any questions on anything coming up? Mark your calendars and be sure to be there for where you need to be.

MS. MURPHEY: Is everybody good with that? All right. We really don't --

MR. CARMICHAEL: So we were thinking we maybe don't want to jump into the full-on workplan discussion yet, for one thing because of the mackerel, but one thing we could talk about is the wreckfish ITQ review, if you wanted to talk about that. That's about the only thing that I feel like we should go into. You know, we're still working on finalizing committee reports, and getting the omnibus document prepared, and getting all the chairs to --

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and so this item pertains to the review that the council has to do for the wreckfish individual transferable quota program, and so this is a review that needs to take place

every seven years. The last one was completed in 2019, and so it's kind of been it's been on our radar for a while, but, as you know, we prepared an amendment, you all did, to implement some of the recommendations from the previous review, and that was Amendment 48, and that amendment was submitted, I believe, in December of 2024, and still is undergoing rulemaking, and so we haven't yet seen the outcome of the review, but we do need to start looking ahead to the next one.

What we've put together here for you is just sort of a proposed timeline of what we think we can accomplish. We do have the option, and other councils have utilized contractors to do this work. As you heard from Lara the other day, there's already a contractor in place who is working on a wreckfish project, and so there's a potential that that person, that contract group, could help us do the review.

The first step, as you can see on that table in front of you, would be to request data from NMFS, and then that would give us what we need to start the analyses. The idea would be to update the information that was put together since 2019. Hopefully if we can get the data by June, in June, at the meeting, we would bring to you kind of like an outline of -- You know, a fleshed-out outline of what the review will look like and how we intend to piece it together.

Over the summer, council staff, along with the contractors, would complete a draft that you can then review in September. We would bring in the wreckfish ITQ, or the Wreckfish Advisory Panel, and not the shareholders, but the whole AP. Now we have a Wreckfish AP, and bring them together in the fall, so that, by December, you could potentially approve the review, and finalize it, and that would meet the deadline for when this needs to be completed.

We wanted to put this in front of you as our proposal, and, if you like this, we would -- We've got a draft motion there on the screen for you to direct us to begin work on this, but, again, you know, this is not something that you need to do right now. If you prefer to wait until you have the full workplan discussion, and this is when this was going to come up, because, obviously, you need to see what else is going to be on your plate, and so any questions?

MS. MURPHEY: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sorry, and I was out of the room at the beginning of this, and so maybe this was discussed in the beginning, but I guess -- You know, we passed -- It took us years to get through the last management measures coming out of the last review, and I don't think that those have been fully implemented yet, and those were some significant changes, you know, moving away from the paper coupons to an electronic system, setting up the cost recovery analysis, because, since this was one of the first ITQ programs in the nation, it, you know, not compliant with some of the standards that are out there right now, and so I feel like the program was changed significantly with the last review, and I guess I just -- I don't want to waste anyone's time, and so I'm not quite sure what we're going to review right now.

I mean, it just -- Because we don't have those other pieces implemented, and so then we're really reviewing the old system all over again, because we ticked off a timeline, you know, like a timetable, and it seems like maybe we could at least get the previous items implemented, maybe for at least a year, and then come in with the review, and so I'm just -- I'm trying to understand

how this would work, thinking about how extensive the last review was, and so could you all speak to that a little bit?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I will, Jessica, and I think -- I think you're right in that. The issue is that the requirement for review every five to seven years doesn't consider the clock starting when whatever you did from a review is in place. What we were told is you can either start your clock based on when you started a review or based on when you ended a review, and, considering we ended the review in 2019, we would hit seven years from the end in August 2026.

The opinion that we were given basically says you've really got to get on this, because, even by the most liberal way of counting the interval between reviews, you may already be a bit behind, and so that's why we're sort of proposing this, where we would update the information from the last review, and you can have that, and you can say, hey, here's how the fishery is going, and then I would fully expect that a large part of the council's response to it may be, well, we can't really do much more with it at this point, because we haven't seen what's going to happen from the last things that we did, because they haven't been put in place, you know, and so say the review doesn't obligate you to take action. It just requires you to go through the motions.

MS. MURPHEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and I understand what Jessica says, and I agree. I also understand where we are from John's bureaucracy point of view that we have to do something. We don't have a choice, and so I don't think there's -- I can't imagine that we would want to change anything, because we're still waiting on the last changes to take effect, but, if we have to do something, then let's just make it as clean and simple as we can and jump through the hoop, I guess, for a lack of a better term.

MS. MURPHEY: I'll get Andy, and then I'll get -- Go ahead, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and maybe a question for staff, and so I used to run the limited access privilege programs, but I can't recall if there's any guidance the agency has provided on reviews, in terms of the level of detail for reviews, and is there --

MS. BROUWER: So there's a policy, and the language, from having read it not that long ago, but it is Thursday of the council meeting, is it was -- It's very broad. It basically says, you know, councils can use whatever information they have available. It doesn't have to necessarily be a quantitative sort of thing. If all you have is qualitative data, that's fine, and so I feel that there is some guidance out there, but it's not -- It's not very prescriptive.

MR. STRELCHECK: That's kind of to my point, right, and like I think you have some leeway with regard to how you conduct the review, how comprehensive of a review it is. I think, for some of the points that have been made, that, yes, this doesn't necessarily have to be this substantial in-depth review, and it's not intended, necessarily, to review the regulatory changes in what we, you know, passed in Amendment 48 as much as it's intended to review the performance of the program as a whole, right, and that review can, obviously, acknowledge that regulations are still being developed, but it would look more at the economics, the landings, you know, some of the data and information surrounding the program, and I think that could be probably pretty quickly assembled for accomplishing the review.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you. John, did you have something to say? Okay. Thank you, Andy. Anything else? Any more direction? Do you all want to wait on the going over -- So we'll just wait and look at the workplan tomorrow before we do this. Is that okay? Okay. It's 4:30, and I think we just -- There's nothing else we can hit, right, because we've got -- All right. You guys get thirty-five minutes. You get thirty-five minutes of your life back today, and so we'll reconvene at 8:30 tomorrow. Thanks.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on March 5, 2026.)

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MARCH 6, 2026

FRIDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Council Session II of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the Villas by the Sea Resort in Jekyll Island, Georgia on Friday, March 6, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Trish Murphey.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Good morning, everybody. We'll go ahead and reconvene Full Council II, and we'll be starting off with the workplan with John and John.

MR. HADLEY: Thank you, everybody. Good morning, and so I pulled up here the revised workplan from this week. If you click on the -- It's available through the webpage as well, and I'm going to run through -- My intent is to run through the workplan, show you what's changed this week, and what's been updated, and then we'll -- We also have the two other items that we sort of left off on yesterday to address, one the Spanish mackerel topic, and then also the wreckfish ITQ review.

The idea is to show you kind of a lay of the land here, but perhaps discuss those two issues, and see where they fit into the workplan right now, and so I'll just start from the top and work my way down. Any of the rows with a highlighted sort of magenta color, that's just there to show what has been updated for this week compared to what was in the previous version of this workplan.

I will highlight one of the one of the updates is an update for the SERO priorities, and this is both for the amendments underway as well as the rulemaking table at the bottom of the workplan, and so I'll move down the list here, starting with the amendments underway. As you can see for Snapper Grouper Amendments 44, 61, and 60, those have been updated to be SERO priorities, and so those are the ones that are sort of an all-hands-on-deck, if you will, and full IPT meetings are likely to happen over the next three months, over the next quarter, and so those are the ones that are really, you know, well underway and need some more eyes on the amendment and input.

Moving down, I'll highlight that there was the addition of the headboat vessel limit amendment, at the direction of the Snapper Grouper Committee, and then, also, the sunseting of SMZs have been moved up to amendments underway.

Going down the list here, the addition -- An initial amendment that was added to the planned workload was opening nearshore closed areas to ropeless black sea bass pots, and so that is a framework amendment. We budgeted three meetings for that from June, and work through with the public hearing approval in September, and final approval in December, and that's assuming it's sort of a narrow amendment, kind of a one-topic amendment, that staff could prepare fairly quickly.

Moving down into the other items, we added a little bit to the staff report, or the liaison agency staff reports, and there's probably a few additional reports that may come to you, and so I wanted to budget time for that. The Citizen Science Committee has been moved from June to September, and we added a meeting for the Snapper Grouper Commercial Subcommittee. There is no time allotted to that, because it is captured further up in the workplan, under Amendment 60, where that's scheduled to be reviewed for public -- Or potentially approved for public hearings, and so I didn't want to double-count there. That's just why there's a zero next to that, but I highlighted it, since it is planned to, expected to, occur.

We added a discussion of the risk-value matrix to June. There is also the addition of the Lines of Communication meeting summary, and just that will be a report back from the North Carolina Lines meetings that are scheduled for later this month.

Another thing to highlight, since you will likely discuss it here shortly, is we built in some time for the wreckfish ITQ review. There's a few updates in here, and we're expecting really more of an in-depth review in September, and then a final approval in December, and so most of those -- Most of those items are fairly short, and so only 0.25. They're sort of updates, or a final approval, and a little bit more budgeted for review of the -- Review of the review, if you will, in September.

There was the addition of the allocation review -- Approval of the allocation review for vermilion snapper. That report will come back to you in June, as mentioned earlier in the meeting, and that should be a fairly quick item to work through for the council, but we wanted to put that on there, and then there's some other items on there. You do have the dolphin MSE feedback scheduled for June, and then there's the report on unmanaged species, and that's scheduled for September, and then there are a few other items regarding the IRA projects, but those are scheduled for either later this year or next year.

Moving down, just to remind everyone these are the sort of the bullpen, if you will, for amendments. These are the amendments that are anticipated, or have been paused, as far as work on those amendments by the council, but we do want to keep those sort of on the workplan. They're just not in the active workplan, if you will, and, if you scroll further down, you can see the SERO rulemaking priorities -- The SERO priority amendments undergoing rulemaking.

With the approval in several amendments in December, those have now -- Have been or are underway for final review and being submitted to the agency for rulemaking, and so you can see there's a fairly lengthy list there of amendments that the agency, the Regional Office, are working on regarding rulemaking.

With that, kind of the take-home of this all is that, with the addition of the sunset -- Really the new amendments, the workplan is pretty jammed up for the rest of the year, and so you can see that, sort of on line 45 for June, September, and December, the workplan is looking pretty full. You

know, when you think about it what your meeting would look, like this meeting was a seven, and so a little bit of a lighter workload. If it's a nine -- I mean, ideally, it would be an eight.

If it's a nine, you're looking at an early Monday start date, and you kind of work all the way through the week. If it's less than that, then potentially a later start time on a Monday, and so just kind of a general idea there of what your week would look like, but we really would like to get that to a nine or under, and so the take-home there is potentially, you know, are there any items that you would like to drop, or potentially move to March of next year, to help alleviate that workplan, and so I don't know if we want to get into that discussion now or come back to it after we address the other two items.

MS. MURPHEY: I've got Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, John. This is super helpful, and I appreciate how you guys update it throughout the week, you know, so that we can see the most up-to-date one when we get here, and we see the results of how all the items that we really want add up to something that might be more than what the meeting week, or future meeting weeks, could handle.

I had a thought, thinking about meeting the commercial subcommittee, and I am wondering if we could possibly meet the subcommittee between now and the June meeting, and maybe we could tack this on to the beginning of the Snapper Grouper AP meeting week, and maybe meet in the afternoon on Monday, the morning of Tuesday, and then the Snapper Grouper AP I believe starts Tuesday afternoon of that week in April.

Then we would be -- We would have a document maybe that's more thoroughly laid out, so that then it could just come right to the committee when we get to the June meeting, and the full committee would be approving that document for public hearings. That's -- I don't know if that shaves off a small amount of time, or a slot for June, but just throwing that out there.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jessica. Great suggestion. Okay. Kerry, did you --

MS. MARHEFKA: (Ms. Marhefka's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and, Jessica, I think that's probably a good idea, and, as far as, you know, meeting times, you know, we kind of mentioned maybe having our public hearings where we could figure out if there's a way so we could ask questions, and like, for instance, I would have liked to ask Chops something, and, me personally, as a council member, if I need to be here Monday morning, ready at 8:30 to go to work, I don't mind, because what we do is important, and it affects people's lives, and I really appreciate the staff's time, and I don't want to overload the staff, but I'm willing to do whatever I need to do to make it happen, and thank you very much.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Charlie. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: I agree. I'm willing to do whatever it takes, and I'll get here early on Mondays, and I would attend the subcommittee meeting wherever it is, if that can shave off so we can accomplish these things we want to accomplish.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jimmy. Jessica, and then I see Andy.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so, back to the public hearing part that Charlie brought up, I'm good with that, but I would hope that, instead of just going later and later, you know, so that we're going way into the evening, I would rather add an hour, or at least a half-hour, to the time that we have allotted during the week for the public comment, in order to accommodate people, so that we're not, you know, going until nine or ten o'clock at night, which we've done in the past, and so I would rather just allot more time for that during the meeting day, you know, through 5:00.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jessica, and so Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: So two things. One, I would have a conflict, and wouldn't be able to participate, and so Rick would have to be my proxy for that meeting. I also look at this very differently, and I feel like the council meeting weeks are intended for us to get down to business, and be working, and that, you know, we put a lot of things on the agenda that are informational, and beneficial for us to hear, but those, to me, would be things that I would rather see pulled out of the council meeting week and done more periodically between council meetings, just to save us some time on the agenda.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. Any other input? Kerry, did you --

MS. MARHEFKA: (Ms. Marhefka's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MS. MURPHEY: Are you sure? All right. Just holler at me when you're ready. John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: We talked some about potentially moving the subcommittee, and it would only be a few additional travelers, when we look at who is already kind of pretty close to Charleston, and already coming for the AP, and so I don't think there's a financial concern there. We can certainly do it, and it would give you the most time, and that's for sure. You know, we were thinking like Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning, and so I think we can make that work for you guys, and so that's good. That will help, and that will shave, what, 0.5 off of our overload, probably.

Then I think, you know, if you want us to allot more time for the public comment, then -- You know, we start now at 4:00. If you want to start at 3:00, that will shave an hour off of your time. I guess my one concern is saying, you know, when you look at the amount of stuff you have there, and you talk about doing that, you're putting further squeeze on the time that we have.

You know, we've done pretty good with the counts, but you put in another hour of that, and, you know, you take away from your time to sit around the table and talk about stuff, and that will hurt, and so just letting you know. I mean, I'm glad to do it, but just beware, and I think, if you guys want us to do that, to start it earlier, then go ahead and say that clearly now.

Then, I mean, Andy, we understand the concerns about things that are informational, and I don't see a whole lot that is in this meeting, and we've really tried to pare that down quite a bit, and I'm not seeing a whole lot of things on here that I feel like we can really squeeze off of this agenda, when I look down to the lower boxes and this one is just a big one.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. I've Jessica, then Jimmy, then Kerry.

MS. MCCAULEY: Yes, and so, on the public hearing, two ideas. Either you could start by adding thirty minutes, and so doing 3:30, and so that's one way, or you could decide that you're going to start it at 3:00, and then, if it's done in an hour, or an hour-and-a-half, then we could go back to our business following the conclusion of the public hearing comments, and so just two ideas, John.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, John. Do you all want to start at 3:00?

MR. CARMICHAEL: You want a half-hour, and start at 3:30?

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: You all realize these people have jobs, right, and their job is not to sit on a Wednesday afternoon at 3:00, and be done at three o'clock, and I personally -- I personally would rather go -- I hate it, and I get hangry at five o'clock, and I don't love it, but I -- That is my responsibility to be here, and I am not super comfortable with starting -- I just think those are the things we do that we look so out of touch. To get a guy off the water, or to get a guy completely stopping his day, and I would say it's the middle of the day, but most of them have already been working half of their twelve hours, or, you know, are twelve hours in, and so I'm personally not comfortable with that, but that's me.

MS. MURPHEY: So you're not comfortable with starting at 3:00?

MS. MARHEFKA: Correct. I would rather go start -- I always I think 4:00 is early, personally, but I would rather go later than start earlier, for the sake of the people who we are trying to hear from, but that's me.

MS. MURPHEY: No, and that's fine. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: I think we're just trying to plug it in, and it's almost impossible, what we want to do with the hours that we have, and we need to think about a different type of way to do it, and there's -- You know, I've been to different meetings where perhaps it's a different -- Over on the -- If you have to ask questions, you know, we ask questions over here, and just let everything keep going, to get through the entire comment, and if there's -- So, for instance, an example, and just a quick one. You want to ask a question of whoever, and you could say I would like to ask you a question when you're done, and then you guys proceed over here, or outside, and get your question answered, and it's not on the public record at that time, and I get that, and so that's the problem, and so forget that.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jimmy. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and so I was going to suggest can we have -- I don't know what we would call it, because it can't be a public hearing, because we're not ready to go to public hearing, but in conjunction with AP meeting, and like a scoping, an additional scoping meeting, if we could call it that, or we could call it public comment, and they're commenting on what exists when we leave today, but you have the people in the room, and it's more of a chance for them to give their individual comments, and then you can have the webinar portion, where Chops or someone -- We can go as long as we want, those of us that are there, and I don't know. It's just a suggestion.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I don't know, and I haven't -- You know, it's a new idea to think about. I guess my first thought is, well, then that's a comment really to the AP, and there's usually limited council members there. I mean, we can just figure on going later, and I've certainly, in my time with this council, have sat in public comment periods that ran until nine o'clock at night, and let me tell you people that get pretty angry after about eight o'clock at night, of being just barraged with stuff.

You know, I think one thing that's really good is maybe to -- You know, in the in the vein of what Jimmy was saying, is to reach out to someone after they finish and say, hey, can you stick around, and I would like to talk to you. You know, I think there's a lot of value to the conversation in the back of the room that happens, and sometimes people boogie out, but maybe, if they knew you were interested in speaking with them, they would stick around, and I know a lot of people were talking at the back of the room, you know, a lot of staff, and a lot of you guys, and so, you know, that is that is another opportunity, to do it a little more informal. Robert has a hand up, Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Has there been a discussion of maybe breaking public comment up and doing it, you know, at 5:00 on multiple nights, instead of trying to do it all at once, and maybe let people speak to items that were discussed more or nearly in time, and not keep us there until nine, but also, you know, achieve Kerry's goal of doing it a time that's more convenient for the fishermen?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and, I mean, certainly that's something to consider as well. I think probably the downside of that would be that, you know, people don't hear everybody's comments, and, you know, like some fishermen don't hear what other fishermen say, but that's certainly something that could be considered.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Well, they would hear -- You know, I think at least people would sign up for, you know, topics that are the day or two before, but I guess not all people are going to come early, but try and have another approach.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Robert. I've got Dewey, Andy, and Tom.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I was all hoping that -- I think everybody around the room could ask -- If they have a question, they could ask that individual a specific question, and we move on, and it's on the record. I think that, all of a sudden, getting somebody in the corner, and you get everybody there, and you get back and forth, and all this after the thing, and I would rather do it at the public meeting.

If anybody around the table has got a question to ask, then they'll ask it, and we'll move on. I don't think somebody has got no fifty questions, and I think everybody around the table is looking for information that somebody might have, or can give some insight, and not everybody that's a speaker at public comment is going to be getting -- Soliciting to get a question, but I just think we should be doing it all at one time. I don't like the coming two days in a row after five o'clock or something, because people travel here, and, you know, if it takes another hour, I'm for it, myself.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Dewey. Andy, did you --

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I've, obviously, suggested asking questions, and we typically have a pretty small crowd of people that come and give public testimony, and so I'm not expecting this to take extended periods of time, right, but I think, if we did get a huge group of people that come to give public testimony, and it's going to be well beyond five or six o'clock, well, maybe we just make a decision that night that we're not going to ask questions, and we're going to save some time that way, right, and so I think we can be adaptable to this, but, given we typically are having, what, fifteen to twenty-five people give public testimony, I feel like it's very manageable, and adding a half-an-hour I think is very reasonable for right now, but let's test it out, and see how that works, and, if we get a lot more, well, we'll figure out something else.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Andy, and I have Tom, and then Amy.

MR. ROLLER: I do like Andy's comment there, and it's also important to remember that we just kind of have to take this as it is sometimes, and, when we do have a really important issue, and get lots of comments, we're going to be here late anyway.

What I just wanted to offer, and we were talking about different ways of doing things, is I would just bring up the way our North Carolina State Commission does public comment. On our multi-day meetings, we usually have a 5:00 p.m. comment and a 9:00 a.m. comment, and we just budget a little bit of time in that morning, and what we have seen in that, in a lot of our meetings, is a lot of the people who are here for the entire meeting may divert their comment to that following morning, right, and then we hear from a lot of fishermen in the evening. If we don't use that budgeted hour or hour-and-a-half of time in the morning, well, we just roll through with the agenda, and so it's just another way to offer opportunity for comment.

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

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair. I am very supportive of Andy's suggestion on us being adaptive. We're talking about something that we haven't -- That I haven't experienced at least, and, being at a Gulf meeting, I know some of you have some better ideas, but I would like to try it, and see what happens, and then we can change it if it blows up, but we do need to respect the time that these people are putting into coming, taking off the water, and the conversations that we have with them are so important, but having a couple of those questions on the record I think is going to also be very valuable as well.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Yes, and thank you, Amy, and I think -- Well, I'll let John wrap it up, but I think what we've heard is we'll do -- We'll still start at 4:00. If we go late, we go late, and we can adjust as we go.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and that's the plan, and I'm glad we had this discussion to clarify, you know, you all's intent, and talk about some ideas, and so really no change on what the public sees on the agenda. The only change is to I think what is really an unwritten policy that you guys followed, where, you know, you don't ask questions during the public comment period, and so I think, you know, now you're going to relax this.

If you would like to ask a question, ask a question. I think folks, you know, be prepared for it maybe to run a little bit longer, but, like Andy said, it's probably not going to run that much longer, and it's really not that much to ask. I mean, certainly I've always told staff, well, you might get out, but, you know, you should plan on -- If you're making dinner plans, you should figure this thing is going to run until 6:00, and maybe later, and like be flexible, you know, and so I think that's fine.

We can certainly do that, and then it will be up to you, and, again, as Andy said, if there's a lot of people that showed up here, you might just tell people, after they get accustomed to this, that, hey, we have a huge crowd tonight, and we just want to let you know that we're not going to ask questions, in the interest of getting through everybody, but, you know, we may follow-up with you afterwards. I think we're clear on what you guys want to do. Thanks.

MS. MURPHEY: Is everybody good with that? I think it sounds like a good plan, and so thanks for that discussion. Tom, did you --

MR. ROLLER: I just wanted to bring up Spanish mackerel, if it was appropriate, and so just whenever. Just let me know.

MS. MURPHEY: Did you --

MS. MARHEFKA: (Ms. Marhefka's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MS. MURPHEY: Okay.

MS. MARHEFKA: I just thought -- If we're done Snapper Grouper, I was going to address Dolphin Wahoo.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Are we done with -- I'm not sure we're done with Snapper Grouper. We're done with --

MS. MARHEFKA: Then, when we're done with Snapper Grouper, I want to talk about Dolphin Wahoo.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I guess we're still overloaded a bit, and it's hard to know where we want to squeeze out the time, and what do you think, John? Are we kind of looking at -- Well, 8.75, and we're looking a little kind of borderline there, and so, yes, maybe we're okay to trying to make this work. Moving the subcommittee I think helps an awful lot. Okay, and so I think we're done with Snapper Grouper. Gary has a Snapper Grouper question.

MR. BORLAND: Just real quick, I mean, we could start a half-hour earlier each day. I mean, most people are in here by eight o'clock every morning, and we push to 8:30. I don't know why, when we have a pressed schedule, we can't extend it in the mornings, to try to get the work done.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The only thing I would say about that is that we expect our staff in here a half-hour early every morning, and so, if we start at 8:00, now people are coming in at 7:30, and admin is coming in at 7:00, and so, you know, that could be a thing, or go until 5:30, I think would be the easier thing, if we need to, if we have to, but, yes, we can definitely -- If you're willing to allow us to extend the time window, we can certainly do that, and, in plenty of meetings, we have gotten behind and gone ahead and started at 8:00. I would rather handle it like that then figure on 8:00 from the start, and then, if we need to run until 5:30, we run until 5:30, and are you all okay running until 5:30? Okay.

MS. MURPHEY: I think we have been pretty flexible when we've run into time issues of starting late, or, you know, running late, or even, you know, coming in early, if we need to, and so I think we can just keep that flexibility. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to confirm, and so we are moving the subcommittee for the commercial to that Monday afternoon of the 20th and the morning of the 21st of April, and that is confirmed? Okay. I just wanted to get it my calendar.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, that's correct, and so do we want to go to Kerry?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Let's go to Kerry and see what she's got on her mind.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes.

MS. MARHEFKA: All right, and so I just want to make sure I understand what's going on, because, instead of being in committee, the way I understand it is we're just getting another update on the MSE, but we know we have to discuss our version of the guardrails, and, also, we do have committee members who are not on this -- Are not South Atlantic Council members, who may not be as tuned in if we're just meeting in Full Council, and so I was under the impression that we were going to have a Dolphin Wahoo Committee meeting in June, and maybe I'm reading it wrong. Two, I forget what the unit stands for, and I don't think the 0.5 means half-an-hour, right, and it means a half a day?

MR. HADLEY: That's a one to two hour, I think, conversation.

MR. CARMICHAEL: At the top, it means -- Like orange is four hours, and the yellow is two hours, but, in the bottom, it's the actual hour count, and is that right?

MR. HADLEY: So it's -- Well, sort of. The yellow is a is a one to two-hour-ish conversation. The orange is a two to four-hour-ish conversation. The 0.5 is -- Kind of think of it as a one-to-two-hour conversation.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Half a yellow.

MR. HADLEY: Half a yellow. Yes.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thank you. I don't feel dumb asking that question, now that you explained it.

MR. HADLEY: Great question.

MS. MARHEFKA: I would just say this. Keep in mind how long we talked about the thing that wasn't even supposed to be a thing, and so I very much worry, and I guess you can answer my question about going into committee, blah, blah, blah, and then maybe we should have a quick discussion about is that really enough time, given the strong feelings around some issues relating to dolphin.

MR. HADLEY: So, for June, the plan is to have a Dolphin Wahoo, a dedicated Dolphin Wahoo, Committee meeting, and that will include the liaison from the Mid-Atlantic, and then, also, we've let the liaison from the New England Council, who was on the webinar yesterday, know, and so that's the plan, is to have a dedicated Dolphin Wahoo Committee, and not handle it in Full Council.

Then it would be a sort of two-topic committee at this point, and we can edit or change it however we need to, but one would cover the MSE, and the other would cover essentially how the council wants to move forward with what's in Reg Amendment 3 right now, and so, really, that's just kind of a start or don't start, or restart or don't restart, work on it. Just kind of reminder of what's in there, and then direction -- Staff will ask for direction on how the committee wants to pursue that.

MS. MURPHEY: Is that good for you? Is that okay, Kerry? That's all? Okay, because we're going to have the Dolphin meeting. Okay. Cool. John.

MR. HADLEY: Right now, the way it's budgeted, it's a three to four-hour conversation, and so we'll see how that plays out in the actual agenda, but that's the way we have it right now.

MS. MURPHEY: Tom, did you want to --

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to have a little conversation about Spanish mackerel again, and see if there's an appetite to address it. You remember, back to our June 2025 meeting, we had some discussions about what direction we wanted to go, knowing that we were still years out from our assessment, and we looked at issues brought up to us by our fishermen at the port meetings that were not necessarily related to the catch levels, or having revised catch levels, and I just want to see if we should have a discussion about doing something about that again.

You know, I look at our workplan, and the things that we're discussing, and, you know, we have fishermen coming to us all the time, when it comes to Spanish mackerel, when it's regarding to the commercial zone allocations, permitting issues that were brought up in in our port meetings, and, I mean, these are relevant, and important, and, you know, I think about things like our FMU amendment, right, and, I mean, I understand it's important to the agency, and I understand that people want to go through with that, but our status quo of that issue is not a problem, as it currently stands, right, and we are putting a lot of work into it.

I just think that we need to talk about whether or not we want to do some sort of action on Spanish mackerel, if we want to convene the AP, because we have new Mid-Atlantic members, and, I mean, it's important.

MS. MURPHEY: Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I definitely would like to convene the AP. The other thing I was going to bring up, and I know Bob Beal I guess is going to talk about the ASMFC meeting, and their discussion on Spanish mackerel, but I guess I would say I'm fine starting to talk about it, you know, while we're waiting on the numbers, you know, from the new assessment.

I really don't want to finalize an amendment where we have to bring in the old numbers while we're waiting on this new stock assessment, and so I'm happy to start the discussions, and conversations, and just to bring up -- You know, we made some transfers from the southern zone to the northern zone this year, and we had a closure in the southern zone, but, also, it looked like we kind of blew through the step-downs, you know, that were in place.

I think that the transfer system is working, but it would have been nice to catch that early, so we could have done the step-downs, and maybe we need to look at this the start date of the fishing year, and that would be another way that the quota could be transferred, like as the fish are moving, if we change the start date to the fishing year, and, you know, like maybe if the southern zone is going first, and then, everything that is left, we can transfer all of that to too the northern zone, and so just some thoughts, but I just wouldn't want to finalize the document before the next stock assessment is through, because it seems like there's a number of things that we're trying to fix, and so I don't want to have to bring in those old numbers, the numbers that we all had concerns with in the previous stock assessment.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thanks, Jessica. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I think that's a good idea, what Jessica said. There's a lot of things going on. You know, the pie that's out there, that we're fishing under, won't be increased yet, or possibly ever, but there's a lot of things going on, and I think it would be good to keep -- Always keep abreast of it, and have an in-person AP meeting, if possible, because, as things go on on the water, and different states and different things, and transfers and all that, it needs to be discussed on how to work this out in the meantime, before we get to that to that phase.

I think it would be very helpful, and it would also keep the books tuned-up on what's going on, and stuff like that, so that we're not here when -- If there's a chance, or what happens after assessment, and so I would really like an in-person Mackerel AP meeting that can best be scheduled sooner rather than later, and I'm sure that AP members will be having requests from staff, once you have that, of what to look for in the future, and different things like that, and we just need to keep up on that. It is an important fishery, both to Florida and North Carolina, and the states to the north, as we're seeing, and so thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Dewey, and so I'll make sure I'm hearing everything right, that we would like to convene the AP, the Mackerel AP, and discuss some of the things that don't rely on numbers, but not start an amendment. Go ahead, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, I think that -- Well, it depends on the workplan. It's hard to know, you know, what all we're going to get through, or what new things we're going to bring in, and so I don't want to, you know, fully commit, but, if we didn't overstack things, I think that we could start a document that we would seek to finalize after the stock assessment is completed.

MS. MURPHEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: So when are we looking at the finalized stock assessment? Is it the end of 2027, just for the conversation, to remind everybody.

MS. MURPHEY: When do we start the -- We'll let Christina speak.

MS. CURTIS: So I just want to -- Bob Beal, the executive director of the commission, is not online right now, and so I did want to give the council just a brief update on discussions that were had at ASMFC during their meeting in February, and so the Coastal Pelagics Board met, and I provided them an update of sort of where things are with regard to Spanish mackerel, sort of the history of port meetings, which they were involved with, and then ultimately what led to the council's decision to sort of delay any action until after the stock assessment was completed in mid-2027.

There was some conversation, and I would sort of characterize it as maybe a little bit of frustration, and you heard from some stakeholders during public comment about this as well, that the commission has been receiving updates on Spanish mackerel since 2019, but the council hasn't made any sort of forward progress in taking action on it, and there's a variety of reasons for that, but there was a discussion about maybe there were some things that the commission could go ahead and move forward with to address some of the inconsistencies between the plans and some of the feedback from port meetings that is affecting fishermen that participate in state waters.

I think, ultimately, the board really felt like they did not want to move forward ahead of the council, and they would like to continue sort of the gentlemen's agreement, where the council takes action first, and then the commission follows, but, you know, sort of wanted to express some of the frustration that the board was feeling with the lack of an action on Spanish mackerel.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Christina. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and just to speak to the ASMFC discussion, I would say -- I mean, I'm glad that their board is waiting for us to act, and I think that Bob Beal has indicated, at past council meetings, that they would be looking to address the issue where the states remain open, you know, at that lower 500 trip limit after federal waters are closed, and I don't think that the council intends to remove that, and that's just my guess, and so they would be going in a different direction, or he thought that the ASMFC board would go in a different direction, and so I would hope that they would wait for us, is what I would say, knowing that there's some things that I think some of their board members want to change that this council doesn't intend to change.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jessica, and so we'll move forward and get the AP together, and do you want to address that?

MS. CURTIS: I just want to make sure that I'm understanding what the council would like to see in terms of mackerel, and so you would like to see an in-person AP meeting, I think most likely that would end up being in the fall. A turnaround to get everyone to meet in the spring might be a little too quick now, and I don't want to ask these guys to meet in, you know, prime fishing time in the summer, and so the fall. That information could then come back to the council at your December meeting, at which time you could consider whether or not you wanted to put an amendment on your workplan.

MS. MURPHEY: That's a wonderful idea. You've got it, and I think that's a great idea, to wait on it, and then I've got Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Christina, that's a wonderful idea, and I like where we're going forward with it. I guess just a quick question is what is the timeframe on the stock assessment currently?

MS. CURTIS: My understanding, and I'm looking around the room to make sure that what I'm saying is correct, but the stock assessment is scheduled to start in 2027, and to be complete sometime mid-2027, and so probably going to the SSC in October, and to you guys following that.

DR. CURTIS: Just to add on that, and so recall that we are going to hold a data workshop for the next assessment, to ensure that all those new data streams from the northern latitudes get integrated. That data workshop stage add some time to the overall assessment process, and so, if it were -- It is scheduled to begin in 2027, but keep that in mind, and I don't have an exact schedule for you, but to ensure that the data workshop occurs, and is a part of the assessment process, that might take a little bit longer.

MS. CURTIS: So, stock assessment results to you guys, the most reasonable timeframe is probably December of 2027.

MS. MURPHEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: So, realistically speaking, we're two years from being able to address some of these other non-catch-level-related issues that fishermen keep bringing to us.

MS. MURPHEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I share Tom's frustration. I'm definitely not the expert on the issues of Spanish, or the assessment, but I am getting a lot of phone calls about tournament sales for king mackerel, and I'm having fishermen beg me to add it to our workplan, and know that the council is addressing it, and I've kept my mouth shut, because I know we have these other issues, and I don't want to create more problems, but now, looking at two years before we get the Spanish assessment, and even consider starting an amendment, I am very uncomfortable going back and telling people that, but I don't know what I don't know what to do about it, because that also means we're not going to have a Mackerel Committee where we address it, and like I don't want to be addressing this in the workplan.

That was not the intent, but when is the time to address it? Dewey keeps saying, well, the AP will bring it up, and, well, the AP has brought it up every meeting, and it's still not on the workplan,

and so I would love people that are smarter than me to help me figure out if we really need to wait until the Spanish assessment to address this.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Kerry, and I'll turn it to Christina.

MS. CURTIS: So I'll make a proposal for you all to consider, and so, if we convene the -- So let's start back at the beginning. One of the reasons the council decided to not move forward on anything until after the Spanish mackerel assessment was in part because the AP did pass a motion saying please don't address anything related to catch levels until there's a new Spanish mackerel stock assessment.

In September, we'll have you guys review agenda items for a Mackerel Cobia AP in the fall. I think what might be helpful is to have the AP then weigh-in on here are a list of things, again, that came up during port meetings, and what actions would you be comfortable with the council moving forward with without the new king and Spanish mackerel stock assessments that are set to come to you, and what actions do you feel like definitely need to wait. That way, you guys can consider that in December, or March, when your schedule is a little bit more free, to determine whether or not you do want to move forward with an amendment in advance of the stock assessment or if you want to wait.

MS. MURPHEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks, Christina. That's a great plan, and I absolutely accept that plan, personally. I would just ask that then somewhere you slide that in under anticipated, whatever that column is, so that it's on there officially, and we can get a realistic view of what that is going to look like, but thank you, Christina.

MS. MURPHEY: John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Looking ahead to the work plan you can see the ten in December, and things lighten up a little bit, and I'm going to say that we will plan on a Mackerel Committee meeting in March, rather than December, just to balance our load a bit, to hear back from the AP.

MS. MURPHEY: All right, so we'll make sure we're all straight here. We will convene the AP in the fall, and just have them -- We'll give them a list of topics to discuss, and that would be things to be considered outside the stock assessment, and that would come back to us in March to consider, and there we would either start -- Just determine whether to start an amendment on those things or not, correct, and does that -- Is everybody good with that? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Yes, and I just want to say, as the committee chair, I think, Christina, the point you put forward is reasonable, and about as timely as we can work on currently.

MS. MURPHEY: Anything else? Is everybody good with that plan? All right. Then that's what we'll do, and so thank you, guys, for that discussion. I know this has been, you know, long in need, but I'm glad we're going to start something in -- I've got John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: So, you know, I hear the frustration over the assessment, and we've had this frustration for quite some time. You know, I can say Spanish was a priority, something we

were pushing at the steering committee to be one of the earliest things done in 2027. The reality is you're dealing with, you know, two available assessment resources in the South Atlantic branch to address all your issues, and the center is in the process of hiring another person, which will help to some extent, but these are the real-world consequences to fisheries of just the lack of resources to get the science done. It's really unfortunate, and I think you guys are pointing out how the cost really accrues to the fishermen.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, John. Anything else for Spanish? Are we good? Do we want to go wreckfish?

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you for the direction there, and the discussion. I think that helps us plan quite a bit for really the next -- Into this year and next year, and so, switching gears a little bit, and picking up where we left off yesterday, the last item related to the workplan is the proposed plan to address the wreckfish ITQ program review.

You know, we went through this yesterday, and Myra explain the situation, the draft timeline that staff has put together for you, and we're really looking for a motion to approve this workplan, so staff can begin work on it, and there is a draft motion there at the bottom to direct staff to begin work on the next review of the wreckfish ITQ program.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, John. Would anybody care to make that motion? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: **Let the record show, with a big old eyeroll, I move to direct staff to begin work on the next review of the wreckfish ITQ program.**

MS. MURPHEY: Do we have a second? Charlie. Thank you, Charlie. Any discussion? **Any objections to this motion?** All right. **Motion approved.**

MR. HADLEY: Thank you. I appreciate the, you know, working through that, and that's it for the workplan for now, and I guess we'll switch gears.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Does anybody want to take a break before we go into committee reports, or you want to --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sure.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. We'll take a -- Let's just come back at 9:30, if that's okay.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MURPHEY: All right, everyone. I'm going to go ahead and start the Full Council I report. The council met in open session on Tuesday, March 3, 2026. The council adopted the agenda for the week and approved minutes for the December 2025 meeting. We had several reports from various representatives, and so I've got some highlights.

We had state agency representatives that highlighted some activities in the recent months. Neither Georgia nor North South Carolina requested concurrent closure of the EEZ to protect white shrimp impacted by cold water temperatures this winter, as the trigger was not met. State agency

representatives also had submitted revised applications for the exempted fishing permit to NOAA Fisheries, and these EFPs will be pilot approaches that could lead to state management of recreational red snapper in the South Atlantic.

We also heard from Law Enforcement AP chair, Major Thomas, and he reported on discussions that took place at the AP's January 2026 meeting, and that report included recommendations on items the council requested in developing actions.

We also heard from Lara Klibansky, the South Atlantic Council contractor, and she updated the council on the progress of four resilient fisheries projects that were undertaken in 2025 with Inflation Reduction Act funding. Lara noted progress reports are posted on each project on the council's website. The projects are slightly different, have slightly different timelines, but are expected to be completed from the fall of 2026 to the fall of 2027, and the council is including these projects in the workplan moving forward.

We also heard from Stacie Crowe with the Habitat and Ecosystem AP. She's the chair, and she delivered a report to the council on topics discussed during the AP's January meeting. A council member did ask how a member of the public would find out which projects have been submitted for EFH consultation, and so it's the Army Corps of Engineers website publishes projects that are coming up for public comment, and so council members expressed support on obtaining information on impacts from the space industry on fishing fisheries using citizen science.

Allie Iberle also provided an update on the South Atlantic shrimp workgroup, including the goals and objectives. Staff also reviewed the milestones of the workgroup thus far, and the first workgroup meeting is scheduled for late March, and the council will receive an update on the progress during the June meeting.

Andy Strelcheck and Clay Porch, Southeast Regional Administrator and Southeast Fisheries Science Director, both provided brief updates from the agency. It included an advance notice for proposed rulemaking has been issued to obtain information on the right whale speed rule, and the agency is receiving public comment through June 2. The Regional Office is in the process of hiring an Assistant Regional Administrator, and there are numerous actions undergoing rulemaking, and SERO is urging patience, since the process is taking longer than it used to. Two stock assessment scientists will be hired, with one focusing on South Atlantic assessments.

The Council of Independent Experts reviewed the South Atlantic Red Snapper Research Project and -- I'm sorry. The Council of Independent Experts review of the South Atlantic Red Snapper Research Project has been completed and is generally positive for the CKMR estimates of abundance, but not so supportive of the other estimates, due to high uncertainty. Then the agency is moving forward with building a new facility in Beaufort, North Carolina.

We had discussion on the NMFS risk-value matrix for managed stocks. John Carmichael reviewed information on NMFS risk and priority evaluation provided to the council executive directors, all the council executive directors, in January of 2025, noting changes and progress since initially presented to the CCC in May of 2025.

The goal of the evaluation has shifted from aligning council and NMFS priorities to narrowing the scope of management and science. A multi-step process is being implemented to assign managed

stocks -- To assign managed stocks to risk-value categories. Alternative simpler management approaches will be considered for lower value and risk stocks. An optimistic timeline for the process is currently proposed, concluding in summer of 2026 to assess resource priorities and inform the fiscal year 2027 planning.

Clay presented on progress by the Science Center to further develop tools to assist decision-making related to narrowing the scope of management. Additional information on management alternatives that could be considered for the risk-value categories was provided, along with the progress of compiling the value and risk information necessary to assign stocks to risk-value categories.

A national approach has been developed to support comparisons across regions. The council agrees that the agency has been unable to provide adequate science for managing South Atlantic stocks, and therefore supports the intent of the scope-narrowing exercise. However, the council raised concerns with timeliness, with the timeline, and noted it will be difficult to obtain input from its scientific and fishery advisors on the social value and degree of risk.

Additional concern was expressed with the end goal of the process and how value could impact future funding allocations, particularly if the only value considered is related to fish harvest and thereby omits many other important components of the council management program. Focusing on fishery value may create an incentive for councils to characterize stocks as high value and a disincentive to remove stocks from an FMU.

The council noted that details had not been provided on how value is estimated and raised a number of specific concerns. These concerns are that the South Atlantic Council recreational landings value is underrepresented, due to the following, and this is the Monroe MRIP counted as Gulf value, Monroe County headboat trips being omitted, dolphin wahoo and coastal migratory pelagics from the Northeast was omitted, and we also noted that there was a letter from senators indicating that recreational fishing in the South Atlantic is worth \$27 billion, and over 170,000 jobs, and this is ten-times greater, the contribution to the GDP, then the \$3.7 billion that was listed here.

Overall, recreational value is underrepresented, consumer value is underrepresented, and then no value is recognized for non-harvest species and FMPs, including those like goliath grouper, speckled hind, warsaw grouper, Nassau grouper, corals, and sargassum.

We also have directions to staff, and that's a draft letter expressing the council's concern, and so a draft to council members no later than 3/21, and give the council until 3/27 to review. The intent is to send to NMFS the first week of April.

We also discussed draft comments for the proposed rule for commercial Atlantic blacknose shark and recreational Atlantic sharks fisheries, and so NOAA Fisheries Atlantic HMS has announced a proposed rule to revise commercial Atlantic blacknose shark and recreational Atlantic shark fisheries management measures. The comment period for the proposed rule has been extended through May 29, 2026, and the council reviewed a draft comment letter on the proposed rule and provided several comments.

Basically, we're supportive of the proposed changes to the commercial measures being considered for Atlantic blacknose sharks and felt the draft comment letter accurately captured that. The

council also appreciated the general efforts to increase recreational harvest for Atlantic shark species, but were apprehensive of some proposed recreational measures, and, specifically, the council noted that the comment letter should reflect the following, which is the concept of flexible regulations is encouraging, but recreational measures should be structured to allow for an increase in harvest of sharks where quota allows, and there's also a growing interest in targeting sharks recreationally in the South Atlantic, and many shark stocks in this region are notably increasing.

The application for the proposed vessel limits is not intuitive, and will be confusing to anglers, and these limits need to be further clarified. The relative large size limits for many large coastal sharks are prohibited for recreational anglers who want to harvest sharks. These specimens can be large for most anglers to harvest and are dangerous to bring aboard. You know, consider substantially lowering the minimum size limits for recreationally-desirable species, such as blacktip and spinner.

Regulations should also allow anglers to concentrate on harvesting smaller large coastal sharks and smaller shark species, due to their superior food quality and to increase safety. Atlantic sharpnose sharks are very prevalent through the South Atlantic region, and measures should be implemented to allow for an increase in their harvest. It was noted that species groupings do not necessarily match those for the ASMFC, and how regulations are implemented to the state level, and, if regulations change from year to year, it will be difficult for states to follow suit, and for anglers to know the regulation changes, and also make sure blacktip and spinner sharks remain the same species grouping under the two alternatives, because they are commonly misidentified.

Public comment was provided to the council, also noting that vessel limits for shark species, where there currently are none, would be particularly problematic for headboats, and this comment focused primarily on Atlantic sharpnose sharks. Atlantic sharpnose sharks are an important species for the headboat anglers and are desirable for food quality. HMS should not consider a vessel limit for the sharpnose sharks, and just consider maintaining the current one-fish-per-person bag limit, or remove the bag limit. A four-fish vessel limit will not work for headboats that may carry upwards of fifty anglers, and there should continue to be no size limit for Atlantic sharpnose sharks.

It was noted that federally-permitted headboats report all shark landings via electronic logbooks, allowing for accurate accounts of harvest, and then we also have a draft motion to direct staff to do the following, and would somebody care to make this motion? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. **Direct staff to do the following: prepare a letter to NMFS on the risk-value matrix; prepare a letter to HMS in response to proposed changes to shark management.**

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have a second? I've got Jimmy. Any discussion on these motions? **Any objections to these motions?** All right. **Hearing none, the motion is approved.** That concludes the Full Council I report.

I guess I will move into the SEDAR Committee report. The committee approved the agenda for the March 2026 meeting and minutes for the September 2025 meeting. We heard steering committee meeting updates. The committee had convened in Charleston in February, and the focus of this meeting was to review the SEDAR standard operating policies and procedures and to

revise the SEDAR project schedule based on available resources and impacts from the 2025 government shutdown, and the SEDAR Committee also received an update on topics discussed at the committee meeting and impacts of the 2025 government shutdown on SEDAR scheduling and ongoing assignments.

We also heard process updates. The committee received a review of several assessment infographics and visual materials that have been developed detailing the various components of the stock assessment process. The committee expressed its gratitude for the provision of these products and suggested that the visual infographics be incorporated in the council member information binders once the materials have been finalized.

We talked about scopes of work for upcoming assessments, and so council staff presented the scopes of work for the upcoming assessments for black sea bass and vermilion snapper, which included a list of scientific uncertainties identified from the previous assessment review and a preliminary timeline for completion of the next assessments.

The black sea bass assessment will be conducted internally by the Science Center. Terms of reference for this assessment will be reviewed by the SSC in April, with final approval using an expedited process to the council chair, vice chair, and Snapper Grouper Committee chair. Assuming completion of the MRIP-FES calibrations by August 31, the final assessment report will be submitted to the cooperator by November 1. A review of this assessment will be conducted by the SSC subgroup prior to full SSC review and setting catch level recommendations, and that will be provided by to the council in March of 2027.

The vermilion snapper assessment will also be conducted internally. The terms of reference for this assessment will be reviewed by the SSC in April and presented to the council for approval during the next committee meeting in September, and this assessment is scheduled to begin fall of 2027, and the committee recommended utilizing the SSC check-in on assessment development before the final review by the SSC and setting catch level recommendations, and this will be provided to the council in June of 2028.

We also discussed terms of reference for upcoming assessments, and this was terms of references for Atlantic Spanish mackerel, the South Atlantic king mackerel and the dolphin MSE. The committee made the following minor revisions to the TORs. The South Atlantic Mackerel TOR Number 3d is to explore the inclusion of FISHstory data, including length composition where feasible, and then the Dolphin MSE TOR Number 1 is to evaluate the types and ranges of uncertainty used in the MSE and explicitly consider uncertainty data in data, life history, process error, non-stationarity, which includes environmental variability, and oceanographic changes, and, if appropriate, fishery dynamics.

Then the committee then made the following motion, and it was to approve the terms of reference for the Atlantic Spanish mackerel stock assessment, the South Atlantic king mackerel stock assessment, and the dolphin MSE review workshop. Allow the committee chair to approve any subsequent edits recommended by the committee, and, on behalf of the committee, I so move. Do I have a second? Amy. Discussion? Any objections? Motion approved.

Then, last, we decided to change our SEDAR Committee name, because of the change in scope, and so we reviewed the new scope of the SEDAR Committee to encompass the variety of analytical products being used to produce management advice. **The committee discussed new name options to reflect this re-envisioned role in the expanded process and passed the following motion to approve the name change of the SEDAR Committee to SEDAR Catch Advice and Data Committee (SECAD) and so, on behalf of the committee, I so move.** Do I have a second? I've got Charlie. Any discussion? **Any objection? Motion approved.** I am done with SEDAR, and so thank you, and I'll pass it over to Jessica for Snapper Grouper.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, madam Chair. The committee approved the minutes from the December 2025 meeting and the agenda for the March 2026 meeting and received an update from SERO on the following amendments, and this included abbreviated framework for blueline tile, Amendment 36 for gag and black grouper vessel limits and black sea bass on-demand gear, Amendment 37 for black sea bass short-term management measures, Amendment 48 for wreckfish, Amendment 54 for commercial e-logbooks and 55 for scamp and yellowmouth grouper.

Then the committee had discussion on exempted fishing permits. The committee received a briefing from SERO on an application for an exempted fishing permit titled "Collection of American Red Snapper Brood Stock for Marine Aquaculture Research and Hatchery Fingerling Production" by Cultimar Technologies.

The proposed project would collect 200 red snapper from federal waters off Florida in one to two trips, each including four days of fishing and five days of transit, occurring between May 2026 and March of 2027. These fish would be transported alive to be used as brood stock at a hatchery research search facility in Puerto Rico. The brood stock would be used for fingerling production to develop aquaculture of red snapper in the United States.

The committee asked several questions related to reasoning for using South Atlantic red snapper, the rationale for the 200 fish that are requested, and how any fish collected through this project would affect catch limits for the fishery, and so we were also seeking public comment on this during our public comment discussion, and so I'll stop here, you know, for another discussion on this and to figure out if we want to send a letter about this EFP.

I'll also add that, since this is occurring off of Florida, our governor's office has reached out to the folks that submitted the EFP, to ask them some additional questions, and I don't think that meeting is scheduled yet, but the governor's office has mentioned that they would hope, assuming that Florida's EFP is approved to fish for the dates that are suggested, which would be starting to fish May 22, the governor's office is asking that these fish not be collected during the time period that the EFP state management season is open, but I think that they're going to have more discussion with that company as well, but more comments on this, or thoughts about what should be in the letter that comes from the council? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. If I remember right, it's not going to come off of our ACLs, and so I'm comfortable with not necessarily writing a letter at all, and letting Florida make a response, because they're going to come off of Florida, and I don't know that we necessarily need to reply to that one way or the other.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess I would look to Myra or John. We usually send letters about EFPs, and so --

MS. BROUWER: Yes, and I don't -- I don't see a problem. We can write a short letter, just to promote continuity of how we do things.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Then, also, as you heard, it sounds like our governor's office is going to be asking some questions, plus maybe we could put in the letter to ask this company not to collect those fish during the time period when the Florida state management season would be open, and so do it after that season, is what I believe the governor's office is suggesting, and so any more discussion on this or what goes in this letter? Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Well, is there any concern about them collecting the fish during the commercial season opening? I mean, for me personally, 200 animals -- You know, it's inconsequential, but maybe localized, right off the port there, it could be consequential, and, for the overall project itself, I mean, it really doesn't impact me personally, other than my personal feelings maybe about aquaculture in the future, and they're not going to be growing anything out in competition to our marketing of our fish yet, but, down the road, obviously, aquaculture could, and so we're just letting them keep on moving towards aquaculture of the animal by this being approved, but I'm good with the governor's questions, but I would also say, you know, the governor should also say, hey, and don't affect my commercial fishery either.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, let's write that in the letter. Let's write that in the letter from the council. You know, if that's your concern, let's write that in there as well. Okay. I'm looking to Myra, who is taking some notes on this. Okay. I think we captured that there. All right. Thank you for that discussion.

I'm going to keep going through the committee report. The committee also discussed red snapper state management EFP applications that have been submitted by each of the South Atlantic states, and the committee discussed how accountability measures would apply to red snapper caught through the EFPs, if approved. The committee also discussed potential effects of these EFPs on the commercial sector, especially related to equity between the sectors. The committee was reminded that the public comment period for the EFPs is open through March 10th, and council members can submit comments individually to NOAA Fisheries.

The commercial subcommittee report and Amendment 60, and so let's jump to that. First, I'll read this paragraph here in the beginnings, and so the commercial subcommittee met earlier this week, on March 2nd and 3rd. The committee received information from SERO staff on permits, trip limits, and potential establishment of a notification system for gear changes during a fishing trip, and the subcommittee reviewed and developed draft actions and alternatives and requested that the council and SERO staff work together outside the meeting to develop some actions and alternative language for review at Full Council. The draft language is included in the committee report, and so maybe we can jump to this report.

Okay, so this is also indicating that we met earlier this week, and we approved the March 2026 meeting agenda, and then the minutes from the December meeting, and so there was some progress made on the document, and then the committee looked at the purpose and needs statement there, adding long-term stability and incorporating language from the Executive Order 14276.

Action 1, remove the two-for-one snapper grouper commercial unlimited permit policy, the committee discussed several aspects of the SG 1 permit and revised the action and alternative language to specify that this is the unlimited permit, and then the committee decided not to include consideration of a trigger for a permit pool in the action at this time.

Under Action 2, which is revised the commercial trip limits for snapper grouper species, include for consideration the following trip limits for the following species, and so, for vermilion, you can see there on the screen what is suggested for the limits for both Season 1 and Season 2, and I'm not going to read them all aloud.

Greater amberjack, you can see the trip limits for Season 1 and 2. Red porgy, for Season 1 and 2, are listed in numbers of fish. Triggerfish, for Season 1 and 2, is listed in pounds. Red grouper, two alternatives there, and hogfish, the Georgia to North Carolina zone, for two different poundages there.

There was some concern expressed for the possibility of localized depletion from trip limits that are set too high, especially for the groupers, but I'm going to pause here for discussion on this, and I'll also remind you that, when we were in Other Business, we talked about the trip limit actions, bringing up the issue of like when is the trip completed, and is it during sale, or is it when the trip ticket has been issued, and, you know, like what completes the trip, or ends the trip, but I see hands going up. I've got Kerry, then Andy, then Tom.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks, Jessica, and thanks for that reminder. I think I'm a little thrown off, because I'm trying to think about what happens to this document now that we've added this other meeting, and so there's a few things in here that I personally know right now that I could be -- I would ask to be removed, for the sake of making analysis easy.

You know, if we know we're not going to do it, and we all agree on that, we take it out now, so that analysis is easier, but is that -- Is now the correct time to do it, or is it more appropriate to do it when we get in the subcommittee, and so my question is to make people's lives -- Myra is saying now. If I may, I'll throw it out there for continued discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes.

MS. MARHEFKA: I personally have thought a lot about triggerfish. I've thought a lot about, you know, how we're not reaching the -- We're not even close, and it was in that beautiful table that we got from Jessica, or Dominique, and I can't remember which one, and we're not getting anywhere close to the ACL now, which didn't in itself bother me until I thought back to the SERFS index, which I believe has also had a downtick.

I also happened to be the councilmember observer for the triggerfish assessment that was not accepted, but there certainly was enough concerning signs there that I think those three sort of data points together made me want to exercise caution, and so, with that long-winded explanation, I would move that we remove triggerfish from Action 2.

I would also propose -- Sorry to do it all at once, but it might be easier, that we remove the -- When you get a second, can you -- Sorry, and I'm -- I don't have that document live open on my screen

to vermilion, and can you go up to the vermilion trip limit, real quick? Thank you. I'm going to leave that there right now and see if anyone else feels like changing anything else, but so, right now, I move that we remove triggerfish from Action 2.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so we have a motion. Do we have a second? Seconded by Amy. Under discussion. Andy, you had your hand up earlier, but was it on triggerfish, or do you want me to go to other hands?

MR. STRELCHECK: I actually had it up for two reasons, one of which was triggerfish, and so I had talked to a few people after the meeting earlier this week, and suggested we look at the indices of abundance, and triggerfish certainly has taken a pretty substantial decline, and so I agree with Kerry's logic, and I would support this motion. Then I have a comment on Action 2, but I'll wait for this discussion to come back.

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

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and just a point of clarification. If we leave it in, do we have to do a trip increase on it? Could we just leave the trip at where it is, and, if we leave it in, and leave the trip limit where it is, and then we give Andy some kind of authority to move trip limits up and down, and we come back to the council and say -- At the appropriate time, when he's going to be readjusting all the trip limits, could we say, okay, we aren't catching the ACL for trigger, and we have concerns over trigger, and so, instead of 1,000, you have flexibility, and do we want to lower these trip limits, and so it may be a way for us to dynamically manage these without having to go to an assessment, and we don't necessarily have to go up, and so I'm just kind of thinking of all of the options that we do have. If we can do it that way, I would be inclined to leave it in, just for the options like that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So let me try to address that, and then I'll go to more hands that are up specific to triggerfish, to this motion, and so what I think you're talking about, Charlie, is in Action 3, and so then you would be taking this out of Action 2, and so no analysis would be needed, but then it would be still be on the list for temporary increase or decrease in Action 3. I think that's what you're saying.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and I don't want to -- Because, if we take it out here, then we're not even going to have an option in Action 3, I think.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's not true.

MR. PHILLIPS: Okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So they're not necessarily completely tied together. We have the species listed out separately in there, and so I just want to clarify, and it sounds like you're in favor of the motion, because it's covered in Action 3, and is that what you're saying?

MR. PHILLIPS: f we still have the wiggle room to do what we feel like we need to do on a quicker timeframe than waiting for assessments, waiting for amendments. As long as we can move things around in Option 3, I'm good.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so, continuing on triggerfish, Kerry, and then Amy.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, to Charlie's point, I probably wouldn't be supportive of that, for two reasons, one being that, if you look at the chart that Dominique gave, you would have to decrease the trip limit by over 60 percent just to get one trip, just to get to where we're landing now, and so that would mean you would end up going down to, I don't know, a couple hundred pounds, just to even have an effect.

Second of all, what I'm most concerned about is that we're mixing the intent of what we're trying to do. I think that, if we need to look at triggerfish for biological reasons -- Everything we're doing here is more for economic reasons, and it concerns me if we start mixing our intent. Alone, having a different discussion about what we need to do to triggerfish, I'm absolutely open for. I just think it really muddies the waters with the intent of these actions, personally.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so I've got a couple more hands on triggerfish, and so you've heard two different ideas about what to do in Action 3 with triggerfish, but let's come back to that. We have a motion on the table on Action 2. Amy, and then back to Charlie.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and I will echo Andy's concerns. Looking at the fishery-independent index, triggerfish have been on the downward trend since about 2020. We also heard during public comment, from multiple -- Well, from a fisherman, who actually suggested that we do not include triggerfish into Action 2 for this one, and so I, again, just wanted to justify why I was supporting the second of that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and his amendment is ideally going to be in place for a long time, and so we don't know what's going to happen with triggerfish three years down the road, and things like that, and so I'm thinking not just today, but down the road, and, again, just because it's in there for an increase, it does not mean we have to go for an increase, and so I -- When and if the stocks rebound, I would like to have the ability to go up.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so are there other people that would like to speak on this motion to remove triggerfish from Action 2, and it doesn't look like -- Myra, did we not have a second on this motion?

MS. BROUWER: (Ms. Brouwer's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I just want to make sure that it was seconded. Okay, and so does anybody else want to speak on removing triggerfish from Action 2? All right. **Any objection to this motion to remove triggerfish from Action 2?** So Charlie is objecting, and so I'm assuming that everybody else is in favor. We have one opposed. **Any abstentions?** All right. **The motion carries with one opposed.**

All right, and so I'm going to go back to my list of hands that were on Action 2, but on different species, and so I'm going to go back to Andy first, and, actually, you were on Action 1, and so we might need to go all the way back to Action 1.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and so this is, I guess, to the commercial representatives on the council. We heard, from some fishermen during public comment yesterday, either opposition for changing the two-for-one or, if we were going to change it, to possibly eliminate the provision for leasing vessels, right, and so I'm curious if you have thoughts on that recommendation specifically, and whether we should incorporate that into this action.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and we have talked about that in the past, but, yes, we heard from a lot of people on that yesterday, and so thoughts on leasing and if we need to have something like alternatives under this action about what to do about leasing? Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Okay. Yes, and I heard those comments from the fishermen, but I didn't really hear in-depth reasoning why they didn't want to remove the two-for-one, other than the broker that was here, and he made some good points, and other brokers I've talked to. You know, leasing is necessary under the system that we have currently, and just taking the two-for-one away doesn't necessarily mean we need to take the leasing ability away.

You know, taking the two-for -- We're trying to make it easier for fishermen to enter this fishery, and so the leasing does make it easier for them, because they can lease a permit with so much less output than buying one, and having more permits available should make it easier for them too, and so I don't think one really leads to the other. I think they can work together in unison, and that's my opinion on it. I would not want to remove the leasing provision.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I see Charlie, then Dewey.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and Jimmy is 100 percent right. There are a lot of people that think they want to be in snapper grouper, and, for a relatively small amount of money, they can get in it, and then they find out whether they want to stay or not. I've watched people get in, lease stuff, and then get right back out, and you can't easily get in it if you're going to pay close to \$100,000 for a permit, if you even have the capital, and you can't borrow against that permit. They want you to borrow money against a house, or land, and you can't borrow money against a permit, and so leasing is really -- If you want new entrants in, that that is one of the paths to do it, for sure.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I have Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I would -- The same as Charlie and Jimmy over there. You know, one thing we might would want to look at is cap the number of permits one entity could have to be leased, and I don't know that -- You know, sometimes when you look at it, the gentleman that was describing his twenty-one permits that he leases, that is, you know, only a few percent of the total amount, and he did point out, you know, that I think he said, on social media, or Facebook, there was eight permits for lease, and it didn't -- You know, why is there eight permits for lease if everybody is wanting to get into it, you know, and so I just throw that out there for -- Not for any discussion purposes, but just a thought, but, under this system that we have, and where we're at after twenty-six years of this two-for-one, I think all things need to be a lot allowed for the industry to -- You know, I don't know if I would use the word "survive", but to keep -- To continue on.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I'm going back to my hands. I have Shep, then Kerry, then Jimmy.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, just to point out that remember you heard in the presentation on permits that the Fisheries Service does not lease permits. The regulations do not accommodate leasing permits. I think what has developed in the fishery is leasing vessels, and then permits associated with those, and that has developed because the agency does not allow leasing of permits, and, by deciding that you want to prohibit that, we're going to -- You're putting us into those private arrangements, to a level we have not been involved before, which is going to change, I think, the permitting process on some level, and I just raise it because there are complications. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, I feel like we could have hours-long discussion on this. I think it's fascinating, and I think it's a worthwhile discussion, quite frankly, and so I'm of two minds, to leave it in to allow us more time to have conversations. My interest is piqued by Dewey's concept, and I don't know the right way to go about it that solves Shep's problem, but do we look at limiting a certain person's -- I just did quick math, and it's almost 5 percent of the fishery that that the commenter has control over.

I mean, that's not a lot, but it's a small fishery, and 5 percent isn't nothing, if you add up all those ACLs, and so do we do we leave a version of this in here where we have the opportunity to have the -- What are they called? The advisory panel have the discussion, and have a deeper discussion for the subcommittee in April, and this is worthy of some thought. It's complicated, obviously, but I do think that, if we don't do it now, when do we do it, and we need to give it the time it deserves.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let me just clarify that it's not in there yet, and you would have to be suggesting that at least some additional research come back, or something for the discussion at that subcommittee meeting in April, and so you would have to add something that you intend to look at it, want some research or something, and it's not in there right now. That's why Andy is bringing it up. I'm going to go to more hands. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Madam Chair. Since we're discussing leasing, this comes up, and so a lot of fishermen who make their living with an SG 1 have commented to me that there they see a lot of leasing of SG 1 going to private recreational anglers, so that they can exceed the recreational trip limits, and, you know, this is something that is concerning. It's concerning to them, you know, in their different communities, and I can't say personally that I know of that, but this is what I hear is happening, and so I think it's something we should be aware of, and make sure that that can't happen.

How you would do that, I don't know, but, you know, the hoops that we have to jump through to be a commercial fisherman with our vessels, and, no matter how you get a permit, whether it's leased or whatever, we have to we have to spend a lot of money to do what we do, and it's maybe that's an avenue to look at, to where we it would restrict, you know, somebody that is not a full-time commercial fisherman trying to use one of these permits and it going to somebody that's, you know, it's basically their hobby, and so just a concern I wanted to, you know, bring forward. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so I have a number of people that want to speak to this. Tom, I'm going to go to you, because you want to speak directly to something that Jimmy said, but I also have, in the queue, Andy and Charlie.

MR. ROLLER: Jimmy, I appreciate you bringing it up, because it is a problem. I know people that do it, and maybe I shouldn't use the word problem, but I know private recreational anglers which lease these permits so they can get around recreational limits, right, because, if you can afford a million-dollar boat, \$8,000, or \$9,000, to lease permit is nothing, you know, and people who are really big into the outdoors will spend millions of dollars on duck impoundments, and, you know, deer hunting plots. I do think it's a problem, and I do have concern, if we have a lot more licenses coming to the market, and this could be something that becomes an even bigger issue, right, for the industry, and so I appreciate you bringing that up.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and, I mean, I appreciate the discussion, and I don't think we're going to have necessarily all the answers today. One suggestion would be just to bring this back in April and talk about the cap and the leasing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree with Andy. I think that we should continue this discussion, maybe with some additional information about this, at the April subcommittee meeting, and that would be my suggestion. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and, yes, the fishery is changing, and, ideally, if we go through with the stopping the two-for-one, there will be a few more permits available, and hopefully they will be a little cheaper, more affordable to new entrants, but, yes, we can bring this forward, but I am skeptical that we should try to stop -- Try to start limiting the number of permits somebody might have, because, even if -- Let's say you stop one guy from having -- Let's say you set the limit at X, and, well, then he just has his wife get the permits, or somebody else, and there's so many ways to get around it, and so I don't want to put the permits office, you know, in a bad spot trying to figure out who is what, and so thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I've got more hands, but I'm going to go to Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I just want to comment related to the subcommittee meeting in April, and just making sure that there's appropriate expectations for that, because we're talking about a meeting that we'll have maybe a month or so to prepare for. We'll have an IPT meeting within the next couple of weeks, and then we're going to get whatever we can together for you all, but it's not going to necessarily be analysis heavy. It's going to be more language-focused, just because the analyses for social effects, economic effects, biological effects, all that will be in process, preparing for us to have a draft amendment for you in June, and so I just want to make sure that that is there.

As we get to April, I really think that the most productive use of that meeting would be more towards kind of tailoring language, but, the bigger the change that gets made in April -- Like, if you're just adjusting action language, then that's fine, and we can incorporate that, but if you're starting to do things like add alternatives, or, you know, make large changes to the amendment, going from that in April to a draft amendment in June is going to be a really big push, because then, any work that begins from our IPT meeting within the next like week or week-and-a-half that

we'll have, we're going to have to reach back out and say, oh, there's this additional thing that the subcommittee wants to throw on there, and you have that -- You know, you have to have that in by the briefing book within a few weeks, and so two weeks. I just want to make sure expectations are set for what work -- You know, how that time in April will be best used to move this amendment forward.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I hear you, but I would also say that's a big hunk of time in April, if we want to have a discussion about leasing, to figure out is it in or is it out, and I think that we would want to have that at that meeting, because we wouldn't necessarily have a subcommittee meeting at the June meeting, and you would just go right to the full Snapper Grouper Committee.

I personally would like to have a discussion about leasing. This is definitely coming up at the FWC level, and there are a lot of people wanting to eliminate the leasing of vessels, basically, for other fisheries that are managed by the FWC, but I'm going to go back to my list of hands. We're still on do we want to talk about this at the April meeting, and so I've heard a couple of no, but I've heard some yes. It seems like, if we even have some yes, we need to talk about it, because that's our big hunk of time, and so I have Amy and Tom in the queue. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair. I just think this conversation should showcase the fact that we do need to continue to have the conversation at the April meeting. I'm not exactly sure how to provide Mike some direction, but I think better understanding what the permits office can and cannot do with this idea of a hard break from -- If we were to move forward with something like this, is there the potential to have some sort of language that will stop this idea of leasing moving forward? I think we're just going to need some information, in order to have a better conversation, and I'm just not exactly sure what those questions are.

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

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. Just while we're on the discussion of permits, I just wanted to bring up the fact, and I appreciate that it has been discussed, and I just wish there was more discussion about the future of the SG 2 permit, and what that could look like, and I would just speak that -- You know, I know there's not a lot left, and they're all in Florida and North Carolina, but a few of those are in North Carolina, and they really matter to my community, right, and I know they really matter to the economies in Florida as well, and so I wish we were just looking at a way -- Just the future of them and what that could look like, whatever that is.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Maybe we can have a short discussion on that at the April meeting, because we did talk about that earlier this week, and decided that that might be too big of a topic, and that it would need to be considered at another time, but I'm just putting it out there. When we talk about leasing, we could talk about the thing that Tom is suggesting. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I just wanted to point out that that is within your list of agenda topics to be addressed by the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel at their April meeting. You all had asked, in December, for them to have input on that topic at their next meeting, and so that is on their agenda.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. All right, and so are we okay with talking about leasing when we get to the subcommittee meeting in April? Okay. I see heads nodding yes, and so I'm going

to leave that topic, and I'm going to go back to my list of hands that were about trip limits on other species, and so, Tom, you wanted to discuss trip limits on amberjack.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. Yes, and, I mean, we've had some discussion, and I know, you know, the idea of, because it is valid, localized depletion has been brought up, and that's one that concerns me a little bit about greater amberjack. What's interesting about this stock, as it currently sits, is the stock assessment doesn't seem to compute with reality, and I'm not going to say that the fishery is doing bad, but there just doesn't seem to be as many as I would like to believe.

When it comes to the localized depletion issues, while these fish are accessible offshore and on the shelf in great numbers, they move into the nearshore wrecks, and artificial reefs, and there is some user conflicts there. They're really important to the for-hire sector in my area, in southeast North Carolina in particular, and I'm just curious if -- I'm just concerned, if those trip limits really bump up, that we'll see some, you know, localized depletion, and potential user conflicts, on those on those more accessible rocks and reefs.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so is that food for thought for the subcommittee for April when thinking about the trip limits?

MR. ROLLER: I would hope it would be.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you so much. Trish, red porgy was your topic.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and I'm just concerned for discussing -- I'm concerned about red porgy, and, I mean, I looked at the SERFS data, and it's really going down too, and we're at a fifteen-fish limit now, and not making the ACL, and it just seems wrong to be considering increasing catch limits, or trip limits, on that particular species, and especially since it already has such a low trip limit, and we're not getting -- We're not meeting the ACL there, and so I just -- I would like to propose we remove red porgy.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Is that a motion?

MS. MURPHEY: **Sure.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: **All right, and so the motion is to remove red porgy from the trip limit considerations in Action 2.** Is there a second? Seconded by Carolyn. Under discussion. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I don't know if -- Maybe I looked in the wrong place, but I think it's pretty -- It's been pretty stable the past couple of years in the SERFS data, and, for that reason, and I think everything I listed the first day, I would not be in support of this motion. I think, at the very least, we need to continue having the discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I don't see how you can catch an ACL catching fifteen fish on a trip, even if you wanted to, and, yes, I get it that recruitment has, you know, been down, but I don't think moving it to -- Adding fifteen fish is going to really make a whole lot of difference, and it may give us some scientific information, because you're not going to go target fifteen fish, and you might make

a stop to catch thirty or forty-five fish, but you're not going to target fifteen, but I would be inclined to leave it in. I don't think it's going to change -- I don't think this has any way of really hurting the stock, as a lack of a better way of putting it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I've got a list of names of hands, and so, once again, if you're against the motion, then you're saying that red porgy would remain to be analyzed for the trip limit discussion, and so I have Trish, then Kerry, then Amy.

MS. MURPHEY: I was just going to say that I'm looking at the red porgy SERFS thing here, and it's not -- It's not steady. It's going down pretty good, and so that was one of the reasons -- Actually, if you look at that compared to the gray trigger, red porgy is going down much more, and faster, than gray trigger, and so, anyway, that's my logic. It just -- You know, it's on a rebuilding plan, and I just -- That's what I support, but, you know, whatever the group wants.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Trish. I have Kerry next.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and, I mean, we've been trying to fix her porgy since 1998, and I'm intimately familiar with it. I think, at this point, it's also pretty clear that it's not fishing effort that is causing the issue, and so, therefore, I don't believe that it's fishing effort that's going to -- Especially at this level. We're not talking a lot of -- A lot of increase in effort, like Charlie said, and you're not -- You're not going out of your way even to catch thirty fish, or forty-five fish, and so I -- It's just -- It's not fishing effort that's causing red porgy, and so I think, if the guys find them, and they're there on the spot, while they're catching their beeliners and their other fish, they should be able to keep more than fifteen, and so, yes, I pretty strongly oppose this motion, actually.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair. Trish kind of got to where I was. I mean, I am looking also at the index, and it is low. It is below the average abundance, but it is, in essence, stable. It's just stable low low, or stable low.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Are you guys ready for a vote on this motion, or does anybody else have any comments on it before we take the vote? **All right, and so, if you are voting in favor of the motion, then red porgy would be removed from Amendment says 60 for trip limit consideration in Action 2, and so, all those in favor of the motion, please raise your hand; those opposed, same sign; any abstentions. All right, and so, Myra, I counted -- I counted four in favor, and seven against, and so the motion fails.**

All right. While Myra is typing, is there any more discussion on this trip limit action, Action Number 2? I see more hands going up. Kerry, and then Amy. Okay. Amy, and then back to Kerry.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair. Also, can we scroll back up to see the numbers? It's the vermilion. From an analysis standpoint, I'm wondering if we should be considering taking off the 3,000 pounds gutted weight for the vermilion snapper in both season one and season two. **We heard, during public comment, that an increase of doubling it from 1,000 to 2,000 pounds would be life-changing, to quote a couple of the commenters, and I'm just wondering if 3,000 might be just a little too aggressive, and I would propose a motion to remove the 3,000-pound**

guttled weight from season one and two from the vermilion snapper and the analysis that's needed to do that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We have a motion. Do have a second? Seconded by Charlie. Under discussion, and so, once again, the motion is removing that highest trip limit consideration for vermilion snapper for season one and two, which is 3,000, and so I'm going to go back to my list of hands. I think I saw Charlie, Jimmy, Kerry. All right. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I would -- I think this is too many fish for one. Somebody trying to stay long enough to get 3,000 pounds is highly likely not going to have the quality of fish of somebody that getting 1,500 or 2,000, and so you're going to have -- You've got the possibility of flooding the markets, if a lot of people do it, and your quality of fish is not going to be as good, which is going to bring the prices down, and so that's just two reasons.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: I support removing it, for all the reasons that have been stated.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: One more consideration for the rationale is that we are getting that updated assessment, whatever we're calling it, in 2027 at some point, or soon, and it's coming, and so, if at that point, there's a great opportunity, if we see different signals then to go up -- If we need to.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Would anyone else like to speak to this motion? **Once again, this motion is to remove from consideration the 3,000-pound trip limit for vermilion snapper from the analysis, and this is for both seasons.** Any more discussion? **Any objection to this motion?** All right. **Motion carries.** All right. Anything else on trip limits? Kerry, you had your hand up, and was it on something other than vermilion? It was on vermilion.

All right, and so I think we're good to leave Action 2 and go into Action 3 which -- So this is not the specific language, but this is established the process for temporary trip limit increases or decreases for snapper grouper species. Instead of writing the language, what Mike has done here is included the points that we've discussed, and so I will start reviewing some of those points, and I believe that we have some questions, and we do, for the committee in here further down.

The subcommittee reviewed the language for step-ups and step-downs. Trip limit increases and decreases should be applied through an annual evaluation, such that years with landings significantly below the ACL would be followed with an increased trip limit in the following year. In years with landings that result in early closures, it would be followed with a decreased trip limit in the following year.

The process for adjusting the trip limit should be carried out through a temporary rule from the NMFS Regional Administrator. Temporary trip limit adjustments would be considered for the same group of species for which trip limit increases are being considered through Action 2, and that gets to Charlie's point, and so we need to fix this list right here of triggerfish, greater amberjack, hogfish, red grouper, red porgy, and vermilion, and so I think that -- I'm going to read all these points, and then let's come back to this, because I think that Charlie is wanting triggerfish

to be considered, but I think we just need to list out what species we want considered and not necessarily tie it to Action 2.

The subcommittee directed initial language be developed to consider trip limit adjustments up to 25 percent higher or 25 percent lower than the trip limit. The subcommittee directed staff to work with SERO staff to develop revised language for temporary trip limit adjustments.

An initial template of this language has been developed. The language will require further review by the IPT. The process would involve annual RA consultation with the council prior to the beginning of the next season, including projected landings for the ongoing season. The council would develop a reckon and recommend a trip limit for the next season. If the RA decides an adjusted trip limit should be implemented, the RA will issue a temporary rule setting the adjusted trip limit for the next season.

There are the questions from staff, but, before we get into those, can we go back to the species that are listed here and talk about what species we want analyzed, and it doesn't have to be the same species as Action 2, and so let's have that discussion, and then we'll go to the other questions. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, Bullet 2 presents a problem, because, the way it's worded, it says that evaluation such that years with landings significantly below the ACL would be followed with an increased trip limit the following years. Well, triggerfish falls into that category, right, and we don't necessarily -- This is where we're going to get stuck. Sometimes below the ACL is not necessarily because they're trip limited, and it's for other reasons, and so how is that addressed?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I also thought that we had a discussion about like a three-year running average or something, but I didn't see that in in there. and so let's go to Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: In kind of the process, the template, that we've discussed, you don't have to increase the trip limit, and that's kind of why there's the opportunity for the council to have that, you know, consultation with the Regional Administrator, because, if it's the situation that you're talking about, even if gray triggerfish is included in this action, and we have a year where, you know, the landings are below, and you could recommend to the Regional Administrator for an increase, you could also, at that same time, say we have this and this rationale of why, even though we can, we don't want to in this situation, and we recommend a different trip level, or keeping the same trip level, or whatever that is, and so that's why there's that that step to have that consultation, that you don't have to, but you can.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think I like the way this is going, that, you know, that we're going to meet and have a discussion, and we will be hearing from our fishermen, and even though let's say gray triggerfish aren't reaching the ACL, but the fishermen tell us, and we see the science behind it, we could ask the Regional Administrator that, hey, we want to change the trip limit up or down, or leave it alone, and I think this can probably maybe help set the path where we can do quicker changes, be more dynamic, be more responsive, instead of waiting for an assessment every whenever we get them, and so I see this as a really good opening pathway to test something like this. I'm pretty excited.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and well said. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I appreciate Mike putting this together, and I had the same kind of reaction as Kerry about that language, and so I agree, right, with how Mike explained it, and it's not like it's locked in. Some of the language we were proposing as well was including like a trigger, and like, if we didn't hit a certain percentage of the annual catch limit, we could then automatically kind of trigger that conversation with the council, but that doesn't mean, just because you fished under the catch limit, that we would be coming back to you to discuss trip limits every time.

A couple things I just want to mention, while I have the microphone, and so Shep and I have spent some time talking this week, and you provided, obviously, the Regional Administrator some authority to accomplish certain activities, and, for example, when a quota is reached, to close the fishery, or to project the season and close the fishery, based on that projection, and that does give me discretion, but it's pretty limited in scope, and pretty narrow in scope, and so that's, I think, one of the challenges that we're going to have to work through from a legal standpoint, is what does the process look like, because, right now, it's pretty open-ended.

Yes, there's some bounds with regard to how high or low the trip limit could be, but, if the council is then got providing guidance, or recommendations, you know, would that trigger rulemaking, and we want to avoid that, and so I just wanted to kind of lay that out, that there's still some things we've got to figure out here, but I at least like the attempt at where we're going with some of the flexibility here, and I agree with Charlie, and others, this would be much more dynamic if we can accomplish this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. John, to that?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, kind of to that, and also just to the logistics of it. I think, when the staff, IPT, et cetera look at this, I would like them to give some thought to logistics, and how this actually works through, and what's the timing of these different events. At what council meeting do we need to squeeze out time to have this consultation between the council and the RA, and, you know, how long does it take to get a trip limit in place, and so then when do you need to have this consultation, which then backs up to how far through the fishery are they when they're making this projection, and I would like the staff to give you a very honest accounting of the reality of this process, with the timing that we work in.

I kind of raise this because of recent difficulties that we talked about at this meeting in dealing with this step-down in Spanish and how difficult it's been in the agency saying like we just can't meet this timeline, and so I want staff to come back and not, you know -- Be very realistic with you guys about what this means.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, and so I would love to start knocking off some of these questions, but, first, I would like to talk about those species. We removed the language that said this was tied to Action 2, but Myra has the species highlighted there, and so could you please comment on what are the right species? I have Kerry, and then Jimmy. Okay, and so I have Jimmy, and then Amy.

MR. HULL: Okay. I'm going back to the questions from staff about is the 25 percent, the guardrails so to speak that we put in there -- I agree with those, but I think we should also add what we just discussed of the, also, you could leave the no adjustment whatsoever, and the word "consultation" above, in the bullet point, is really important, that we have the consultation with the Regional Administrator about those adjustments.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. It looks like we're capturing that. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Going back to your species to consider in this action, for discussion purposes, and perhaps for some analysis, I think we need to consider gag. They are in a rebuilding plan. Every year, the ACL for both the commercial and the recreational season will be slightly increasing, and, looking at the last couple of years with that 300-pound trip limit, there could potentially be some ACL left on the table at the end of that fishing year, and so I would like to see some analysis for gag, and then perhaps also the hook-and-line for the golden tilefish. I know that can be a little bit of an interesting scenario from year to year, but I do think that those two, specific to that hook-and-line fishery, should be looked at from a step-up and/or step-down perspective.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Those are added, and I see lots of thumbs-up to both of those species. Would anybody else like to comment on the species list or the two blue questions there from staff? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: My comment is really the first question, and so the plus or minus 25 percent, and I'm just looking at what we did in Action 2, and it seems way too narrow compared to what we were considering in Action 2, and so, when we were bouncing some ideas off Mike, and I was just using vermilion as an example, and that would be essentially a 100 percent increase, up to 2,000 pounds, right, and so I think we would maybe be better off using the like specific trip limit range, rather than a percentage, and it would be species-specific.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike, do you have any thoughts on that? Is that okay to do that and change it away from the plus or minus 25 percent, and instead to specific trip limit ranges?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess I would need to know what those trip limit ranges would be. Yes, and it's okay whatever way you want to do it, but is -- You know, would you want the example given of the maximum amount of increase would be to double the trip limit, and what are you thinking in that realm, because that's -- That kind of defines, you know, what the bounds would be of what that trip limit could be, and are you -- Are you also considering then -- Down at the lower end, are you considering it -- It doesn't have to be equal upper and lower, but, yes, because the lower end -- If the higher end is, you know, double the trip limit, the lower end would be zero, and so is that the range that you want to be in, or do you want to set some other range, but having an idea of that coming out of this would really help us be able to write this document.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. More discussion on that? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I'm not sure how to get there from here, but we need to figure out, you know, how to lower say gray triggerfish, and maybe do it incrementally, in 200-pound increments, or something like that, but we need to figure out how to do it, and I don't know.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and the percentage I think is, to me, a larger conversation, but using vermilion was perhaps not the best species to discuss, because, ultimately, if, under Action 2, there's already an established revision to the trip limit, I wouldn't want a 100 percent trip limit on top of what we perhaps are going to be doing in Action 2, and so I think we're just going to need to think about this a little bit more.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I know, and I lean towards the percentage, but we -- I understand that we need to provide something, so that the action could be set up and analyzed, and I lean towards the percentage, because two-times the newly-established trip limit seems too much, or decreasing it to zero, with this mechanism, seems too drastic. I saw a hand over here, but I'll go to Shep first.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, I would just say keep in mind, as you've been discussing it, you intend to have a conversation, and it's not a mandatory thing that -- Right, and you wouldn't automatically -- You would discuss how much you wanted to increase it each time, and it isn't like you're automatically defaulting to the highest increase allowable under this process. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and my comment was kind of assuming status quo baseline trip limits, and so we wouldn't necessarily be, you know, increasing them in Action 2, and, obviously, I don't know that at this point, right, but, if we do increase them, then I agree that the range, or the percentage, might make more sense.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so I'm going to look to Mike, and so we've heard some different things here, and so we've also heard that this action is loosely tied to Action 2, and so, if we are assuming that we're going to increase trip limits for some of these species, then another increase on top of that, that could double it, is probably too much, and it sounds like we don't necessarily want to drop to zero, but we also are saying, in these bullet points, that the Regional Administrator is going to come back to the council before taking the action, and are we, with this action, setting up the range of what we want the Regional Administrator to look at for each species, or are we just setting up the process that says the Regional Administrator comes back to the council, and then the council then decides the up and down, and so I have Kerry, and then back to Andy.

MS. MARHEFKA: I think right now we just have to be setting up the process, because I'm guessing what we're going to hear is we need to be very mindful of the bounds of this application, so that we don't trigger comment, and like the discretion has to be very, very narrow, I think is what I understand, and so I think, for the sake of now, we just come up with the range that -- We are going to pick a number from a range, and that's going to be the number.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So I was with you all the way until the end, and so then are you suggesting that we need to give staff the range right now for each one of those species, and do you see -- That's where I got hung-up. Andy, did you have your hand up?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and so, from an analysis standpoint, I would have to talk to my team about how critical it is to actually have that range hammered down, right, and I think more

important is the process, and so maybe we could just ask the IPT to give some thought based on this conversation.

I want to kind of drill down the percentage point one more time though, and so let's say we make a decision, in Action 2, to increase the vermilion snapper trip limit from 1,000 pounds to 1,500 pounds. Then you're giving me the flexibility to increase that by 25 percent, or decrease it by 25 percent, and, well, the increase of 25 percent is 375 pounds, right, and so the maximum I could go is 1,875, and not 2,000, right, and so is that too narrow of a range? Do you want to be able to go a full 500 pounds, and would it be easier just to say no higher than a 500-pound increase, and no lower than a 500-pound decrease, rather than working in percentages, right, and I feel like that's a little cleaner, and more straightforward, and so that's why I was suggesting that. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and that's one way to skin the cat. The other way might be, instead of using 25 percent, use 50 percent, because 25 percent, and let's say if we want to move gag grouper, that's at a 300-pound trip limit, is not a lot of fish, where it is getting to be a significant amount of fish on vermilion, and so maybe we want to give -- Have some options of 25 percent and 50 percent, or something like that, and then, after we have our consultation, then we can all figure out, you know, and round stuff up to the nearest hundred, and maybe that's an option.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so I'm looking to Mike about -- It seems like we're getting away from the plus or minus 25 percent. Instead, we're thinking about some sort of poundage amount, as opposed to a percentage. Mike, do you want to -- Also that, for April, it seems like we're focusing more on the process, or the procedure to do it, and we're having a little difficulty coming up with the amounts for each species, but the percentage seems to be challenging. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and I think, kind of along the lines of what Charlie has pointed out, the species that you're including in this action have a pretty wide range of trip limits, and so a set poundage amount is going to mean something completely different for red grouper or gag than what it will mean to vermilion. Now, you can set -- You can also specify those to be species-specific. You can do that, and maybe that's a conversation that you have, and you narrow down in April, is what those species-specific considerations are.

I guess kind of what I'm hearing from -- Starting to build initial analysis, what we can do is -- What we can do is possibly -- If 50 percent is kind of an upper end, we can set that as an initial mark, and then tier down a couple of levels, to have analysis put forward, and that would also include some of those potential set poundage amounts.

It may be -- You know, we may be overshooting it a little bit, but then you'll have -- You know, you'll be able to pare down from more information than less, and so that might be a way that we can kind of approach it, and then, hopefully in April, we can get a bit more definition on what you all are interested in, or if you want to dive into specific species on what poundage amounts would be appropriate.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I think we've had a lot of discussion on this, and I appreciate it. I don't think we intended to have another subcommittee meeting all over again, and so I appreciate this discussion. I feel like we have what we need for this particular action, and we'll have more

information on this at the April meeting, which could include setting particular poundage for particular species, or a percentage, but, yes, it means very different things for different species, and so I would like to look at the final action that's in that document when Mike is done typing.

All right, and so the final action in that document is to revise the bottom longline gear stowage requirements and species that may be harvested while gear is onboard and stowed. The subcommittee clarified that bottom gear is specifically noted because it's already a legal gear in the snapper grouper fishery. Therefore, it is not subject to the same restrictions as for unauthorized gear.

The subcommittee discussed the possibility of a notification requirement for vessels that intend to switch from or to bottom longline gear during the trip. The subcommittee discussed the timing of the notification to be prior to trip departure or at-sea, and preferred the notification to occur prior to trip departure. Add another alternative that is the same as Alternative 2, except add a notification requirement for prior to departure. Are we good with this? I feel like we had a lot of discussion on this, and we have some specific direction in there, and we can look at this again when it comes back in April. All right. I appreciate that discussion.

We're going to go back to the regular committee report. All right, and so next up is the spawning special management zones. The committee received a presentation on the five spawning special management zones that were created in 2017, where fishing for, harvest of, and/or possession of snapper grouper species is prohibited. Three of these SSMZs are natural sites with a sunset on regulations after ten years, while the two artificial reef ones did not have the sunset provision.

The council intended to use the ten-year period to gather additional information to determine whether the natural sites are functioning as effective spawning areas for the focal species listed in the system management plan for the SSMZs.

To support the evaluation of the SSMZs and other protected areas, the council established the System Management Plan Workgroup. The work group is in the process of finalizing an evaluation and conducting the review. Their report will be provided to the council to consider extending regulations for the SSMZs or allowing the regulations to sunset. The committee discussed concerns with fishing access, compliance and enforcement, and the importance of the areas for spawning fish and bycatch.

The committee approved a motion to initiate a framework amendment to remove or extend the sunset provision for the SSMZs, and the committee made Motion Number 1 to initiate a framework amendment to consider a range of options to remove the sunset provision or extend the sunset provision by ten to twenty years for the spawning special management zones, and, on behalf of the committee, I so move. Any additional discussion? Any objection?
All right. **Motion carries.**

All right. Then the committee went to the headboat vessel limits. The council requested an analysis exploring per-angler-based bag limits for federally-inspected and permitted headboats as an alternative to vessel-based bag limits for gag, black grouper, scamp, yellowmouth, and snowy.

The committee received a recap of previous discussions and recommendations, including input from the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel, and staff also presented analyses examining changes in landings associated with shifting from a vessel-based limit to a limit of one fish per six anglers.

The committee discussion focused on whether possession limits based on the number of anglers onboard could help reduce the negative impacts that vessel-based limits may have on the headboat component of the recreational sector. The committee was concerned with including snowy grouper in the amendment, and ultimately decided to remove them, due to a low level of discards and a low number of vessels reporting landings and concerns about the stock.

Following discussion, the committee approved a motion to initiate a framework amendment to consider possession limits of one fish per six anglers on headboats for gag, black grouper, scamp, and yellowmouth grouper. The committee made Motion Number 2 to initiate a framework amendment to adjust the headboat limits to number of fish per six passengers for gag, black grouper, scamp, and yellowmouth grouper, and, on behalf of the committee, I so move. Any additional discussion? Any objection? All right. That motion carries.

Then the committee looked at the allocation review for vermilion snapper, and so, at the December 2023 meeting, the council approved the allocation review guidelines and updated the allocation review trigger policy. The guidelines specify how sector allocations for managed species will be reviewed and documented. While the policy specifies when allocation reviews will occur, one of the criteria that the council chose to trigger an allocation review is time-based, noting that each species should have its sector allocations reviewed at least once every seven years.

For this meeting, the council reviewed the current sector allocations for vermilion snapper, since the species have met the time-based review criterion, and, in accordance with the guidelines, a summary allocations report will be developed, based on the council discussion, and presented to the council for approval at the June meeting.

The council offered the following comments and guidance. The council noted that existing sector allocations for vermilion snapper are sufficient for the fishery. Neither the commercial nor recreational sectors are fully landing their sector ACLs in recent years, with no early closures. Thus the current allocations are meeting the needs of the current fishery. The existing recreational allocation is working well for both the private and for-hire components.

It was noted that the current ACL for the recreational sector includes MRIP Coastal Household Telephone Survey estimates, and revisions are currently underway to update landing estimates for the recreational sector. As such, revising sector allocations at this time, and without a new assessment, would be problematic. The innovation plan for the snapper grouper fishery and Snapper Grouper Amendment 61, and I think that that should be 60, are being developed and may help guide the council's future allocation decisions, once implemented.

Sector allocations for vermilion snapper should be revisited when the next stock assessment for the species has been completed and recreational landings from the MRIP-FES are integrated into the catch level recommendations.

All right. Then the committee went into the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit revision, Amendment 61. The Snapper Grouper FMU currently consists of fifty-five species, many of

which are unassessed or have low landings, and the council is considering changes to the species composition of the Snapper Grouper FMU through Amendment 61 to streamline management of the fishery.

In doing so, the council has selected seventeen species to evaluate whether they continue to need conservation and management under a federal plan. The council has indicated that these species could be removed from the FMU altogether, or could be designated as ecosystem component species, or receive some other type of management. The committee reviewed summary comments received from the Law Enforcement AP. The committee reviewed the input on the draft purpose of need statement and the species that will continue to be considered in the amendment.

In doing so, the committee provided the following guidance and direction to staff. Edit the draft purpose and need statement, add a discussion of managing species with the resources that are available, further edit the need statement to include topics in addition to executive orders, and also incorporate discussion of agency funding priorities and narrowing the scope of species that are managed. Then you can see the direction to staff there for the different species. This will come back to us at the next meeting. I'm not going to sit here and read all of this at this point.

We did talk about, later in the meeting, getting some type of table that comes back in the document, that the tables are very helpful as we look at this, and I just want to note the part at the bottom, that species that will not be further considered in Amendment 61, and so they'll be continued to be managed in the Snapper Grouper FMP, with no immediate changes, and those three species are cubera, queen, and banded rudderfish.

All right. I'm going to move on to black sea bass, the black sea bass follow-up. In June of 2025, the council paused work on Amendment 56 until updates to the SEDAR 76 stock assessment, including incorporation of updated recreational catch estimates from MRIP, have been made. The council staff reviewed the historical timeline of Amendment 56 and where it stood when work was paused.

The next step in development of this amendment is the release of updated recreational catch estimates, currently scheduled for later in 2026. After this, the assessment will be completed, and development of Amendment 56 will resume. Amendment 56 will address long-term management actions. Short-term actions were already addressed in Regulatory Amendment 37, which is being prepared for submission to NOAA Fisheries. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: I was wondering if the council would like us to draft a letter to the Office of Science and Technology asking if they could potentially look at getting estimates earlier for black sea bass, in order to get this assessment moving along.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that's a great idea. All right. It looks like people are in favor of that, and I see heads nodding. Thank you, Chip. All right. Now we're going to go into yellowtail snapper and mutton snapper, which is Amendment 44. The Joint Snapper Grouper Amendment 44/Reef Fish Amendment 55 is in response to SEDAR 79 for mutton snapper and SEDAR 96 for yellowtail snapper, where both assessments indicated that the stocks are not overfished or experiencing overfishing.

The amendment will establish the stock OFL and ABC, jurisdictional apportionment between the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils, establish regional ACLs, and modify South Atlantic sector allocations for each species.

The committee reviewed a decision document, discussed the updated amendment timeline, and data attributions for Monroe County. Staff also reviewed the actions and alternatives and started discussions on methods to update the weight conversion for mutton snapper recreational ACL. There was no committee action needed.

Then the committee looked at the innovative management approach for the snapper grouper fishery, and so this proposed approach is intended as a reference document to help the committee in their discussions, and not a policy or in any way a binding document, and so there were suggestions to add that this is a living document. The committee reviewed the draft goalposts and principles and offered suggestions for clarifying language, including the committee's willingness to use non-traditional data sources to inform management decisions.

There is a copy of the updated document at the end of this committee report that you guys can look at. We highlighted in yellow everything that was changed at this meeting, and so I'm going to let you guys look at that, and the plan would be that this document is going to be coming back to the council for your binders at future meetings.

All right. Snapper Grouper MSE, as part of the ongoing South Atlantic snapper grouper MSE, recent research has examined angler preferences to better understand attitudes and fishing behavior within the recreational fishery. The results are intended to inform enhancements to the snapper grouper MSE and support future decision-making by the South Atlantic Council.

The research identified distinct groups of anglers with differing preferences for management approaches, and findings from this work will be presented to the snapper grouper MSE workgroup for consideration and model development. The committee recommended continuing with the previously-recommended management approaches of aggregate bag limits, mandatory stopping, temporal management, and spatial management, and suggested adding to the snapper grouper aggregate limit a component to stop bottom fishing once the snapper grouper aggregate limit is reached.

Then the committee went into the topics for the Snapper Grouper AP meeting. We went over this yesterday, and I'm not going to go over it again. The proposed list of topics is there. We've talked about that actually also today as well, and then we went into three Other Business items.

The first item under Other Business was blueline tilefish. In February, the Mid-Atlantic Council sent a letter to our council requesting population of the joint council subcommittee to determine allocation of blueline tilefish ABC north of Cape Hatteras, and the folks that we suggested were Dewey, Tom, Amy, and Kerry as the alternate will serve as South Atlantic Council reps on this subcommittee.

Another Other Business item is were commercial trip limits applied to sale, and the committee directed staff to include consideration of revisions to trip limit applications to sale of fish and clarification of trip completion to Amendment 60.

Under black sea bass Other Business, the committee directed staff to develop a framework amendment to consider reopening the nearshore seasonal closed areas to on-demand black sea bass pot fishing and changing the trip limit for black sea bass pots. The committee directed this item to be included on the AP's April agenda and to include an analysis of commercial catch by gear in recent years. Then we have a question, and do we want to consider a motion to initiate this framework amendment? I think that would be cleanest. Charlie, would you like to make that motion?

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, Madam Chair. **I would like to direct staff to initiate a framework amendment to open black sea bass pots to on-demand gear.** Is that the way it should be phrased?

MS. MCCAWLEY: In the closed area, right?

MR. PHILLIPS: **In the closed area.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Mike is grabbing the language. Standby. Okay. Charlie, does that capture your motion? I'll read it. **Initiate a framework amendment to consider reopening the nearshore seasonal closed areas to on-demand black sea bass pot fishing and changing the trip limit for black sea bass pots.** Okay. Do we have a second? Seconded by Jimmy. Any discussion? We did have discussion in committee, under Other Business about this, and we now have a motion to do it. Any further discussion on this motion? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: With this -- I'm in favor of the opening using this gear, but, as we're making this framework, I guess there will be other analyses that will be done, because I fear that, with this limited amount of ACL we have, that you basically could catch all the quota up with this black sea bass trap, and, if anybody else has a different analogy, or thoughts, please share it with me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and we talked about that a little bit when we were in committee, and so I don't know that that modifies the motion. I think it's that was just kind of direction to staff on analysis. Mike is nodding his head yes. Okay. Any more discussion? All right. **Any objection to this motion?** All right. **Seeing none, the motion carries.**

All right, and so then we have a lengthy timing and tasks motion there, and we did decide, during the workplan to convene the Snapper Grouper Commercial Subcommittee before the June council meeting, and, in fact, we said that it would be the week of the Snapper Grouper AP meeting, and then Mike is adding another item to write a letter requesting early information on black sea bass catch limits, and can folks scan the rest of the timing and tasks motion and make sure that we're good with all of that? Then, ultimately, we'll need somebody to make it, but let's make sure it's the right motion before we make it. I see heads nodding that it looks like we have everything in there. Is somebody be willing to make this timing and tasks motion? Jimmy.

MR. HULL: **I would like to make the following motion to direct staff to do the following: continue development of Amendment 60 for consideration of public hearing approval in June 2026; convene the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel in April; initiate development of framework amendments to address spawning special management zones, headboat trip limits, and reopening of nearshore seasonal closed areas for on-demand black sea bass pots; continue development of Amendment 44 for consideration of public hearing approval in**

June, pending data availability; continue development of Amendment 61 for review in June 2026; develop a draft allocation review report for vermilion snapper for approval in June 2026; convene the Snapper Grouper Commercial Subcommittee before the June 2026 council meeting; and write a letter to OST requesting early access for black sea bass catch estimates from MREP.

MS. MCCAULEY: All right. Is there a second for that motion? Seconded by Charlie. Any more discussion of the timing and tasks motion? **Any objection to the timing and tasks motion?** All right. **The motion carries.** Is there any other business to come before Snapper Grouper Committee? All right. Seeing no hands, I will happily pass it back to our chair. Thanks, everybody.

MS. MURPHEY: Good job, everybody. I guess we already went through our upcoming meetings, and so do is there any other business to discuss here in Jekyll Island? Seeing none, I will adjourn this council meeting. Thank you, everyone. It was great.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on March 6, 2026.)

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Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
April 23, 2026

FC 2 - Thurs. 3/5/2024

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FC 2 - Thurs. 3/5/2024

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

Dr. Clay Porch

Shep Grimes

~~Shep Grimes~~

Kristin Foss

Kathy Knowlton

FC 2 - Fri, 3/6/2024

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✓ Kerry	Marhefka		
Tom	Pease		Seventh Coast Guard District
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✓ Tom	Roller		
wls ✓ Robert	Spottswood	Jr.	
✓ Andy	Strelcheck		NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region
Deirdre	Warner-Kramer		Office of Marine Conservation OES / OMC
TBD	TBD		U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Representative

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Rick DeVitor

Nikhil Matha

Kristen Foss

March 2026 Council

Attendee Report: Meeting

Report Generated:

03/09/2026 07:35 AM EDT

Webinar ID	Actual Start Date/Time	Duration	# Registered
535-165-571	03/05/2026 07:52 AM EST	8 hours 35 minutes	218

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Attended	Interest Rating	Last Name	First Name
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Barile	Peter
Barrows	Katline
Bernier	Quinn
Bianchi	Alan
Blough	Heather
Bogdan	Jennifer
Borland	Gary
Brantley	William
Brouwer	Myra
Bublely	Walter
Bunting	Matthew
Byrd	Julia
Califf	Julie
Carruthers	Tom
Clawson	Jessica
Cox	Jack
Crandall	Chelsey
Crosson	Scott
Curtis	Christina
Curtis	Judd
DeVictor	Rick
Dingle	Julie
Dobbs	Jeffrey
Dukes	Amy

Dyar	Ben
Evans	Joseph
Flowers	Henry
Floyd	Brad
Foor	Brandon
Foss	Kristin
Franco	Dawn
Gibson	Daniel
Gooding	Elizabeth
Gore	Karla
Griffin	Aimee
HEMILRIGHT	DEWEY
Hadley	John
Hale	Robert
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Helmey	Judy
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Huber	Jeanette
Hull	Jimmy
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Klibansky	Lara
Knowlton	Kathy
Larkin	Michael
Lazarre	Dominique
Lee	Jennifer
Levy	Mara
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Malinowski	Richard
Marhefka	Kerry
Markwith	Anne
Marquez	Johnny
Masi	Michelle
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McMullen	Ryan
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Murphey	Trish
Neer	Julie
Newman	Thomas
Noay	Jamiah
Norcross	Jennifer
Oliver	Ashley
Ott	Emily
Package-Ward	Christina
Palmrose	Kristin
Peterson	Cassidy
Phillips	Charlie
Pierdinock	Michael
Ramsay	Chloe
Records	David
Robbins	Megan
Roller	Tom
S	Emma
SAWICKI	KIM
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Smith	Leah
Snyder	Dave
Spurgin	Kali
Starling	Savannah
Stemle	Adam
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Stephens	Haley
Stephenson	Sarah
Sweetman	CJ
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Wamer	David
White	Geoff
Whitmer	Morgan
Whitmer	Morgan
Williams	Travis
Withers	Meg

Zapf	Daniel
colby	barrett
collier	chip
gloeckner	david
gwin	earl sonny
marinko	jeff
plessett	eric
sandorf	scott
zales	bob
Agar	J
Atkinson	Seth
Barbieri	Luiz
Beal	Bob
Beyer	George
Bonura	Vincent
Brantley	William
Brewster-Geisz	Karyl
Brogan (Oceana)	Gib
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Carter	David
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Dancy	Kiley
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Degan	Jacqui
DiJohnson	Alex
DuBeck	Guy
Dubniczki	Hayden
Dunn	Russell
Emory	Meaghan
Fango	Ginamel
Farnell	Paula
Feldman	Lindsey
Finch	Margaret
Gahm	Meghan
Garcia Moliner	Graciela
Gray	Alisha
Griner	Robert
Guyas	Martha
Harrison	Alana
Hartig	Ben
Hechanova	Riza

Howell	Scott
Hurff	Kieley
Jones	John
Kellison	Todd
Kent	Russell
Kirkman	Rayman
Klibansky	Lara
Leach	Scott
Ledet	vicki
Lee	Max
Leonard	Eddie
Locke	Charles
Lopez-Mercer	Maria
M Tornabene	Essence
Mackesey	Brendan
Mackesey	Brendan
McMahan	Trevor
McMullen	Ryan
Merck	Nicole
Merrifield	Mike
Miranda	David
Morrison	Wendy
Muffley	Brandon
Murphy	Michael
O'Donnell	Kelli
Parsell	Steven
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Prada	Martha
Reed	Steven
Reichert	Marcel
Reynolds	Kris
Richard	Andrew
Rindone	Ryan
Rothman	Carl
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Shester	Geoff
Smillie	Nick
Spratt	Paige
Stanley	Sydney
Thomas	Michael

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spottswood

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Meredith
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ariel
00Robert

March 2026 Council

Attendee Report: Meeting

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Webinar ID	Actual Start Date/Time	Duration	# Registered
535-165-571	03/06/2026 07:56 AM EST	3 hours 19 minutes	221

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Bruger	Catherine
Bubley	Walter
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Curtis	Judd
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Dyar	Ben
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Foss	Kristin
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Gore	Karla
Guyas	Martha

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Harrison
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Howington
Hull
Iberle
Iverson
Keppler
Kersting
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Lee
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Sinkus
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Smillie
Smith

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Wiley
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Nick
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Starling	Savannah
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Stephen	Jessica
Stephens	Haley
Stephenson	Sarah
Sweetman	CJ
Talia	Jenna
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Turley	Brendan
Vara	Mary
Vecchio	Julie
Walsh	Mick
Wamer	David
White	Geoff
Whitmer	Morgan
Whitmer	Morgan
Williams	Travis
Withers	Meg
Zapf	Daniel
collier	chip
gloeckner	david
gwin	earl sonny
sandorf	scott
spottswood	00Robert
zales	bob
Agar	J
Appelman	Max
Atkinson	Seth
Bailey	Adam
Bajema	Jordan
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Gahm	Meghan
Garcia Moliner	Graciela
Gray	Alisha
Griffin	Aimee
Griner	Robert
Hartig	Ben
Hechanova	Riza
Hildreth	Delaine
Howell	Scott
Huber	Jeanette
Hurff	Kieley
Jones	John
Kellison	Todd
Kennedy	Todd
Kent	Russell
Kimrey	chris
Kirkman	Rayman
Klibansky	Lara
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Markwith	Anne
Marquez	Johnny
McMullen	Ryan
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Meehan	Sean
Merck	Nicole
Merrifield	Mike
Merrifield	Jeanna
Morrison	Wendy
Mottola	Rick
Muffley	Brandon
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Shester	Geoff
Snyder	Dave
Spratt	Paige
Stanley	Sydney
Thomas	Michael

Vitiello
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Wilms
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Withers
Wolfe
colby
elder
fredieu
marinko
plessett
poholek

Matthew
Matt
John
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Alyssa
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