

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL

Webinar

February 7, 2022

TRANSCRIPT

Council Members

Mel Bell, Chairman
Robert Beal
Chris Conklin
Judy Helmey
Jessica McCawley
Tom Roller
Laurilee Thompson

Dr. Carolyn Belcher, Vice Chair
Chester Brewer
Tim Griner
Kerry Marhefka
Trish Murphey
Andy Strelcheck
Spud Woodward

Staff Members

Myra Brouwer
John Carmichael
Dr. Judd Curtis
Kelly Klasnick
Kim Iverson
Dr. Mike Schmidtke

Julia Byrd
Dr. Chip Collier
John Hadley
Allie Iberle
Roger Pugliese
Christina Wiegand

Attendees and Invited Participants

Rick DeVictor
Dr. Jack McGovern

Shep Grimes

Additional attendees and invited participants attached.

The Full Council Session of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened via webinar on Monday, February 7, 2022, and was called to order by Chairman Mel Bell.

MR. BELL: Welcome, everyone, to this special meeting of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. I am Mel Bell, the Chair. It's a one-topic, one-item meeting today, and this is something that we've been needing to spend some time on, and we wanted to make sure that we could give adequate time to this topic and to hearing all the great stuff the council staff have put together, in terms of this concept, and so, without further ado, I will get us rolling into the agenda, and so I will call us to order.

The first item would be Approval of the Agenda. Are there any desired modifications to the agenda? If so, raise your hand. I don't see any hands, and so are there any objections to the agenda? No, and so the agenda will be approved as it's written, and it's a very short agenda, like I said, one item.

The first thing after that is I would like to have an opportunity for members of the public, and, if you would like to make a brief comment on this one agenda item that we have, we can give a little time to that right now, and I don't want to spend a huge amount of time, but I would be glad to give folks a couple of minutes, if there's something they would like to say at this time. Just please raise your hand.

For those that -- The hand-raising, remember the simplest thing, that red is raised. If you click on the little green hand-thing, I will turn red, and red is raised, and that's the best way to remember that. Okay. No hands. We can also see how we are at the end, perhaps, and, if we've got some time, we could perhaps revisit public comment at that point.

As I mentioned, we've got one agenda item. Council staff, primarily John Hadley, are going to do all the talking, which is good, and I am losing my voice, but we're going to spend the next few hours, and there will be some breaks, and don't worry. We will take appropriate breaks, and so John will basically start working us through this presentation on the allocation decision tree blueprint.

Recall that, back in September, we had directed staff to kind of head down this road, but, as I said, it's not a simple thing, factoring in other things, such as the biological and social and economic data, when you're considering allocation decisions, and so it's a little more involved than simply looking at landings, and so there's a lot to it, and we'll let John kind of work us through this, and other staff will weigh-in at different points, and then there are some natural break points, where we'll have discussion.

The idea is for us to hear what staff put together, and there is a document that was in your briefing binder, basically this one document, which is well done, in terms of working us all through this, and so I would encourage you to read that as well, but I think that will do it, and so, John, whenever you're ready to roll, and we'll have points where we break, and we can have discussion and question at those points. Then, from our standpoint, our action, if you will, will be the feedback that we give staff and any direction particularly at the end. Okay, and so, John, it is your show.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you, Mel. I appreciate that, and thank you, everybody, for tuning in and dedicating your Monday afternoon. I think Mel kind of hit the nail on the head with

the introduction, but, overall, we're going to be looking over the draft blueprint that's been put together for using allocation decision trees to apply biological, social, and economic considerations in allocation decisions, and, before I get started, I just wanted to point out that there are several different members of the working group that have kind of supported this all along, and the core working group, if you will, has been Dr. Mike Schmidtke, Christina Wiegand, myself, Dr. Scott Crosson with the Science Center, and also Myra Brower.

On top of that, I certainly would be remiss if I didn't mention Dr. Chip Collier for all his help with the data, and also the programming for the Shiny app, which we'll get to later on in the presentation, but, also, when they say it takes a village, this one has been kind of that case, because, on top of the working group, we also had many members from the Socioeconomic Panel, the Scientific and Statistical Committee, and several AP members that have weighed-in on this throughout the process.

Without further ado, we will jump into the presentation itself, and, just to kind of frame the request of the council and where we're going to go with this today, the idea is to consider the proposed decision tree approach and provide some background, and so just a general overview, to kind of orient everyone, and then we'll get into the specific decision tree questions, and there is going to be a break after each major topic, where the council is asked for specific feedback on that topic, whether it be biological related, economic related, or social related.

Then, at the very end, we'll get into the example decision tree tool, as requested by the council, and the council wanted to look at greater amberjack as sort of your guinea pig species and to do a draft decision tree.

Overall, we're looking for general feedback on the potential usefulness of the approach, and, really, are there any changes that you've seen that should be made, and those can really run the gamut, but we're really looking at, specifically, are there any changes to the topics that need to be addressed, and then also the structure of the tool itself, and then we'll wrap up at the very end, looking at final timing of the review and potential approval, and so, depending on how this conversation goes today, there are maybe some items that we could come back around to at the March 2022 meeting, and we're looking for guidance on that, there again at the very end.

As a little bit of a background and introduction, the council is -- It's no news to the council members, but, really, there's been an increased attention on sector allocations. A few years ago, there was the Government Accountability Office report on sector allocations in the Southeast, and it was recommending that councils consider multiple pieces of data in sector allocation decisions, such as trends in catch and landings, stock assessment results, economic analyses, social indicator analyses, and ecosystem models.

On top of this, as we have discussed at several of the recent council meetings, there is the topic of the revised method for estimating recreational landings, and so, essentially, the currency has changed for how recreational landings will be accounted for going forward, as well as how they have been estimated going back in time, and so, in the past, landings have primarily been the data source used for allocation purposes, because they are consistently available, and available at least for almost all species, and so something to keep in mind, if you're using landings as your allocation method, is that whole baseline has changed, with that change in currency, if you will, for recreational landings going from CHTS to FES estimates.

Additionally, the council is now reconsidering sector allocations, as new recommendations are coming from the SSC, and really it's looking at accommodating for the current and future needs, really, of the fishery, and the fishery being on a species-by-species basis. There again, there is that recreational issue, looking at the change from CHTS to FES methodologies.

Overall, the goal of the tool that has been developed is to help the council develop an approach for addressing allocation decisions that applies a consistent method across all species, and so that's kind of the take-home there and the whole goal of this allocation decision tool.

As a refresher on recent council action, the council, at the March 2020 meeting, identified broad criteria for examining when discussing allocations, and then, at the subsequent June 2020 meeting, the council identified specific criteria, or more specific criteria, I should say, for using an allocation decision, and so this included landings history, discard and bycatch rate, accountability, fairness and equity, market need and trends, importance to a sector, cultural importance, and really just using general informed judgment.

At this meeting, that's really where this decision tree approach was approved for development by the council, and council staff, along with help from all of the members that I mentioned earlier for the various advisory groups for the council, have been working to develop this allocation decision tree approach.

When the council discussed this, the idea was to create an objective and organized approach to allocation decisions, and, along the way, the council has expressed that the overall result is not to be overly prescriptive in making allocation decisions and to maintain flexibility when it comes to allocation decisions, so they could be made on a species-by-species basis.

As an overview, and we'll get into the details of this in the comments towards the end, but, just as an overview and a reminder of the development process for developing the decision tree, the decision tree was developed, and the draft has undergone fairly extensive review, and there have really been revisions made along the way to address comments and concerns. The initial draft was reviewed by the Socioeconomic Panel and the SSC at their April 2021 meeting, and then additional comments were received from staff from the Southeast Regional Office and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and then, last, but certainly not least, there was a review of AP chairs and select AP members in August of 2021.

You've had several different groups involved in the review of this, and, really, there again, it's been kind of a developing process, taking into account the comments along the way. The council did get sort of a light review of the allocation tool at the September 2021 meeting, but really didn't have time to really dive into it in detail and get really feedback on a question-by-question basis, due to time constraints at that meeting, and so that's kind of where we sit now, and we're going to go through each major topic and, ideally, receive in-depth review on a topic-by-topic basis.

Just to kind of orient everyone, and some of you might be asking what is a decision tree approach, and, as you can see on the right there, there is sort of a very general overview of how a decision tree works, and, essentially, it uses the same question pattern, or tree, for each species considered. Currently, there are four major decision trees that have been developed. As a question is answered, the tree branches towards the next question to be answered, with the idea that it's intended to aid

the council in making decisions, such as whether the allocations need to be considered in an amendment, the initial structuring of allocation alternatives, and also to help build rationale as an amendment develops.

Overall, where the decision tree stands at the moment is that there are four major categories, as mentioned, that look at landings and discards, stock status, economic factors, and social factors. The idea is that each species will pass through all four of these major decision trees, and, really, the outcome, and we'll get to this in the example a little bit, is some decision trees may not provide a relevant outcome for a given species, and a question in one decision tree could be applicable to another tree, and, by that, I mean, for example, you will see landings come up over and over again, but really in different aspects, whether they be biological, economic, or social, and so there's a little bit of repetition there, but really coming at it from a different angle.

That was sort of a brief orientation of where we stand, and we're going to get into the specific, the nuts-and-bolts, if you will, of the decision tree, and then, after that, get into the example, the greater amberjack example, but I'm just going to take a pause here, before we get into the specific questions, and see if you have any general questions on the approach, before we do that.

MR. BELL: All right. Any general questions for John right now, based on the introduction? So we all know why we're here. Okay. Good. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Just a quick question, John. Would I assume that sort of a historical perspective of the fishery would be looked at under each of those four criteria and that it wouldn't need its own sort of bullet point?

MR. HADLEY: Well, yes, but we may want to come back around to that, because there is different timelines that are used for each major topic, and so kind of moving back and -- I will move back a couple of slides, and so, for each one of these major topics here, there is different timelines used, and so there's at least a brief history, but depending on how far of the historical aspect you want to go into it, it does vary.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, Kerry. Any other questions right now? All right. I don't see any hands, and so go ahead, John. Carry on.

MR. HADLEY: All right. I am going to continue driving the presentation, but I am going to hand it over to Mike to walk you through the landings, discards, and stock status questions.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you, John. As John said, I will be walking through landings and discards first, and then we'll talk about the stock status component of the decision tree. First, we'll be addressing landings, and the first question within this landings portion is really a decision point for the council, more than one addressed by data

You will see, as we go through these questions, that there is kind of a mixture of both in there, in the sense that there are questions that the council will need to address, in terms of interpreting information and making decisions for how you all want the fisheries to look like moving forward, but there also will be some data components that will be provided, and some of the questions lend themselves a little bit more heavily to lean on the data than others that may be more motivated by

council discussions, and this is one that is kind of one of those discussion-type questions of should future allocations be based on harvests that are impacted by previous or current quotas?

This is addressing what the timeframe of any data that would get used in developing allocations should be. For several species, annual sector quotas were not established until the Comprehensive ACL Amendment in 2012, although there were some species, including our example species for today, greater amberjack, as well as others, that had some commercial quotas that were in place a bit earlier.

Quotas place an upper bound on sector harvest and limit a sector's contribution to the landings composition if they are regularly met, and so some of the discussion surrounding the years used in allocation has focused on allocating according to how the fishery would, and I am air-quoting here, naturally separate out in the absence of allocation, and so ideas of this nature would tend away from more recent time periods, where they have been allocations in place, and sector-specific ACLs, or quotas.

That is one way to allocate according to landings, but it is not the only way. Allocations including more recent landings can be developed, even if they are being affected by sector ACLs, and that's something that can be considered in the process of moving forward, and so this question is really getting at whether the council wants to consider landings-based allocation, according to that idea of a, air-quote, natural separation of the past or come up with something based possibly on more recent landings that could have been impacted by those sector ACLs.

A no here would involve looking into a historical time period, where allocation was generally considered to be fair, and considering alternatives that incorporate that reasoning. A yes here would then further investigate whether there is unused quota in a more recent time period from one sector that the other sector could benefit from, and so, if both sectors are hitting their quotas, there doesn't seem to be anything really to give on one side or the other, and so landings wouldn't be very informative to reallocation discussions, and this is another point that's kind of in the general realm to keep in mind as we're moving through this process.

Just because one piece of this decision tree is not informative to reallocation, it does not mean that reallocation can't, or shouldn't, happen, but it just means that it wouldn't be based on that one topic, and so, in this case, it would be landings. If both sectors are hitting their ACL in recent times, then landings wouldn't be the reasoning for the reallocation, but there could be a reasoning that would come from the economic or the social side that the fishery could benefit from, and so that's just something to keep in mind as we go through these other sections.

If only one sector is hitting their quota, then there could be some reallocation of unused quota to the other sector, while keeping in mind that the giving sector would need to still have enough quota so that they wouldn't be expected to have an overage.

Finally, if neither sector is hitting their quota, then the quotas don't seem to be limiting, such that we have that more or less natural situation, where the fishery is playing out, and you may be able to select a time period where there is optimal fairness in the allocation, and there also may be some consideration of not allocating for a fishery that isn't hitting its limits, and so those are some of the ideas that may come into the discussion there.

It is important to note, in that scenario, more than just the absolute numbers, but also any trend in the landings, when deciding allocations based on this reasoning, and you would want to notice if there is a specific sector that is experiencing a lot of growth, or a decline, and consider that in developing the allocations.

To evaluate this part of the decision tree, the council could use time series of sector landings, and we'll look at some of those in the greater amberjack example today, and this could inform whether landings would be based on some past time period related to allocation, based on landings, and what that time period could be. Additionally, the council could use information on past quota-related closures, to see if the sectors have been hitting their quotas and how long they have been taking to do so, if they're doing so at the end of the season, if they're do so in the middle or early portion of the season, and consider those when making decisions and developing the allocation options.

Next, looking at discards, and this is really a short branch, if you will, of the decision tree, and it's only a single question, and that is whether discard mortality has accounted for a more substantial portion of the removals for either sector in recent years, and we have it as three of the past five years, as kind of that threshold area.

If you're like me, and you look at this question, and you think to yourself what does more substantial mean, it really means what you want it to mean for that situation. This question is intentionally left up to the council's interpretation, because the council is going to be approaching these fisheries at different points in their management history, and so you may be able to catch a fishery where the discard mortality is growing, but not quite at a drastic level, or it may be leveling off or on a decline, somewhere in the mix of all of that, and so it's really left up to the council's interpretation to notice if there is a concerning trend in discard mortality and whether that trend is being primarily driven by a specific sector.

The thought process being that, if a specific sector is driving that concerning trend, then you wouldn't want to increase the allocation to that sector, and that would decrease the -- In the case of discards here, that would decrease the efficiency of the fishery.

On the analytical front, the information that would help inform these discussions would look at the proportion of removals that are attributed to dead discards, as opposed to those that are coming from landings, and that would help determine if discards are substantially affecting the fishery and whether there is a specific driver of that or not.

Next, we'll move on to stock status, and really a big initial question here is has status been determined, and, if so, what is it? It looks like there are hands going up. John, do you want me to wait on hands until we get to the question slide?

MR. HADLEY: That's up to you. Mel, do you have a preference one way or another?

MR. BELL: Well, I'm not sure kind of how far it might go, but, I mean, if it's something that would be easily -- It might be kind of a clarifying thing right now, as we move, and, Andy, if you want to go ahead and ask a quick one, I'm okay with that.

MR. STRELCHECK: I don't want to disrupt the -- I have a number of questions, but, if you want to wait until the end of the presentation, then we can do it all at once.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. There's a natural break in about two slides, and so we can go until then, and we can move as needed at that point. All right. Going through stock status, the question is whether it's been determined, and, if so, what is it, and, the advice that addresses overfished status, that would look at prioritizing allocation toward whichever sector would increase the biomass, and this typically means through increasing juvenile survival or increasing the survival of female fish.

Overfishing is addressed through allocation via increased efficiency, and there would likely need to be some coupling, and some requirement, with a decrease in the quota overall, and that is for both sectors, but increasing the fishing efficiency, through reallocation, is another way to reduce that overall fishing-related mortality and accomplish the overall goal of ending overfishing.

Finally, if a stock is neither overfished nor has overfishing occurring, there isn't really a whole lot of information related to status that would lead to reallocation, and so, in this case, any motivation for that would come from another part of the decision tree.

If stock status is unknown, we can then maybe look into the data, to see whether there is some reasonably reliable index of abundance for that species, and that could come from federal or state surveys. In this situation, it may be helpful to get SSC input on that reliability aspect, to help determine that, but, if it so happens that there is a decent index out there, then the trend of that index could inform allocations, in similar fashion to the other statuses, where a stable, or increasing, trend would indicate a more or less healthy fishery, where there really would be status-related reasoning to reallocate. However, a decreasing trend in such an index would indicate that there could be some status-based reasoning for reallocating, in the form of increasing biomass, due to increased survival of juveniles or females. Finally, if there is no status, and there is no index, then, simply for lack of information, there wouldn't be any status basis for changing allocations.

Stock status would primarily come from SEDAR stock assessments and status updates from NOAA Fisheries. In the absence of an assessment, like I said, we may look to federal or state surveys, and those could be sources of information for indices that could be considered for that use.

Here is kind of the break, the questions slide, and some questions for the council to consider as we move through this process, but I will also be answering clarifying questions as they are brought up, and so, for the content, we're looking to the council, keeping in mind the need to focus on having readily-available data and completing the decision tree in a relatively short time, and are these questions, covering landings, discards, and status, adequate for use in this? Do they cover the range of issues that you all should consider when making allocation decisions? Then are there resulting recommendations, and so the advice that you're seeing associated with each of the kinds of the ends of the branches for the tree, and are these helpful to guide initial allocation decisions, without being overly prescriptive? At this point, I will pass it back to you, Mr. Chair, and I will take questions as needed.

MR. BELL: All right. Andy, why don't you go first, and then others that want to queue up, and we'll go ahead, and then just leave that slide up, and there is some food for thought for us, in terms

of how we can best help respond and things to think about, but you may have others, and so, Andy, you go ahead, and then we'll run down the list.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Mike, for the presentation, and others that have helped put this together, and, with regard to discards I guess a few comments. One is it's obviously a decision tree, and so you have to kind of make a yes or no answer, and this is probably relevant for beyond just discards, but, to me, there is situations where you wouldn't just want necessarily a yes or no, right, and you may want to consider discards as part of the reallocation and decide, obviously, kind of how you consider that as kind of an overarching factor, with regard to the amount which you would be reallocating or not.

I guess my concern with discards is that, yes, it would be up to the council to decide whether you choose to use discards or not, but we all, I think, well know that, in most of our fisheries, the overwhelming amount of discards comes from the recreational sector, and so, in choosing that, you're essentially at least weighing that as a reallocation decision away from the recreational sector and toward the commercial sector, and so I think it's an important thing that we need to consider, is just to kind of figure out how to balance that, especially in light of self-reported data, both in the commercial and recreational sector, and some of the uncertainty that surrounds that. So it's more of a comment than I guess a concern, with regard to the decision tool at this point, in terms of the utility of it and how it can be factored into any decision-making process. Thanks.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, Andy. Mike, that was kind of a comment, I guess, and anything that was sort of the form of a question that you feel that you need to answer at this point?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Sure, and I guess the one thing, just kind of reiterating, and I think Andy touched on it, and so it's there, but I just wanted to reinforce the idea that the end result of all of this is going to be kind of pieces of advice that are going to the council and that are going into considerations, and the council is still going to kind of give direction on what you all want to see in allocations that would be developed and/or chosen out of the various amendment processes that would go into place. Some of those nuances that Andy is kind of hitting on, those are things that would get brought up in those specific council discussions, and there definitely is room for that within this more kind of general advice type of approach.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks. Chester, do you have a question or a comment?

MR. BREWER: I've got both. I wanted to echo what Andy said though, because, if you weigh discard mortality too heavily, you're going to be very unfair to the recreational sector, and I did have a question, and if we could go back to where we were talking about quota-induced overages, and I think it was one of the first slides. It's 2b. I read that three or four times, and I swear to goodness that I cannot figure out exactly what's being said there, if you could help me out, please, and flesh it out or something, because I don't understand that.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and so that's getting at the amount that would reallocate from one sector to another, and so you have a sector that is not hitting its quota, and what we would be doing, in that scenario, is there would be a reallocation of that portion that that sector is not harvesting and moving it over to the sector that is hitting its quota, and, in considering the amount, you want to make sure you have, I guess, some wiggle room, so to speak, and so you don't want to take just a single, middle-of-the-road point for that giving sector, and so kind of the amount that was proposed

within this option is that the most that you can move over is the difference between the maximum that they have harvested over the last five years, I think it is there, and the ACL.

You would have that difference between the ACL minus the maximum harvest from the last five years, and that's the most amount that you can reallocate from that giving sector, from that underharvesting sector, to the sector that is hitting their quota. Does that help clarify it a little bit?

MR. BREWER: It does, and let me see if I can put it in other words, just to make sure that I understand it. What you're saying is that -- Let's say that the recreational sector is underharvesting by, I don't know, a million pounds over the past year, and that would be the maximum amount that you could then reallocate over to the commercial sector, and is that sort of putting it differently, but meaning the same thing?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: If that's the highest that they have harvested in the last five years. As long as that amount is the highest harvest that they've had in the last five years, then, yes, that would be the maximum that they can do.

MR. BREWER: Okay. Thank you.

MR. BELL: Okay. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks, Mel. I will say that I looked at this, and I read it over several times, sort of very heavily through the lens of the snapper grouper fishery, and so forgive me when I speak in general terms, and that's kind of how I'm thinking, and I know it won't apply everywhere, but that was making me think about Chester's and Andy's points, as far as, when I was reading this, and I read the discard section, I recognized that that would sort of, the way we look at things now, be a disproportionate effect on the recreational fishery, but I was feeling like every sort of other part of the decision tree tool would have a disproportionate effect on the commercial fishery, and so that's just a comment. It may all weigh-out, and that's the discussions we have to have.

The reason why I bring up the snapper grouper fishery specifically, and to this point of the topic of landings and discards, is because I am concerned about how we will make sure that we will look at something like that fishery, which is constrained outside of ACLs, because it's constrained by number of permits, and that is, by design, right now shrinking in participants, when the recreational fishery is, or at least has the potential, to expand in participants, and, obviously, I know that's what we will talk about, as we go through each species-by-species, and that's not something we're going to sort of litigate here, but I think it's important that that outside force, and any other outside forces, are brought up as we look at the topic of landings and discards for each species.

I was going to suggest that, perhaps on -- If you took Slide 12, which was the time series with the sector landings, and, when we look at this for a particular species, if there's a way to sort of indicate when management measures went into effect for the species we're looking at and for each sector, because, in a lot of ways, I think that landings aren't just constrained by ACL anymore.

I think they're constrained by a number of other regulatory factors, and I would also argue that there are times that they are constrained by extraneous management factors, whether it's COVID or a hurricane or just something that we could all sort of agree on, but I think my concern is looking

at the topics and discards just through the lens of ACL, when we have other things that are actually constraining, at least from my perspective, the commercial fishery.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, Kerry. Any other council members have a question? I would really like to keep this to South Atlantic Council folks right now, I think, and we'll have an opportunity for others later. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: In reading through this, the other thing that I guess I was trying to pay attention to is the wording itself, right, and there's a number of places where I'm not sure exactly how we, or council staff, or those using the tool, would define certain things, but I am also cognizant of not being overly prescriptive, but, for example, there is statements, for instance, with discards of a substantial amount, and, well, what does that mean, a substantial amount?

For stock status, an adequate abundance index, and how do we define "adequate"? The landings time series uses the past five years, and why use the last five years? Why not three or ten? I point this out, but I guess the question I have is really for staff, in kind of thinking through the utility of this tool and the consistent use of it. Have you thought along those same lines, and is there any recommendations, or suggestions, you have in terms of why you were purposely using wording like that, versus maybe being more prescriptive?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Mel, do you mind if I go ahead?

MR. BELL: Go right ahead, please.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Sure. I think that we were really -- We were really trying to walk that line that the council has given us of trying to provide actual usable advice while not being overly prescriptive, and recognizing really the diversity of South Atlantic fisheries, and that's one of the reasons why we had kind of some of those intentionally vague, to speak, terms, and I don't know if "vague" is the right word, but terms where it is something that the council would discuss and the council would be presented with information that can help inform that discussion, but the council would be the one that would come to that conclusion of is this trend in discards -- Is this concerning to you all, or is that -- Are these other pieces of information -- How should they be interpreted? There is some of that that's going to need to come from the council's end and the direction that is going to come with those specific situations.

As far as the five-year portion, why we were a bit more prescriptive with that is we were trying to come up with some type of advice, reasoning, for, okay, if you're moving over a certain amount, reallocating from one to another, what should the cap on that be, and that was kind of what we came up with, and the five years is really just kind of a force of habit from what is used in a fair number of amendments, as those are being developed, and they are typically looking at the most recent five years of landings and economic information when we're doing the analyses of effects related to some of those actions.

That kind of was the five, and it was concerning if it was the majority of the time, and so that was the three of the five, but that's one of those things that, if you all feel like that needs to be pulled back and be a bit less prescriptive, or that there is something else, some other timeframe, some other triggering factor or cap amount or something like that, that could be used in place of that, then that's something that we would look to the council to provide guidance on in this meeting.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, Mike, and, again, the whole purpose of what we're doing here is to look at the concept we've got, as they presented it, and tweaking, or there are going to be some decision points on which way we think we need to go on some of this as well, and so make sure you kind of keep track of all that, so we can give sufficient guidance to staff on how to proceed. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I have a barking dog issue. Could you come back to me after Chester?

MR. BELL: Okay. Gee, that's never happened before. If the FedEx guy shows up, anybody is suspect. Chester, do you want to go ahead?

MR. BREWER: My mailman just left, and so I'm okay, but I did have a barking dog issue. Going back to this five-year timeframe, and it seems like, to me, if your maximum underage during say your five-year period is a million pounds, but you got half-a-million pounds of underage in the other four years, wouldn't it make sense to say that you were going to cap it at the minimum underage for the past five years? Maybe I am misreading that, but that seems to make more sense to me, if you're trying to cap it and not reallocate more than is necessary, and I will mute myself.

MR. BELL: Mike, do you want to respond to that?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and thanks, Chester, and, John, if you could go back to the slide with the landings response, because I think we had it as the maximum harvest, and so it would be -- That would be what you described, Chester. That would be the minimum underage, because it is the maximum harvest within those five years, and so, the way that you were thinking that it should be, that's what it is.

MR. BREWER: Thank you very much.

MR. BELL: All right. Thank you. Tom, are you okay now?

MR. ROLLER: We are good. It was the mailman. A question here, and, if you think there's a better time to address this, I am, obviously, open to that, but how does this decision tree, or does it, take into consideration the importance of abundance to the recreational industry? Specifically, what I mean is, for fish like amberjack, or Spanish mackerel, or dolphin, their abundance and how that relates to having lots of opportunities for recreational fishermen I think is a really important part of their economic value, and is that something that is taken into consideration?

MR. BELL: I will let Mike answer that, but my thinking is that's the sort of thing that would fit more when we get over to the economics and the social aspects, because we've certainly heard that before, about abundance being an important issue, and perhaps perceived a little differently from the recreational side than the commercial, but, Mike, you can go ahead and answer that.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thanks, Mel, and thanks, Tom, for the question. I think, related to the pieces that we have talked about thus far, landings, discards, and status, the one that would most directly address abundance would be stock status, in the sense of overfished or not overfished status. If it's not overfished, then the population is above a certain threshold. Now, if there is a higher threshold, beyond that overfished limit that is applied there, that would be more advantageous for

the fishery to sit at, and that's something that is not -- That's a detail that is not gone into here, but, as that base criteria, there's a certain amount of abundance that would need to be had in order to be considered not overfished, and so that's as much as we have from these sections.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, Mike. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I wasn't sure where to ask this question, but the previous question kind of leads me to this, and I guess it's not clear to me how, in the decision tree, it's going to be factored in that you might have a stock that is moving, for whatever reason, climate change or some other factor, and so something like dolphin, or maybe yellowtail, moving north, and how -- Like which decision tree does that get factored in, and how is that factored in, because it's not really about the historical use of the fishery, and it's kind of the current use, and the changing use, of a particular fishery, where now maybe it's available off of one state, or even moving outside the council's region, and how that's going to factor in, and does it factor in here with the landings, or does it only factor in when you get to the social decision tree? I'm just not sure.

MR. BELL: All right. John, did you have your hand up?

MR. HADLEY: I did, and I just wanted to respond to that point that Jessica just brought up, and it's a very good one, and it's something that we considered in the development of the allocation decision tree, but we were having -- Basically, we were having problems fitting data to this tool, specifically, and so we can go back to the drawing board on that, and try to come up with ways to make it fit the decision tree, but it's something that, as of now, at least the way the overall tool, if you will, is structured, it doesn't specifically take that into account, and that would be a factor that the council would take into account in addition to this tool, if that makes sense, but, right now, I think Jessica mentioned the climate change impacts on several of the species are not necessarily factored in here, and it's not that it's not an important consideration, but it just didn't fit well, at least as we initially developed this tool.

MR. BELL: That kinds of adds another layer of complexity to this whole thing, and really everything we are dealing with, is just that you can come up with this great decision tree, based on certain factors, and then, in that, we're using a decision tree in an environment that is changing, perhaps, and so how do you operate this, sort of mechanically, within a dynamic environment of things changing, but it a whole other layer of complexity. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thanks, Mel. I think this is going to be a perpetual challenge for us, and I think one of the beliefs we have is that, if we use recent landings histories, proportionally to older landings histories, that we can account for some of this change, recognizing, of course, that there is other factors that can influence where something is harvested in time and space, but we're struggling with this, at the interstate level, with menhaden, because menhaden are more abundant in an area where they historically weren't abundant, and we're trying to account for that opportunity, to make those fish available to be harvested in that area without detracting from where they have been historically harvested.

I also wanted to follow-up on what Tom brought up, because I do think it's very important to remember that, in some of these mixed-use fisheries, that, just because we're not harvesting the full ACL for the recreational sector, it doesn't mean that that ACL needs to remain at its historical level to create abundance-based opportunities for catch-and-release fishing and other types of

things, and so it's just -- I do agree that -- I kind of look at this thing as these are critical thinking pathways.

They are designed to take us down a path to think critically about a particular segment of the allocation decision-making process, and, in some cases, we're going to find ourselves with inadequate information to fully use that pathway, and then we back out and go to another path, and so, anyway, that's my comments. Thanks.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, Spud. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Just another point to bring up, and, first, let me bring up that I really love this decision tree approach. I think it's very cool, and I think it's really going to force the council to look at other factors other than just historic landings, looking at all these different pieces and really start to think critically about these other parts of the fishery before making the decision. I just am bringing up some questions to think about and to think if we need to hone some of these tools.

One of my other questions, that somewhat gets to the ACL, is what happens when you have a jointly-managed stock with the Gulf Council, but they haven't adopted this whole decision tree approach, and do we just present the material to the Gulf Council on here's what we're recommending on allocation, and here's how we got to this decision, and then we're just hoping that they select the same preferences that the South Atlantic does? I am just -- I am not saying that, because we selected to use decision trees, that they're bound by it, and I don't know, and I am just putting that out there and trying to figure out how it would work when it's a jointly-managed species.

MR. BELL: Good point, Jessica. I mean, that is part of the reality of the world with some of these species, because the idea here was to have something that could be in place for all species, but you're right that a number of them we don't just manage on our own, and how would that work out? Mike, did you want to address that?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and, I mean, that's certainly a wrinkle that will need to be kind of discussed in the cases where it gets brought up. For species where there is kind of an allocation to the South Atlantic, and then the South Atlantic allocates how they want, then it's a little bit less messy, but, if there is some form of allocation that spans both regions, then, yes, that can get complicated.

I did want to hit on a couple of points, in the sense that the council -- What you're going to get out of this, and you'll see it when we go through the example, but what you're going to get out of this is a list of reasoning that has come from the decisions that were made going through the questions, as well as the information provided, and so you're going to have this list of reasoning, and so what could happen, from that, in relation to with jointly-managed species, is that the South Atlantic Council has gone through this decision tree process, and it recommends developing alternatives, or prioritizing allocation in this direction, whatever have you, based on this reasoning.

You can present that reason to the Gulf Council, and they would not be bound by it, by any means, but it would show them that this is what the council is thinking, and the reasoning why it supports this allocation option, or this path forward for allocation, something like that, and so that's kind of

what this is getting at and how that could play out in that joint process, but, the question of whether the Gulf would be bound to this process, that would be a no.

MR. BELL: That makes sense. Okay. Any other questions or comments on this part so far? Mike, I am not sure, in terms of digesting all this, and you've got a new piece coming up, and how long that will take, and we can take another bite at it here. Timewise, is everybody good? I mean, we've only been at it for an hour, or less than an hour. Okay.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: We're changing gears after this slide anyway, and so it will be a fresh topic, and fresh eyes and ears for that.

MR. BELL: Okay. Does anybody need five minutes at this point? Raise your hand. All right. Let's just transition into the next piece then.

MR. HADLEY: Okay. Thank you. We're going to switch gears a little bit and move from the biological-related realm and over to the economic realm and some of the economic-related questions in the decision tree, at least as it currently stands.

There is really three major economic-related questions overall, and one looks at economic importance, and the other looks at trends in demand for the species, and then the other look at trends in demand for quota, and, really, overall, we're looking at proxies for these different topics, and so, to start off, looking at at least what data is readily available to look at the economic importance of a species, the decision tree asks is the relative economic importance of the species changing?

Really, there is a pretty simple branch, so to speak, but, overall, if yes, the next question would be is it becoming more economically important? If it's becoming more economically important to one sector relative to the other, then the idea would be to prioritize reallocation towards the sector for which the species has a higher economic importance, or an increasing trend in economic importance.

If the species seems to be showing the same trend across sectors, and so it's becoming more important for both sectors, then the outcome of the tool itself would be to consider maintaining current sector allocations, again based on this piece of it, or basing changes to allocations on other factors. Similarly, if there is -- If the species is not becoming more economically important to either sector, there again, essentially look elsewhere, to other pieces of the decision tree, or consider maintaining the current allocations.

Looking at some of the information available, we'll get into specific examples with the greater amberjack example that we put together that's coming up later on in this presentation, but, overall, looking at the potential analyses available, and we can look -- On the commercial side, we can look into logbook information, to determine commercial importance, through a comparison of gross revenue from species to the total revenue generated by those vessels.

On the recreational side, it's really looking at proxies for potential economic importance and comparing directed effort for a species to total effort for South-Atlantic-Council-managed species, and, really, directed effort, as least as we have initially proposed, it's looking at trips that targeted or harvested a species.

Moving over to trends in demand for a species, another way to look at those would be to look at if there are indications of notable trends in demand for the species, and, if so, what is the trend by sector? If the demand is increasing for both sectors, or appears to be increasing for both sectors, consider maintaining current allocations or looking elsewhere in the decision tree. If the demand seems to be increasing for one sector relative to the other, then the prioritized reallocation for that sector that is exhibiting increasing demand, and, if there really is no trend apparent, there again, consider maintaining sector allocations or basing decisions on other factors.

Some of the potential proxies for the trends in demand for the species looks at -- On the commercial side, you can look at trends in ex-vessel price as well as trends in landings for the commercial sector, and then, on the recreational side, we can look at trends in directed effort as well as trends in landings for a specific species, and this is really sort of the quantitative data, and I will note there is some qualitative information available, often in our fishery performance reports, which the APs put together on a species-by-species basis.

Last, but not least, is a look at the demand for quota, and so looking at has a sector fully harvested its ACL on a consistent basis, and, if the answer to that is yes, but for only one sector, then consider prioritizing reallocation towards a sector that would likely benefit from additional ACL. If both sectors are consistently harvesting their ACL on a consistent basis, then consider maintaining sector allocations or looking elsewhere for basing allocation decisions, and, if neither sector is harvesting its ACL, there again, consider maintaining sector allocations or looking elsewhere in the decision tree.

A potential analysis for trends in demand for quota, under some circumstances, I would say previous and well into the future circumstances, you can look at historical use of sector ACLs, if appropriate. The reason I mentioned "if appropriate" is that, as we're all very aware of, the new change in MRIP, from CHTS to FES, really changes the game in how you look at potential use of sector allocations, since you can't really compare future units that will be in FES to previous units that were in CHTS.

In this case, you would really look at projected use of new sector ACLs under the status allocation percentage, but apply the new ACL for the species, and so really kind of a retrospective analysis, but a hypothetical scenario, since those units were -- Due to the units used for the recreational sector specifically. and how landings will be accounted for going forward, and, there again, I'm happy to answer any questions, but there's an example of this, that we'll get into for greater amberjack, that shows a potential examination of trends in demand for quota.

Potentially taking a break here to discuss any questions and gain any feedback on the economic portion of the decision tree, but it's very similar generic questions there, keeping in mind the focus on readily-available data, and are the economic questions adequate? Do they cover the range of issues that managers should consider, when making allocation decisions, and are the recommendations helpful for guiding initial allocation decisions, without being too prescriptive? I will hand it over to the council from there.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, John. Again, that's the next bite of the apple here. Any specific questions or comments from council members related to what John just presented? I will start with Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I will keep it really broad right now, but I am wondering if, before every time we go through a decision tree for a specific species, will we have the opportunity, as council members, to sort of weigh-in on what analysis sort of can be possibly included, because I'm thinking -- As I'm going through this, I'm thinking of all these other -- Granted, knowing that we need readily available and fairly quick to analyze information, but will there be a time when staff will come to us and say we're about to do an allocation decision tree on spadefish, and where do you think there is potential to gather some data for analysis to go into this decision tree? Will we have that opportunity, sort of before we go through every decision tree?

MR. BELL: That's kind of a process question. John.

MR. HADLEY: I was just going to say that it wasn't envisioned that way, but that's certainly something that we can build into the process. I mean, right now, everything is draft that we're reviewing right now, and so that's something that we can build into the process. I will also mention that the decision tree is intended, at least one of the uses, intended uses, is to look at allocation decisions fairly early in the process, and so there are additional analyses that will come up, as typically are developed, through an amendment process, but, if there's something that you wanted to kind of get out in front of right away, that's something that -- There again, we can build it into the process, as needed.

MS. MARHEFKA: Mel, if I may?

MR. BELL: Yes, and go ahead, Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: The reason I'm bringing that up now is because I know we're not trying to be too prescriptive with this plan, and so I didn't sort of want to get into the weeds with other thoughts that I had for how we could look at some economic factors, and so I just don't want to miss my opportunity to do that now, when I may have an opportunity to do it on a species-by-species basis, and so I'm not quite sure when the best time to do it is.

That is really -- What we have right now, if we're only going to be looking at trends in ex-vessel price, landings for the commercial sector, trends in directed effort, what you have there sort of under the trends for demand for species, and then fishery performance report, but you have potential analysis, and so I just want to make sure that -- If I sort of have some other ideas of where we can get economic information, and I'm just not sure if this is the right time to bring it up, in this general sense, or if it's on a species-by-species basis.

MR. BELL: All right. That's a good point. Okay. Next question, Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Chair. I am going to go back to my last question here and ask it here in the economic section. You know, per the idea of abundance-based opportunity, I think there's a lot of value in a lot of our fisheries' unused ACL, particularly in the recreational community, when having that abundance there has a huge economic value for fishermen. What sort of considerations can this matrix do, or is that considered, or how can we address that question?

MR. HADLEY: Mel, if I could respond to that?

MR. BELL: Yes, please.

MR. HADLEY: I think that's a good point, and it's something that -- I think it comes back to the point of does the ideal biomass need to be above the MSY biomass, and then some of the benefits from that, and so having extra abundance, if you will, particularly for the recreational sector for some species, and I would say that is at least partially captured in some of the measures of directed effort, in that directed effort, as it's being defined, at least for now, includes whether the species was targeted or harvested, and so it's capturing part of that, but there is some part of that that is not captured.

It's, in a way, difficult to capture. I mean, you could throw in -- If you're looking at effort and how it relates to -- Typically, effort relates to economic impact, and not necessarily value, but economic impacts, but you could throw in released effort into that effort category, but then you're going to have a whole lot of trips that really had nothing to do with amberjack, other than that they caught one, and so it's kind of a balancing act. In summary, it's partially, at least partially, captured in that directed effort metric.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, John. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, Mel. I want to follow-up, and Kerry said something that kind of prompted me to ask this question, and that is will the economic information that we will use for this part of the decision tree have to be vetted through the Socioeconomic Panel of the SSC? I mean, obviously, there is lots of diverse information out there, everything from people's personal records to very sophisticated peer review studies, but I am just curious about that, and then I've got a follow-up to that.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, Spud. John, do you want to take that?

MR. HADLEY: Sure, and so the economic information, as it's currently presented, is -- It's really intentionally readily-available information, and so there's not a whole lot of analysis, so to speak, there, and this is information that usually comes directly from MRIP, or it comes directly from the logbook, and so, keeping it in the context of the way it is right now, and it's certainly up to the council, and certainly up to the SSC, if they ever wanted to do anything, but, in the context that it's framed in now, that is pretty readily-available information, and there is not a whole lot of analysis to it, or I would say unique analysis to it, and so I would say, in my opinion, no, you are not required each time to go to the SSC or the SEP.

If there was a specific, more in-depth analysis, that -- We could certainly go to the SSC or the SEP for it, and, also, that information -- There is more developed economic analyses that are inherent within each amendment that are developed later in the process, but I don't know if that helps answer the question, but, basically, as it's framed right now, this is pretty readily-available information, and a comparison thereof, that I don't think would need to go, each time at least, to the SSC.

MR. BELL: All right. Spud, you had a follow-up to that?

MR. WOODWARD: Yes, and just to -- Not to sound like a broken record, but to reiterate what Tom is talking about, and, oftentimes, it is very difficult to capture, in the marine recreational

fishery, what economic value is, and we do, obviously, economic -- to MRIP, and that's what you've got, and you've got a lot of fishermen that are generalists, and then you have some that are specialists and go out and target either one or two species, and you've got some folks that just go to fish for whatever they can catch, and so it will be a challenge. It doesn't mean that we shouldn't go down that pathway, but I think we'll find ourselves trying to tease apart some of this and fully understand it.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, Spud. That concept is part economic, and it's kind of part social, and it's sort of people's perceptions and people's use of the resource, and, again, we do know that, and we've heard that over and over again, and just kind of the rec sector looks at things a little differently from -- It's not just a matter of, always a matter of, how many fish you catch kind of thing, and so that will be something we'll have to factor in there, I think. Tim, do you have a question?

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just kind of going back to what Tom and Spud kind of touched on there, it's always going to be very difficult to put a dollar figure on abundance, or whether or not that's really important to someone or not, and what is their perception of abundance? I mean, a great fishermen and a not-so-great fisherman can have a very different perception of abundance, but I think it's really important, as John was alluding to, that what we really manage here is effort.

We don't manage abundance, and we can't make fish spawn, and we can't influence recruitment, so to speak, but all we really do is manage effort, and so I think those abundances are really taken into effect during the SEDAR process, and so I think, as we move through this, we really need to kind of hone-in on what we can affect, which really is effort, and that's really all we can affect. Thank you.

MR. BELL: Thanks, Tim. John, your hand flashed up there, real quick, and flashed away. Were you going to respond to something after Spud?

MR. HADLEY: I was. I was going to respond to Spud's and Tom's comments that thinking of the importance of abundance, particularly for specific species, is something that can be tough to measure, in a quantitative way, which is kind of what this tool is aimed at, but that's not to say that that is an extremely important aspect of allocation decisions, and it's something that could be brought up outside of this kind of allocation decision tool process.

Another thing that I was going to offer is that might be a question that we could pose to our Socioeconomic Panel at their upcoming meeting. Are there ways that they can think of to measure the importance of abundance, on a species-by-species basis, that maybe we weren't thinking of, because that question wasn't specifically posed to them when they reviewed this allocation decision tool, and so that's just another option that I was going to toss out there, and it's something that we could follow-up on the SEP's meeting in April.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, John. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I guess, in response to the questions on the screen, I am not sure that they're going to fully capture what we need from an economic analysis, and I don't know if you would allow for me to have Mike Travis speak, and he's one of our lead

economists, but certainly one of the things that we have noted with this is that it doesn't address the net economic benefits analysis that is required under MSA and Executive Orders, and so that is something that we would need to figure out how to address, or we would need to understand kind of what the council staff is thinking of, in terms of how this tool then interfaces with that.

The other thing that I would mention is there is a couple of, I guess, parts of these questions that may or may not be adequate to the value and economic importance of demand. For example, it was talked about ex-vessel price being used kind of as a proxy for demand, but ex-vessel price can change based on supply, and it's not necessarily in the South Atlantic region, and it could be based on imports, or it could be from the Gulf of Mexico, and so there's an assumption there that, in order for that to occur, that there has to be a constant supply, which we know isn't the case.

Then, for a lot of this, the economic importance has to take into consideration the regulatory overlay and how restrictions may or may not be affecting that economic importance, and so that's certainly something I think staff would acknowledge in their review and analysis of this, but I think a complexity to all of these economic questions, in terms of how that then affects the decisions. With that, Chair, I don't know if you would allow Mike Travis to speak, but I think it's important to talk a little bit about net economic benefits, if he could have the floor.

MR. BELL: Andy, I'm okay with that. What I was trying to do is make sure that we had ample opportunity for all council members to look at this, because I do intend to actually bring in others at the end as well, but, if this would be a particularly good point for Mike, realizing his background and his association, I mean, I would be fine with that, if it would be particularly helpful right now, you think. John, you had your hand up there?

MR. HADLEY: Sure, and I just wanted to -- I don't know if we're going to jump over to Mike, but I just wanted to respond to Andy's first comment on net economic benefits. That is something that is a very important consideration, obviously, but it's something that the determination of which usually happens well into the development of an amendment, and so it's something that we address through the analyses in each amendment, and so it's not like it's something that's going to be ignored, but it's just very -- It takes a lot of time, and it oftentimes takes several in-depth economic analyses to come to that conclusion, and so that's something that will be addressed in the amendment, but would be difficult to address in the context of this allocation decision tree.

MR. BELL: Okay. Thanks, John. Mike, since Andy kind of teed that up, I think maybe that would be helpful right now, for you to go ahead and -- If you would like to weigh-in here a little bit on the specific points that Andy was talking about, and I think that would be useful, and so, if you're available and unmuted, Mike, go ahead.

DR. TRAVIS: Okay. John is correct that this is something that we would look at at the amendment stage, but I think it's important to start looking at net economic benefits and the factors that go into the determination of those sooner rather than later, because, if you do get to the amendment stage, we're going to have to look at the net economic benefits of whatever allocation you're going to be looking at, and so this is an opportunity for the council and staff to look at, well, what data do we have to inform our determinations of net economic benefits, and I would also point out that the net benefits determination goes directly to various National Standards and compliance with those standards, including, of course, National Standard 1, and, thus, it is also connected to optimum yield.

One quick point there is how the council has dealt with optimum yield so far, and, if anyone wants to correct me, please feel free, but my understanding is that we do not have long-term OY set up for the various species that the council manages. What the council has done is determined that annual OY is equal to your ACL, and so you need to keep that in mind, because, presumably, achieving OY is one of your primary objectives.

Now, I would also point out that it's not just National Standard 1, and net benefits also relate to National Standards 4, 5, 7, and 9, and it also goes directly to the heart of Executive Order 12866, and the Executive Order is not directly germane to the allocation decision tree, but it does become germane when you start working on an amendment that deals with allocations.

What we're looking at, when we get to net economic benefits, is we're looking at economic value, and so what is the value of the fish to seafood consumers, what is the value to the harvesting vessels, the commercial harvesting vessels, and what is the value to the recreational anglers, and what is the value to the for-hire vessels? Those are all things that we should be looking at, to the extent that available data allows us to do so.

Now, one comment I want to make that has me a little nervous is the idea of this -- There were some comments made that suggest that you should potentially look at economic impacts and that economic impact should determine the direction that allocation should go, and I strongly advise against that, because, when you allocate towards a sector that maximizes economic impacts, that generally reduces economic efficiency and reduces the economic value that is being generated by those fish.

Just one other last comment that I wanted to make is be careful about assuming, for example, that changes in ex-vessel prices indicate a change in demand, because that assumes your supply is constant, and I think everyone knows that supply is generally not constant, not just because of what the council does, with regard to its management measures, but prices are also affected by what's happening in the Gulf and certainly what's happening with regard to imports, and I'm going to be quiet.

MR. BELL: Thanks, Mike. We appreciate the input right there. John, do you have anything to add at this point?

MR. HADLEY: Nothing to add at this point, no.

MR. BELL: Okay. All right. Any other questions or comments in this particular section from anyone, council members? I am not seeing any hands. Okay. Just kind of keeping things flowing along, the next section would be shifting over to Christina to take us through social, and so this might be a good place to go ahead and take a quick break. If we could just go ahead and take ten, no more than ten, that would be great, and then we'll come back and cover the social piece, and then John will kind of finish things up, and we're going to run through an example of actually working through this, and so let's go ahead and take ten, and we'll see you in a little bit. I guess we'll follow the raise your hand when you come back. That way, we'll know that folks are back.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. BELL: I think we've got pretty much everybody back. In the interest of time, we'll move along, and I am going to turn to John Hadley first, and he wanted to respond to something, and then, after that, Christina will pick up and run us through the social slides. John.

MR. HADLEY: Sure. Thank you, Mel. I appreciate it. I was kind of looking over my notes here during our break, and I did want to come back to Kerry's question regarding potential additional information on a species-by-species basis. You know, I think that's something that we could certainly fit in, particularly if it's readily-available information that we have on-hand, because, you know, this is the council's tool, and so whatever we can do to make it better and more useful I think is something that we're certainly happy to accommodate however we can.

I just want to make sure that Kerry's suggestion of, if there's specific information, using the spadefish example, that we incorporate that into the tool, but, also, we want to -- Maybe that's a discussion for the very end, is how we can -- Do we need to come to the council ahead of time, before we present the tool for whatever species, and see if there is any additional information that would be desired or that a certain council member is thinking of displaying, and so I just wanted to come back around to that and just -- There again, we can come back to it at the very end, but it's something that I didn't want to leave kind of on the backburner and unanswered.

MR. BELL: Thanks, John, and I do intend to, after we get through all of this, to have ample opportunity to kind of bring up other things of a general nature or fill in any gaps that we might need to fill in, and so okay. Christina, whenever you're ready, if you would like to tee-up your slides.

MS. WIEGAND: Absolutely. Let's talk about the social questions. Last, but certainly not least. There are two different social trees, and they are broken up sort of in terms of a quantitative analysis and a more qualitative analysis, and so the first tree looks at fishery dependence, and this is much more of a quantitative analysis, using some of those social indicators that were mentioned in the GAO report and that John Hadley listed off in the very beginning of this meeting.

The first questions is, among the top ten counties with the highest proportion of total -- It could be landings, trips, permits, and, for the example we're going to show you in a little bit, we did landings in the region and are most of them engaged in commercial fishing or recreational fishing.

You will notice a change in this question from when we presented some of this to you at a previous meeting and when we were presenting things to the various SSC and SEP and AP groups. This used to look at the top ten communities, and we had to bump it up to counties, and that was because of the reliability of data, as well as confidentiality, particularly for the recreational data, and so now we're looking at things in more of a county level.

Then we're asking ourselves are they highly engaged, and fishing engagement is one of those social indicators that looks at community, or, in this case, county, dependence on fishing, and they are essentially absolute measures of fishing activity measured by the absolute number of that activity, and so, for commercial fishing, it's absolute number of permits, pounds, and value of landings, as well as the number of dealers for commercial fishing, and then, for recreational engagement, it uses fishing trips from the MRIP site survey as well as information on fishing boats from each site and summation of all of those modes across communities.

Once we move down, we can either say most of those top-ten communities are coming off as highly engaged in commercial fishing, highly engaged in recreational fishing, or it's looking like they are equally engaged in commercial and recreational fishing.

If it looks like the majority of the communities are engaged in commercial fishing, then it depends on are those counties considered dependent on commercial fishing. If those communities really are dependent upon commercial fishing, and that species, you might want to consider prioritizing commercial fishing opportunities. Similarly, if most of the counties are highly engaged in recreational fishing, and then, of those counties that are highly engaged, those are showing as dependent upon the resource, compared to the other counties, you may want to consider prioritizing recreational fishing communities.

Then, of course, if it looks like you've got sort of equal engagement between commercial and recreational fishing, you might want to consider either removing sector allocations altogether or allocating between sectors, if there is rationale for maintaining sector allocations.

MR. BELL: Christina, you are slightly garbled a little bit, but I think it got better there at the end, and I don't know if you were closer to the mic or whatever, but there's a little bit of distortion.

MS. WIEGAND: Okay. I'm about as close to my computer screen as I can get, but stop me again if things --

MR. BELL: That's better. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Okay. Like I said, the potential analysis here are these social indicators, and also looking at things like the local quotient, or the number of trips, the number of pounds being landed per trip, excuse me, comparatively across the coast, as well as looking at the number of recreational directed trips.

Next, we get into this idea of cultural importance and the extent to which the fishery plays a unique role in the history of fishing communities, and so, if, yes, the fishery does play a unique role in the history of a fishing community, the question is then does it sort of play an important role in these close-knit community cultural traditions, and I will say this can be a little hard to tease out, and a number of you have mentioned this idea that, particularly for the snapper grouper species, one specific species isn't as important as perhaps the whole group of species, and so that is something to be considered here.

Then, if the fishery does play an important role in community cultural traditions, the question is then is it changes in the regulatory environment that are changing the role the species is playing in the community in historical times, versus current times, and, if it is regulations, one might consider allocations that mirror the historical real allocations or de facto allocations, if there was sort of a set allocation that was being seen in the fishery, even if it wasn't formally regulated, and, if it's not regulations that are causing this change in cultural tradition, or cultural value, then you may want to consider allocations that prioritize some of the economic, biological, ecosystem needs, because it's not necessarily the regulatory environment that is affecting the change.

Then, again, if these fisheries aren't playing a unique role in the history of fishing communities, you may want to consider allocations that simply reflect the current state of the fishery or would allow for some growth and adjustment in the future.

The information for this cultural importance, a lot of it is going to come from you guys, you using your informed judgment, any available demographic data that we might be able to get our hands on, and then a summary of information that's provided in fishery performance reports. To-date, we haven't specifically been asking about cultural importance during these fishery performance reports, and we intend to do so in the future, and I will say, looking back at already completed fishery performance reports, a lot of this information is actually already provided by AP members and is available.

Those are the two social trees, and we'll pop over to the next slide, and I am not going to go over these questions in detail, and you are familiar with them, and you've had them for the last two sections, and so, again, content, keeping in mind the focus on readily-available data, and then are the recommendations helpful to guide decisions, without being too prescriptive, and I see we've got hands up, and so I will go ahead and pause here.

MR. BELL: Okay. Thank you, Christina. Laurilee, you had yours up first, if you want to go ahead.

MS. THOMPSON: When you say you're going to take the top ten counties, is that the top ten counties in the entire South Atlantic region or the top ten counties in each state, and how do you determine what the top ten counties are? That's my first question.

MS. WIEGAND: It's the top ten counties within the South Atlantic region, or within whatever the management boundaries are, and so, for snapper grouper, it would be the South Atlantic region. For king and Spanish mackerel, it would extend through the Mid-Atlantic region, because that's the management unit, in its entirety, and then it's based on total landings in a given county.

MR. BELL: Do you have another one, Laurilee?

MS. THOMPSON: Yes, and, actually, I have several. Over time, the commercial landings, due to the regulations, have gone down, and they're a lot lower than they once were, and so, when you're trying to judge the cultural importance, and I will take Port Canaveral, for example, Port Canaveral in Florida, and the port was created for the shrimping industry, but now it is a cruise ship, and it's hard to even find a shrimp boat there, even though it's one of only two places on the entire east coast of Florida where the large shrimp boats can actually unload and take on provisions, and so the cultural importance of the commercial fishery, through the decades, has diminished, and not really through any fault of the commercial industry, but that is -- That is what has happened.

The recreational industry has exploded, while the commercial industry, due to federal regulations, has been kept in check, and, in some cases, is just a shadow of what it once was, and so, when you're trying to consider culture and history, how far back do you go?

MR. BELL: Do you want to respond to that, Christina?

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, please. For the first question, that's looking at fishery dependence, we used, like Mike was talking about for the biological questions, we used the last five years, because that's what lined up with what was going into the amendment document for greater amberjack, but that's not to say that we can't use a different set of years, or a longer time period, and I do think that's something the council should discuss.

For the cultural and historic questions, because that's based on qualitative data, that arguably goes back as far as the memory of the council members and AP members and anyone that we're able to talk to gather that type of information.

MS. THOMPSON: Thank you.

MR. BELL: All right. If you've got other questions, Laurilee, just circle around, and we'll come back. Kerry, go ahead. You're next.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thank you. Again, some suggestion for ways we can do a potential analysis, or have information for a potential analysis, and, specifically to this, I think, under cultural importance, I might take that highlighted question of does the fishery play an important role and specifically highlight not just the fishing regulatory environment, but also perhaps zoning and development, because that plays a huge issue on how sort of the importance of fisheries has changed, is access to working waterfront and things, as we all know.

I also think that, for analysis, under cultural importance, I would specifically highlight, and I would like the wording in there, to talk about whether it's -- Does that area have seafood festivals, and does that area use sort of fishing in any form in their tourist and marketing materials, and what are the number of fishing organizations in that group, in that area, excuse me, because I think Laurilee is going exactly where I'm going, where we're going to have a really hard time -- There's not going to be anywhere in the past five years, almost, on the entire Southeast coast where someone is going to look and go the most important thing to that area is commercial fishing.

I highly doubt that that community exists anymore, yet I will use Charleston as an example, where I can't even imagine the percentage of importance, in terms of economic value, that just commercial fishing alone plays into the Charleston County economy, but, if you look back, and you think about Mount Pleasant Markets itself, with pictures of Shem Creek and the shrimp boats, and it's not pictures of Shem Creek and the yellowfin with quad Yamahas, and maybe it will eventually, and I don't know.

I think that that's where we're really going to become -- We're just going to get stuck on this issue right here, if we're only looking back a certain level, and that leads me to, Mr. Chairman, can you put a pin, later, in our conversation, and I would like to discuss fishery performance reports and maybe how we can use those most effectively to answer a lot of these topics for potential analysis, and I will leave that there.

MR. BELL: Okay. Thanks, Kerry. Good points, and certainly, on the Charleston picture here, I would agree with you, and it's not the same place it was twenty or thirty years ago on the waterfront. Chester.

MR. BREWER: Christina, I am a little bit unclear as to what criteria are to be used to pick out the top ten counties, because, as I look at the different say counties in the State of Florida, where Laurilee lives, commercial fishing, and particularly the shrimping industry, is pretty important, but, when you look at where I live, Palm Beach County, you've got -- Lord only knows the economic impact of recreational fishing, and the extraction rate in Palm Beach County is relatively low, because of the level of catch-and-release fishing that goes on here. We've got -- When it comes to billfish, there is no take, or harvest, of billfish, even though it's legal, and nobody is going to do it, and so I'm just wondering how you pick out your social and economic issues and what criteria you use to go into your, quote, top ten counties. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Chester, and so, right now, identifying the top ten counties is based purely on landings, and so it's just the sum of landings over the last five years by county, including both recreational and commercial landings, to identify those counties in the South Atlantic that are seeing the highest amount of X species landed.

I understand that that doesn't get at your concern, in terms of extraction and actually landing fish as being not necessarily the most important part for the recreational sector, and I will say, while landings is what we have run through for the example we're about to show you, there is other ways to do it, and we can look at total number of permits, and we can look at total number of directed trips, and there are other ways we can go about identifying those top ten counties, but, right now, we have been sticking with just the top landed fish.

MR. BREWER: Okay. Thank you.

MR. BELL: Thanks. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I had a couple of suggestions on this particular tree, and so one of -- It's suggestions and questions, I guess, and one of the things is how you factor in catch-and-release and the importance of catch-and-release fishing for some of our fisheries, and it seems like, if it's going to get factored in somewhere, that maybe it gets factored into this particular tree.

Another thing that I brought up earlier is these differences in values or satisfaction with the fishery across the council's region, and so I think about how -- I am going to take Dewey's blueline tilefish example and how he's been talking to us about something that is occurring in one particular area, whereas how Florida uses the blueline tilefish fishery and interacts with it is totally different, and so it seems like -- I don't think that just getting at what are the top counties, and it's more about how different fishermen in these particular areas value the particular species and how they are fishing for the species. I think that there would be some differences like that in dolphin as well, and so I just wanted to throw that out there, that maybe there is a way to incorporate that in this tree.

Then, also, and Kerry brought up the fishery performance report, but it seems like something about like recent stakeholder input, whether it's concerns or just changes in the fishery, and I'm wondering if that can get incorporated. She mentioned with the fishery performance report, but I think about something like a survey, or even -- So, of course, you could have a statistically-valid survey, which would take some time, but you could also do something more informal, maybe like what the Gulf Council does with their Something's Fishy, and try to get feedback on a particular species that they working on, and so I'm just throwing those ideas out there.

I wish there was a way that we could get to the multispecies component, or kind of how changes that we make for one species would affect other species, whether it's in a complex or other species that might be overfished or undergoing overfishing, and changing allocation in one could affect another, but that might be just too much to try to incorporate into this tree. Thank you.

MR. BELL: Good comments, Jessica. Christina, do you want to respond to some of that?

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, please. Thanks, Mel. I agree that there are other ways that we can incorporate information into this, and we could look at past public comment, recent public input, related to a given species, and we could look into what I would term the gray literature, and so things like fishing boards, and we could look at what Kerry was talking about, to see marketing for certain areas, whether there are seafood festivals or given things in certain areas, and that's information that we could gather.

In terms of a survey, we could solicit public input, similar to the way the Gulf Council does with their now renamed Something's Fishy tool, but, in terms of actually conducting a formal survey, even if it wasn't super statistically significant, that is something that is a bit challenging for the council to do on a short time period, because we have to go through and get OMB approval, and so, for something like this, we would need to stick more with just soliciting public input on a given topic, as opposed to an actual survey.

MR. BELL: Good point, and I was going to mention that surveys always sound like a great idea, but we've got certain restrictions that we have to deal with, and so thanks for pointing that out. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thanks, Mel. I was just going to recommend, if at all possible, we look at effort, instead of landings, as the metric of recreational activity, to try to get at that sort of dimension, about the fact that landings does not always reflect importance, and so that's something maybe we need to consider. Thank you.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, Spud. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Sorry if this has already been answered, but, with regard to the recreational data, what is available to get down to the county level? I don't think it's statistically possible to use those MRIP surveys, though we would have some headboat data and then, over the long term, some logbook data, but, with pure private recreational, I don't think we can get down to the county level, and so I just wanted to confirm that.

MR. BELL: Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: I will say I wasn't the one that pulled the data for this, and it was our lovely Dr. Chip who did that, but I believe, with the MRIP data, we were able to get down to the county level, but it's just that we were unable to get down to the community level, and so that sort of census-designated place level that is typically used, and we weren't able to get down to that level, and so we had to up it to the county level.

MR. BELL: Okay. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Chair. I want to reiterate Spud's comment here and just say that I think that looking simply at harvest numbers is a little bit too rigid, and it's really important, or even so looking at just directed trips, and we need to look at this more big-picture. I can think, from my personal experience, if you were to probably survey customers of my for-hire business, a lot of these really important species we catch, like Spanish mackerel, it would often not be said that they were a directed trip, because we were doing something else and went to a fallback option, and so I just think, that when we look at this, we have to be a little less rigid with that. Thank you.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, Tom. Any other comments or questions for Christina on this particular topic right now? Okay. I am not seeing any hands, and so the plan is -- I believe, John, what we're going to do is shift over to you and actually run the app, using amberjack as an example, and just kind of see how this works and then come back with more comments and questions.

MR. HADLEY: Well, that's on the agenda, or on the menu, if you will, but there are a few more slides between then and now, and I think Christina was going to go over those.

MR. BELL: Okay. I'm sorry. Gotcha. Go ahead and finish.

MS. WIEGAND: We just wanted to go over a little bit of what it would be like to actually work through the decision tree and some of the feedback we got from previously showing this tool to our variety of advisors, and so this is how we, as staff, sort of foresee this process going.

First, we're going to gather all of the appropriate information, and we're going to present that to you in a Shiny app. If you will remember, at the last few meetings, we've been doing these fishery overviews, when you're first starting to work on a new amendment with a given species, and all of that information will be presented within that fishery overview. Staff will go through and do the analysis and sort of develop the preliminary responses to each of the trees, and we'll walk the council through each decision point, where you'll be able to then clarify the outcomes and address some of these more subjective outcomes.

Of course, as I'm sure you guys have gathered from going through all of these different trees, it's certainly possible that we might not have the necessary data, or there might not be an input for every species, and, perhaps more importantly, it's likely that not all of the decision tree branches are going to point to the exact same recommendation, and so the social tree might say to allocate one way, where the econ and stock status tree say to allocate a different way.

Because we wanted to make sure that this decision tree tool wasn't too prescriptive, we haven't gone through and assigned any ranking or weighting to any of the trees, so that it will maintain flexibility, and you'll be able to sort of make decisions on a species-by-species basis, based on rationale. Then, of course, the council will have to resolve everything on a case-by-case basis and use those results to then either develop a range of alternatives or to discuss different rationale for a chosen alternative.

Then, just real quickly, like John Hadley mentioned at the beginning, we have had this reviewed by the SEP, SSC, staff from the Regional Office and the Science Center, and we did have a meeting that consisted of AP chairs and vice chairs and a few other members, and I will say just a big thank

you to those AP members who were able to participate in that meeting and to everyone who was able to provide us input on this tool.

We got sort of a variety of feedback, and there was generally positive feedback on developing this sort of systematic approach to address allocations and appreciation of looking at a variety of factors, as opposed to just landings, and, in general, there was a feeling that the information provided was appropriate, given that need for a really quick turnaround.

Then, of course, the not so good, which you guys have brought up a little bit today, and there is quite a bit of concern over this single-species approach, especially for fisheries like the snapper grouper fishery, where one species alone is perhaps not super important, and it's the combination of a variety of different species that creates the importance.

There is also a note about the uncertainty in the data that is being used, particularly with MRIP data, as well as discard data, and then noting that not every approach may be applicable to a given species, and so it's possible that some of the branches within the decision trees would provide misleading results, with one salient example being red snapper or species that have highly constrained harvest levels. With that, now I believe it is finally the time to sort of run you through our greater amberjack example, to see how all of this actually worked out with a real-life example.

MR. HADLEY: All right. If you'll give me just a second and let me refresh these apps, so they're responsive, and, in the meantime, we'll start off with Mike going through the biological aspects of the decision tree, once we get this up and running, and so, just before I hand it over to Mike, just to kind of orient everyone, this main tab that's up on the screen right now, this is what would be the allocation decision tool, and so this what we will work through for the different questions.

This screen that is up and highlighted now on your presentation screen is the fishery description, and so this is going to be sort of the data that we use to help answer those questions, and so, with that, I will hand it over to Mike, and we'll start walking through the decision tree, looking at landings and discards, to start off with.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you, John. I guess if we can first highlight the landings and discards tab in the allocation tool, and so just reorienting folks to the questions that are shown here, and the first big one for landings and discards will be should future allocations be based on harvests that are impacted by previous or current quotas, and, just as a brief aside for what the current quotas are, or the current allocations, rather, for greater amberjack, they are derived from the Comprehensive ACL Amendment, and those were based on landings between 1986 and 2008, with special emphasis on 2006 through 2008, and there was kind of that half-and-half allocation approach.

Prior to that being in place, there was a commercial quota that has been in place since 1999, and so, with that information there, we can look to the fishery overview, to see kind of how that has played out against the ACL, by looking at the combined data for both sectors tab, and that will show sector landings as a percent of the ACL in recent times.

If we want to look a bit further back, there are commercial sector and recreational sector-specific landings that we can pull up, but remember that first question is really a bit more subjective, and so it's kind of a question to the council now of how would you all like to proceed, and would you

like to have the landings look further into the past, when there were more or less no ACLs in place that would be limiting to the harvest, or would you like to look at more recent time periods, where it may have been impacted by a sector-specific ACL? As a reminder, this is not binding, and this is an example, and so pick something for the sake of the example. John, if you can highlight the decision tool, and, I guess, Mel, if you want to pick one or the other, and this would probably involve some type of a longer discussion.

MR. BELL: Yes, it normally would, but, just for the sake of moving things along here, yes. Let's see what happens.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Now we have the follow-up question of whether both or only one or neither sector have met or exceeded the ACLs or experienced closures to the ACLs in any of the past five fishing years, and so, if we shift back over to -- We can actually leave it right on this slide, because you can kind of see it as a percent of the ACL, and there is 100 percent, and there are years where it gets close or exceeds.

Just for the sake of having actual years of the closures, there have been commercial closures in three of the last five fishing years, and, for the five years that we're looking at here, the terminal year is the 2019/2020 fishing year, because, if you remember, for greater amberjack, the year starts in March and goes through the subsequent February, and so the last fishing year that we're looking at, the most recent one, started in March of 2019 and ended in February of 2020, and then go back five years, and that's the time period we're looking at.

Commercial closures occurred in the 2015/2016, 2016/2017, and 2017/2018 fishing years, and, in those same years, there were recreational quotas that were met, and the recreational fishery did not close in 2015/2016, even though it met its quota, but it would have met it later in the year, and that's kind of reflected also in the commercial fishery. The 2015/2016 closure happened on January 21, and so very close to the end of the fishing year anyway for that fishery.

Going back to the question that was asked, this is more of a data-oriented question, and it seems that both of the sectors have met or exceeded the ACLs within the past five fishing years, and so that would lend it to the reasoning that the landings are hitting their ACLs, and there's not really anything to give from one sector to the other, and so the advice coming out of that, from the landings perspective, would be to either maintain current allocations or consider basing any changes on other decision trees.

Next, looking at the discard question, whether discards have been a substantial portion, if you look at the catch projections button in the fishery overview, and you don't have to pay attention to the blue background portion, and that's kind of the future projections, but you do see, in this figure, the landings versus the dead discards, looking back over time, and what you see is that the dead discards constitute a very small portion of the overall removals for greater amberjack, and that contributes partially to, relative to other species, there are not a whole lot of releases of greater amberjack, but, also, they have a relatively low discard mortality rate, and so that combination of factors -- The data would suggest that there is a relatively low impact of discard mortality on greater amberjack overall.

Coming back to the question, has it accounted for a substantial portion of removals, and the data would indicate no, and so we would continue looking at other decision trees without any specific

advice regarding the discards for greater amberjack, and I guess I can pause right here, and are there questions on the responses that we've gone through with this portion?

MR. BELL: Any questions on what Mike just went through and how that worked? I am not seeing any hands.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. We will continue on to stock status, and there is not as much in the overview with status, because a lot of this comes from the assessment, and status has been determined, and so that's a yes, and the status is not overfished and not overfishing, and that came out of SEDAR 59, and so the advice related to status would be that there isn't anything related to status that would indicate a reallocation, and so either consider keeping the current ones or, if you're going to make any changes, those would be based on factors addressed in other decision trees. At this point, I would transition to John to take us through economic.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Unless there are any questions, and we can certainly come back to each one of these at the end, once you see the summary, but I will jump into the economic portion. As you recall, there is three economic-related questions, looking at really proxies, looking at the potential economic importance and whether or not that is changing to either sector. Are there notable trends in demand for the species, and, really, looking at has the sector fully harvested its ACL on a consistent basis, which is looking at demand for quota.

I will hop over here and let this load. All right. Starting off with this first question, is the relative economic importance of the species changing? These first two graphs are the proxy information that is available. The left side looks at the percent of commercial revenue from greater amberjack landings compared to total revenue from all species that landed greater amberjack, and so you can see, at least based on the past five years of data, looking at a somewhat flat, but relatively downward trend, as far as the percent of revenue from greater amberjack landings.

Looking at the right graph here, this looks at the recreational economic importance, or proxy thereof, and this looked at directed trips, specifically the -- Looking at this right graph, looking at the percent of recreational directed trips for greater amberjack compared to total directed recreational trips for South-Atlantic-Council-managed species, and so -- I am not sure why this keeps wanting to reload, but the take-home point is that the overall trends, looking at whether it be the percent of revenue on the commercial side dedicated to greater amberjack or the percent of directed trips to greater amberjack on the recreational side, compared to total directed recreational trips, has seen a downward trend, and so, if we hop back over to our first question, it is changing.

Really, in this case, it's actually becoming -- At least over the past five years, it's decreasing in importance for both, and so, really, we probably need to tweak the wording on this a little bit, but I am just going to click this, because it's going to have the same outcome, where, here, we consider maintaining current allocations or basing changes on other factors. I don't know if, Kerry, you wanted to ask a question now or come back to it.

MR. BELL: Does it make sense, Kerry, to ask it now?

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks. If it's okay, I would, because this is sort of -- For this exercise to be useful for all of us, I feel like we do kind of need to see what it would be like if there was significant discussion, or disagreement, and, again, we don't have to figure it out here, but I just want to point

out like a pitfall that I see, and the data that we saw on the commercial importance -- You showed a downward trend, and that is not my experience, and that's not my experience with my own ex-vessel value coming off of our boat, and it's not my experience with the importance beyond ex-vessel value, which, in my case, is all the way to the end user.

It makes me nervous, and are we just rushing just to see where the tree leads, or, in every circumstance, is it going to be that we're going to see sort of one or two graphs like that, and that's going to be the conclusion, because I would -- I am not going to argue it here, because this doesn't matter, but, if we were really doing this, I would have a huge argument with sort of where that branch led. Did you get my question out of that?

MR. BELL: Go ahead, John. I mean, I see what she's saying, and I actually understand her point there, but I thought we were just kind of working through this as an example, to show how the thing worked, and not necessarily worry about the specific data you're looking at, but you can answer the question.

MR. HADLEY: I have kind of a two-part answer to that, and that's a good point, and I'm glad that you brought that up, and I think, from a conceptual standpoint, we're looking for feedback just on the tool itself, and so kind of that first scenario we're clicking through and seeing what the eventual summary outcome is going to be, and, Kerry, to your point, this is the kind of information that, at least in its current form, would be shown when this thing is live.

If it's something that you don't feel is appropriate, or if we should change the information being presented, or remove it from the decision tree altogether, that's certainly useful feedback on staff's part, and so, if there is -- This is a conceptual example, and it is a draft example, and so, while it is a real live species, it isn't necessarily meant to be used for management at this point, just because this is a trial run, and this kind of a guinea pig species, but this is the sort of information, and baseline information, that will be displayed once this thing is kind of, quote, unquote, live, moving forward, and so certainly I welcome any feedback on that.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, John. If you want to just keep working through, I guess.

MR. HADLEY: Okay. Working through to the next question, looking at are there notable trends in demand for the species, we're going to slide down to these next four graphs, and, on top, the top two graphs show directed recreational trips for greater amberjack, based on vessel-based trips, and so this is looking at harvested, or targeted, and, again, that five-year timeline, and then also recreational landings of greater amberjack, and so, based on the example that we put together, it looks like there's a declining trend in both recreational directed trips for the species overall and then directed -- There are decreased landings for the species overall, as far as the general trend.

Moving down to these bottom two graphs, the first graph looks -- Graph A there at the bottom shows the ex-vessel price per pound for greater amberjack from 2015 through 2019, and then the graph to the right, Graph Lower B there, shows landings, and this is an interesting scenario, since you have divergent -- There is other explanations for this, but there are divergent trends, and so, looking at a price per pound basis, there is an increasing trend for greater amberjack. However, landings have gone down.

When looking in summary, and so looking at all four graphs together, two downward trends for the recreational sector and one upward and one downward trend for the commercial sector, and so, moving over here, there is one positive notable change in demand, divergent trend in demand, and you would say, yes, there are notable trends, and, in this case, demand would be increasing for only one sector, based on, there again, that price per pound portion.

Then, moving down to has the sector fully harvested its ACL on a consistent basis, this is really looking at the demand for quota for the species, and quota is a generic term for essentially sector ACL, but, on the top, there is the recreational information, and so, on the top, this is a retrospective comparison of recreational greater amberjack landings to the potential sector ACL under the status quo allocation, and so, essentially, we can't really -- In this case, it's using the new terms, and so FES terms, and there is not really a proper comparison between CHTS and FES, and you're looking at previous landings in FES terms and how that would compare to the new total sector ACLs, if they were not to change on a percentage basis.

If that were the case, and here again a potential status quo scenario, and those were in place over the past five years, the recreational sector would have been exceeding its sector ACL, and, again, this hypothetical ACL, in 2015, 2016, and 2017, and then landings decreased. Additionally, moving over and looking at it on a percent basis, it would have exceeded its ACL in excess of -- Really, over 150 percent in that one year, in 2016, where you saw that spike in landings, and then the sector ACL usage would have really declined over time.

A similar analysis for the commercial sector, if this new sector ACL were put in place under existing sector allocations, the commercial sector would have underharvested its ACL in most years, varying over time, depending on the year. Looking at the 2015 year, it would have been at about 65 percent, and decreased over time.

Moving back over to the demand for, essentially the demand for quota, has a sector fully harvested its ACL on a consistent basis, and the answer to that would, in this case, be yes, there again looking at these years where the recreational sector would have harvested its sector ACL under the existing sector allocations, and so those are the three outcomes for the different economic perspectives.

It's kind of interesting, because, in this case, you have the first one being not terribly informative, and kind of pointing you in a different direction, and the second one is pointing you towards reallocating for the commercial sector, and the third one is pointing towards reallocation towards the recreational sector, and we can talk about the kind of summary portion of this at the end, but all of these could be useful, in that they could kind of set the range of -- Just thinking of potential uses down the line, setting the range of potential sector allocation alternatives and really options to examine down the road. I will turn it over for any additional questions on the economic portion, before we jump into the social portion.

MR. BELL: All right. Any questions for John on the economic portion that he just ran through? Again, we'll have plenty of time at the end for all kinds of questions. John, I don't see any hands.

MR. HADLEY: All right. In that case, I will turn it over to Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, John. If you want to move us back over to the overview, that first question was, among the top ten communities with the highest proportion of total landings in the

region, are most of them engaged in commercial or recreational fishing or both, and so, when you look at the overview, if you scroll down to the bottom, here you can see the top ten counties by total recreational and commercial landings in the South Atlantic, and you've got Monroe, Duval, and Volusia County, Florida, and then Dare County, North Carolina. Then Indian River, Palm Beach, St. John, and Dade County, Florida, and then Charleston and Georgetown in South Carolina came out as the top counties for greater amberjack.

Then you've got to look at each of those county's commercial and recreational engagement, and these were determined by averaging the engagement of the census-designated places within each county, and so, like I said earlier, we were unable to get down to the community level with the recreational data, and so we bumped it up to the county level, so that we could compare both commercial and recreational at the same level, and so we just averaged the engagement scores across communities for each county.

As you can see, doing that actually resulted in no counties being considered highly engaged, and there were some communities within each county, but, once you averaged it all out, it turned out there were no highly-engaged communities, and so any communities that were sort of above the one standard deviation mark. You can, however, see that we did have a number of sort of medium-engaged communities, both for commercial and recreational, and then we did have one community that was considered medium to highly engaged for the recreational fishery, and that was Georgetown.

One thing I do want everyone to keep in mind is that, when we looked at those top ten communities, we identified them based on amberjack-specific landings, but these engagement values are broadly for commercial fishing and recreational fishing, and they are not amberjack specific, and so, if you pop back over to the tool, this is where we get sort of an interesting council decision point, because we're seeing no highly engaged commercial or recreational counties for this, and the council could choose, arguably, to say that, because we did see that medium-high level kick up in Georgetown for recreational, that we're seeing more recreational communities dependent on the resource. Alternatively, you could also say they were equally engaged in commercial and recreational fishing. This is one of those interesting points where it becomes a bit subjective, and so I will sort of turn it over to the council, and I guess, Mel, if you want to, as Council Chair, just pick one.

MR. BELL: Mash the "equally in both" button.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so that would say consider removing sector allocations or allocating equally between sectors. Then we move on to cultural importance and looking at whether the fishery plays an important role in the history of fishing communities, and so, for that, I went back to the fishery performance report, which was linked in that fishery overview, and I pulled out the whole fishery overview, or the whole fishery performance report, excuse me, is linked in the overview.

Reading through that, there were a couple of things that, to me, as staff, stuck out. There were talks about how the recreational fishery for greater amberjack originated all the way back in the 1960s, and, in particular, there was discussion of the Albatross Fleet, which was the original fleet of charter boats in Hatteras, and it was noted that people were fishing for amberjack in that area as early as 1937, and so before World War II.

It was also noted that, in the 1950s and 1960s, off of Daytona Beach, they were often caught, and, at that time, the fishermen would dress the fish for their customers, because of concerns about worms that were found in part of the fillets, and then, even in the 1980s, charter captains would keep amberjack and would give their catch to the soup kitchen, but, in recent years, people are sort of realizing how good they can be to eat, and so, as there have been closures for other species, fishermen have been more interested in targeting greater amberjack.

Then, from the commercial sector, it was noted that greater amberjack has been targeted since the 1980s, but it wasn't really of much value until 2008, because of a variety of regulatory changes, but, back in the 1980s, the greater amberjack were landed because they were so thick that fishermen that were targeting gag and other grouper species had a hard time just getting through the amberjack to get their baits down to those deeper species, and, nowadays, it has become a pretty important commercial and recreational fishery. The price is going up, because people are seeing value in it, and it puts up a good fight, and so it's ideal for recreational fishing as well.

Based on sort of that information in the fishery performance report, it does seem that the fishery plays an important role, but it doesn't seem that it plays a huge role in community cultural tradition. It does seem that it's sort of -- Like we've talked about a lot before, greater amberjack is a piece of this much bigger puzzle, and so, based on that, the resulting recommendation is to consider allocations that mirror the historical, real, or de facto allocations, and that sort of sums up the greater amberjack tree for social.

MR. BELL: All right. Any questions about that piece? None right now. All right. I don't see any hands.

MR. HADLEY: Moving along, this is sort of the take-home of this whole decision tree process and the decision tree tool, is walking through the various portions that were presented. At the very end here, there is a summary of the at least initial allocation suggestions, or advice, if you will, coming from the tool, based on these various topics, and, as you can see, in this scenario, from a landings and discards perspective, the advice there would be to maintain current allocations or base allocation decisions on other factors. From a stock status advice, it would be the same.

From an economic perspective, as I summarized, it was kind of an intriguing scenario, in that, from an economic importance perspective, the suggestion was to consider maintaining current allocations. From a species demand perspective, at least based on the data provided, it would prioritize reallocation towards the sector that was exhibiting increasing demand, in this case the commercial sector, and then, from a quota demand, it would prioritize allocation toward the sector that would likely benefit from additional ACL, in that case the recreational sector.

Then last, but not least, certainly, would be the social advice, which would be to consider removing allocations or allocating equally between the sectors or, from a cultural perspective, consider allocations that mirror the historic, real, or de facto allocations. This is where certainly we have a couple more slides in the presentation, but, before we move off of this, this is, at it stands now, kind of a draft outline of what would come from this tool, and I will take a pause there, if anybody has any comments before jumping back into the presentation.

MR. BELL: All right. We're still walking through the example we worked through. Any questions about how that played out in the summary of advice? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I guess a couple of -- Well, a comment and I guess a question, or maybe it's just my confusion, and so, with the summary advice -- I mean, it's helpful, obviously, that the tool spits it out and tells us exactly what was decided. What would be beneficial, for those using the tool, from my perspective, so you don't have to remember exactly how you entered it, is, for those situations where it says that you're reallocating for one sector relative to the other, to actually specify that sector, and so, if there's an option to be able to choose the sector, so that you could say reallocate toward the commercial sector, or reallocate toward the recreational sector, so that it would show up on the summary report, that would be ideal.

I guess my struggle with this is that I really like the effort that's been made here, in that we so often, and overly simplistically, look solely at landings data, historical landings data, but, when you look at this output, it's kind of a mixture of lots of different factors, some of them going one way and some of them going another way and some of them not being considered at all, and so I'm struggling to then see how this provides that clear guidance that the council is really going to be looking for to develop alternatives surrounding this and come up with like these allocation scenarios to be considered.

I would be curious, from a staff perspective, if the thought there would be that, when you have directionality one way or another, that that would then form the basis for some alternatives, so that you could look at alternatives that, if you decided to allocate based on certain factors, it might go one way, but other factors might go another way, and so can you talk more about that, from a vision standpoint?

MR. BELL: John, do you have some thoughts on that?

MR. HADLEY: Sure. Absolutely. I appreciate that point, and it's interesting moving this from a conceptual draft and applying it to a real species and kind of seeing how this one played out. I think, initially, when it was envisioned, it would be a little bit more -- When we make this live, and it may occur, based on a different species, that there would be a little bit more directionality in the suggestions.

To me, how this could be potentially useful to the council is there is -- Once we get out of this whole aspect of revising ABCs and ACLs to accommodate FES and CHTS estimates, after we kind of get out of that scenario, in a few years, where the council can get a stock assessment and decide whether or not they even need to look at sector allocations, this could be useful, if you ran a species through this process, and there are several things that say consider maintaining sector allocations, then that could be a good indication that the council says, okay, we're okay with the current sector allocations, and so we're going to move on to different aspects of management of the fishery.

Specifically to the use of an outcome like this, I think it could be useful in helping the council consider how to set up alternatives for sector allocations, particularly certainly -- Well, it's always a status quo option in there, but it points to considering that in this scenario, but it also points to alternatives that look at allocating more to the commercial sector and to the recreational sector, and so, just because there is not a very specific directionality, it doesn't mean that it wouldn't be helpful to the council in setting up, at least initially, allocations that would, down the road, as the amendment develops, have an in-depth analysis on those potential outcomes, and so that's sort of

how I envision it, and I don't know if any other -- If Mike or Christina or any other staff have ideas on that, but I will stop there.

MR. BELL: Okay. Thanks, John. Mike, do you want to weigh-in there?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thanks, Mel, and certainly I agree with everything that John just laid out, and I think another aspect to consider is that, when you have these kind of divergent pieces of advice that are coming through, that's the place where the council comes in, and we didn't put a specific weighting type of system for this, and that was intentional, because the council wanted to be able to evaluate things on that case-by-case basis, but that's a place where the council comes in, and the council makes the decision of, okay, what are we going to prioritize in this fishery, are we going to take into account a little bit more of the economic species demand, or are we going to value the cultural importance a little bit more heavily, and that's a decision point for the council to make in developing their alternatives and then selecting between those as well.

MR. BELL: Okay. Thank you, Mike. Any other staff, back to Andy's point there? All right. Kerry, do you have a comment or a question?

MS. MARHEFKA: I have a question. Procedurally, what is it going to look like when we may disagree on answers to these questions that are subjective, like the first question about whether allocation should be based on harvest, should future allocation be based on harvest impacted by previous or current quotas, and I can see times where we're not going to necessarily have a consensus on that, and, procedurally, has it been thought through how we'll handle that?

MR. BELL: John, is that a fair question?

MR. HADLEY: That's a good question. That's not something that we have discussed. I think it's something that, at least initially, as council staff, I would look to council members and how would you like to address a situation like that, whether it be making a motion and coming to a vote that this is how that -- That this is how that outcome would occur, one way or another, and I think the other option is you could almost agree to move on to other topics, since that's a very controversial one, if that's what the council desires, because there is not a clear answer, one way or another, to whatever aspect it is, landings or discards or what have you. That's kind of the way that I would think it would play out, but it's really at the discretion of the council members, because, there again, this is meant to be a non-binding tool for council members to use as you see fit, and, with that, I see that Christina has her hand up as well.

MR. BELL: Christina, if you would like to weigh-in there.

MS. WIEGAND: I 100 percent agree with everything that John just said. I would also encourage that, if we do go the route of sort of soliciting public input and revising and updating how we do fishery performance reports, that, when there are some of these more subjective decisions to be made, that the council could also then take the opportunity to review some of the qualitative data that they have access to and to see what that does or does not sort of help guide a decision on that specific decision tree point.

MR. BELL: Thanks, Christina. I think Kerry asked a good question, kind of jumping right into the practical application of this tool, and we've got this good tool, and exactly how do we use this, and that makes sense, thinking ahead. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Overall, I really like the decision tree. It, obviously, is a starting point, and I think probably one of the biggest problematic areas we're going to probably encounter is this economic advice and social advice, because there is so many different ways to look at it, and we tend to look at only recreational fishing and commercial fishing as activities, but, in reality, we're looking at the economic and social impacts of the states that make up the South Atlantic, and more people visit every single state just to go fine dining than they do fishing, period.

I think, to look at social and economic data, especially in the changing times of a pandemic and everything we're going to be going through in the next few years, I think you have to look at overall economic development and overall tourism. Where are the dollars being spent, and on what activities, because that really gives you a clearer picture of what kind of economic and social impact on an area that these activities are happening.

At the end of the day, we really come back to one thing, and the SSC gives us an ACL, and that's what we have to live with, and the only thing we can do with that is prioritize effort and control effort, and so, yes, I just think that it's going to be very problematic that we don't get wrapped around the axle of looking at economic and social advice from a million different standpoints that, at the end of the day, you could pick and choose any way to look at it, and it could change what you think is the reasonable outcome. At the end of the day, we have a quantifiable number of fish, or pounds of fish, that we can harvest, and we need to figure out how to control the effort to make that happen without running over that number. Thank you.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, Tim. Any other comments or questions at this point on the summary that John presented and the example? John, do you have a couple more slides?

MR. HADLEY: I do, yes, and they're kind of wrap-up slides and next steps, but, before we move along, I did allude to it, that this is meant to be a flexible tool for the council to use, and just to keep in mind that this isn't all the information you'll get throughout the amendment process and that you will -- Each action and alternative that you develop will run through the full NEPA process and full analysis, and so you will have additional information down the road. Kind of the goal here is just to try to get some information out front, before that sort of detailed analysis is available, and so just a conceptual comment, in the context of timing.

With that, I will hop back into the presentation, and there are just two more slides here. One is looking at timing of development of the decision tree, and that's certainly sort of ending, or coming to the end, of the development process, and we're looking for comment, and this will be cued, on the next slide, but just sort of guidance to staff on how you would like to proceed, and this was, potentially, one of the final allocation decision tree blueprint reviews.

However, there is some time blocked out, and not a lot of time, and it is a fairly tight schedule, but there is some time blocked out at the March meeting to come back around and address any items that the council would like to address specific to this tool. We're looking for a little guidance there, towards the end, on how you would like to proceed and the timing of how to proceed.

With that, this is the last slide, and so it's looking at just general feedback on the process. Do you feel that this tool and method, as outlined, could be useful for the council in examining initial allocation decisions? Do you feel like the resulting recommendations would be useful and helpful as well, without being too prescriptive, and, finally, there again, that timing aspect, based on the content and examples, and do you feel a decision tree should be put into practice, as currently developed, or are there other changes that are needed? If so, is there something that you would like to review at the March meeting? I will turn it over. Thank you.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks for that, John. What I would like to do -- So we've run through the presentation, and we've run through an example of actually running it, and what we want to make sure we do is we -- The council members, in particular, have had an opportunity to ask any questions or comments, and I know I've talked to some folks offline here about making sure we have time just for some general comments and reflection on this, but we want to make sure that we have appropriate direction to staff.

What I was hoping to do is maybe we could just go ahead and take ten, and we'll leave the questions up, and then we'll come back and then deal with this, and we'll make sure that John and Mike and Christina get everything they need from us, and then we can also hit specific questions and comments that you might have, and so let's go ahead and, if you don't mind, Spud and Kerry, if you're going to be here, if you can hold that for ten minutes, and we'll come back and get into this, and we'll leave those questions up. Okay. We'll see you in ten.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. BELL: Let's go ahead and come back to this. What I want to make sure we do is, particularly with council members, for starters, is make sure everybody can ask any questions they want, make any comments, any guidance, and we want to make sure that staff has good guidance in moving forward, and one of the things we need to make sure we're clear on is, if we feel that, what we've seen, if we're good with it as-is, or if there are specific changes that we think need to be addressed, and we can always come back and look at that in March, and so that's something we need to ponder as we move forward with this.

I would like to make sure we've kind of worked this through with the council, and, once we've done that, if we have some time, we'll go ahead and open up for some public comment as well, and so we've got a queue started here. Spud, if you would like to lead us off.

MR. WOODWARD: All right. Thanks, Mel, and I certainly want to extend my appreciation for the work that's been done on this, and it's an ambitious undertaking, and I think it's been fruitful. I think it has, obviously, raised a lot of questions about the details of how would we go down these pathways and make decisions, but I just wanted to make sure that I understood, and so we've got an allocation review trigger policy that I believe we've accepted, and so, if we are in a situation where we have to do an allocation review, then this would be the next step in the process that we would use, that we would go to this to begin to examine various alternatives that we might consider if an allocation change is deemed necessary.

If that's the way it's to be used, then I think it's a good tool, and I think -- To go back to a question I asked earlier, that is that it will be the responsibility of council staff to basically gather the information that we'll use for the first run through it, and then, as it's said here, obviously, there

would be more detailed information made available for final allocation decisions that would be included, I guess, in a management action, and so I just wanted to make sure I understood that right.

Anyway, at this point, I think it's giving us outcomes that are useful. I am not sure that I am comfortable enough with it to say it's ready to go. This has been very informative, and it's raised a lot of thoughts in my mind, and so, personally, I would like to have a chance, maybe, to revisit it and talk a little more, hopefully in person, about this at the March meeting, and so thanks.

MR. BELL: Okay, and I think, for that, to help staff with that, if there are specific things that we would like them to address, or consider tweaking, or we could certainly make time for it in March, but kind of think of maybe some specific things as well, and we will have some time here, but just everybody kind of think about that as well. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thank you. I think I have some specifics. First, I would like to say that I've been talking more than most people, and thank you all for bearing with me, and, also, that I didn't get the chance to say that I think that staff has done a great job on this. My questions, or critiques, are absolutely not directed at you all, and I hope you know that I think the potential is fabulous, but I just want to make sure we get it right, because I think it's so good.

With that said, one of the specific things that I think I would like to see, in order to feel more comfortable moving forward, is that, in my mind, the fishery performance report becomes a lot more important in this tool than I think it has been in past when we've used it, and I am worried about the information going in, and that has nothing to do with who is putting the information in, but it has to just do with the fact that we're in the situation where we don't have great information, and we don't have the time to get the information we would like, and that is my biggest concern about this.

If one of the things we're going to use to inform the answers to some of these questions is going to be fishery performance reports, what I would like to see, if possible, and I don't know if we have time, and I don't know what it would look like, is sort of an outline of a fishery performance report as it goes to the advisory panel.

I would like us, as a council, to have a chance to sort of tweak the questions that are being asked and see if there are ways that we can ask questions that would make that even more useful for this application and then make sure that, when it starts going to the advisory panels, the advisory panels have plenty of time and understand sort of how important that information is and how it's going to be used, because I do have some specific things that I would like to add to asking the advisory panels to the performance report, if we're going to start using it.

I also know, from my experience as an advisory panel member, that, just like us, they're slammed, and they have two days, and these are usually done -- The discussion about the performance reports can be kind of done -- Not rushed, but there's just so much to talk about, and I want to make sure that they understand the implications are that we are really going to be using that to inform some management decisions, and so that's my specific comment about what we could do before March.

Then I have a question, and that's in regard to, as we make a decision, as we use the tool, if we get four answers all pointing say in the direction of reallocating to the commercial industry, for

example, but then, through the amendment process, through looking at the NEPA analysis and through other ways in which we collect information, the council then decides not to do what the tool may have very clearly said we should do, if there was ever that circumstance, where we would be on legal ground? I mean, are we setting ourselves up to be more bound by this than we intend to be? I will stop talking now.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, Kerry. There were some questions and some points, and I don't know if anybody from staff wants to respond to any of that, but, I mean, I think, from the standpoint of Kerry's last point, again, this is a tool that we've developed ourselves, to help us make an informed decision to try to come up with the best result, and so I don't know that it doesn't -- It simply becomes part of, I guess, the record of our decision-making process, and we're not bound by the tool, necessarily, I would think. Myra, you go first, and I saw that Shep has his hand up, but if you wanted to respond from a perspective of answering that question, and maybe Shep might have an opinion there. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Mel. I am not going to attempt to even give any kind of legal advice at all, and so my comment, and it just popped into my head when Kerry was talking about the fishery performance reports, and, you know, if the council wanted to spend a little bit of time reviewing those discussion questions that we use to walk the advisory panels, when they put together those reports, there would be time to potentially do that in March, if you guys would like to do that, and we have allocated some time to continue discussion that you guys have started today at the March meeting, and so there will be time to do that, if you wish, at that time. Thank you.

MR. BELL: All right. Shep, if you have something specific to Kerry's point or something, you can go ahead and weigh-in on that.

MR. GRIMES: Thanks, Mr. Chairman, and you did a good job of teeing up the legal response there that, yes, ultimately, the council's consideration, whatever the council considers, will be part of the record for its decision, and, if the council goes through this process and then develops the amendment, or an amendment, to reallocate all of that, presumably it would be part of the record.

If the council decides not to reallocate, and doesn't address something, or doesn't proceed with that plan amendment, then there's really nothing to challenge, and the nature of the lawsuit would be different, but I think still the underlying information that the council based its decision upon would still be part of the administrative record that would be used to defend the agency action, should it be challenged in court. Thank you.

MR. BELL: Okay. Thanks, Shep. I appreciate that. Trish, you were next in line.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Mel. I was just trying to get all my thoughts together on this and providing input to staff. In short, I think it's great. I mean, I love a decision tree. You know, decision trees are great tools, and I think we all just need to remember that it's a tool, but, with all that said, when I was reading through it, the GAO had also recommended ecosystem models in this, and this really was not addressed in this, and you just stuck with the four, and I'm guessing that's probably because the data just aren't -- There is not huge great amounts of data, as far as ecosystem models, but, listening to some of the questions and discussions throughout today, I wonder if you need to add, or you should consider adding, something to that effect, and you don't have to call it ecosystem models, but something to the effect that it may kind of bring out these

outside influences on both the rec and the commercial fleets, be it storms, the climate change, and you just consider something like is that center of biomass moving north or something, and so, anyway, just trying to kind of get at those outside influences that I think Kerry and Jessica both kind of touched on.

The stock status piece, I was -- When I was reading through this, and I think I'm still kind of there, I wonder if a question about rebuilding should be considered in that, like if rebuilding -- If it's trending up, or not trending at all, and I guess, on one hand, if it's rebuilding, it's still technically overfished, but I still wonder if that might be a helpful question, and, also, in the discussion where you got your feedback about dealing with highly constrained harvest levels, I wonder if there is an opportunity for a question, or a couple of questions, to address that in the stock status piece.

Then the other thing that kind of -- When I was reading through this, you talked about -- It's called trends in demand of quota, but kind of maybe -- It was still about quota, or ACLs, and I almost wonder if that is actually a better question in the stock status and not in the economic piece, and let's see. Then I will just kind of add to what Kerry was talking about for the fishery performance reports. I agree that it seems like these are going to play a significant, more significant, role in this decision tree and that probably, when you start putting these together, as Kerry was saying, develop some questions for this, but my point is I think you definitely need to consider that it will be used for this decision tree, and so be sure to put things together in that, so that it will be helpful in this.

Then you all don't laugh at me, but I almost wonder, when you get to the summary, and the summary is still not giving you an answer, or a clear answer, or at least a quasi-clear answer, I almost wonder if you -- Don't shoot me, but a decision tree on the decision tree, but I do wonder if this -- If there might be some additional questions at the end of the summary that might help tease out those conflicting answers, and that was all my input for that, but you guys did a great job, and I love decision trees, and so thanks.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, Trish, and that's a lot of good input and feedback, and, like you said, it's a tool. Judy, you had something?

MS. HELMEY: I was just raising my hand to tell you that I was back from break, but, since I'm here, I would like to say that the staff has done a great job of putting this together, and I also would really like to be in-person and discuss this again, at the March meeting, if that's an option.

MR. BELL: Yes, ma'am, and welcome back, and I think that's the direction that we're heading, and I think there is some interest in probably at least having some time with this in March. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Mr. Chair, and I want to echo the comments of many others, in terms of the effort and work that staff has put into this. They had showed, early on, who had a chance to review this, including the SSC, folks from my team, the Science Center, and this happened over the course of a fairly long period of time, and it's been, obviously, an evolution to the decision tree that has happened, and so I certainly would welcome, and I think we would benefit, from having a conversation in March about some of these guiding questions and give some more time, obviously, to prepare for the questions, but I also think it would benefit to have South Atlantic Council staff work with the Regional Office and Science Center and General Counsel that, if is a tool that the council is going to move forward with, just to ensure we're all on the same

page for its utility and, ultimately, the work under an interdisciplinary planning process, and so to be able to be all on the same page I think is really important.

I would suggest that the council staff reach out to my team and the Center and work to get some additional input and feedback directly from some of our technical experts on this, so we can refine it a little bit further and bring that back to the council.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, Andy. Jessica, I know you had a number of things that you wanted to bring up, in kind of the general sense.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I tried to bring them up throughout the discussion today, but, first, I want to start with I really appreciate staff working on this decision tool, and I know it took a really long time, and I think that it's great. I would like to see it again in March, and I guess that I would bring up some of the points that I brought up throughout this meeting today about -- I guess that some of these things would go under that social decision tree, but the issue about the expansion of the fishery, or contraction of the fishery, and how you're going to deal with that, dealing with things like, if a fishery becomes primarily catch-and-release on the recreational side.

Then the issue of how you're going to gather the stakeholder input, and I do understand that you guys can't easily do a formal survey, but maybe, in addition to the fishery performance report, there's a way to gather some additional stakeholder input, and I don't know if that comes through the council's regular process or what, or if dare I say we use social media, or something else, to try to gather some additional information.

Thinking about things like how different parts of our region are accessing various fisheries, and how it's different, and how you weigh the -- I don't know if you call that the importance, or the effects of that, like thinking about blueline tilefish or king mackerel or Spanish mackerel and how different portions of the region are using the fish differently, and, to me, just using the counties, whether it's by landings or effort or what have you, doesn't get us all the way there, in my mind, and so I was looking at some additional questions, and I would love it if staff could consider some of those things and bring those back, or at least say, look, we looked into this, and here's some things we can do, or we don't see a way that this can work, but I just would like to hear a little bit more about some of those things.

It sounds like we've answered the question about dealing with a stock that occurs in the Gulf and the South Atlantic, where we have to cooperate with the Gulf Council in a management plan, and so it sounds like that is taken care of.

We talked a little bit about ecosystem and how to get some of those effects in there, and I think Trish brought some of that up as well, and I'm not sure if that's fully fleshed out. I have heard that we can't really deal with climate change, and so I don't know if there's any more thoughts on that. I think I'm done. Thanks for coming to me, Mel, and letting me go through a number of those points that I brought up earlier.

MR. BELL: Thanks, Jessica, and that's good things you captured there. At this point, any other specifics or things, again, we might want staff to look at? I think we've kind of agreed that we're going to take another swing at this, in terms of being together face-to-face and discussing looking at it. If there is -- Andy mentioned kind of more of bringing a larger group together with eyes on

it cooperatively, and that might take a little time, but, right now, for staff, specific guidance, thinking of kind of moving on this, but what else would we need to maybe think about and like them to tweak or look at or questions? Anything we can give them some specific guidance on right now would be helpful. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: If it's at all possible, if there's any other metric that can be included alongside ex-vessel value, to look at sort of the economic equation, and I just really quickly want to use an example of why I am beating the drum on this. Currently, right now, triggerfish ex-vessel value is about \$3.75 a pound, and amberjack ex-vessel value is about \$2.00 per pound.

If you go to a restaurant in downtown Charleston right now, those same two fish are being -- An entrée with the same two fish, at the same two number of ounces, are being -- They're \$40.00 a pound, and so there are going to be some species, and I'm just using that as an example, that are going to be devaluated, if that's even the right word, and I'm not an economist, if we're truly only looking at ex-vessel value.

I know that's tough, because I know that you guys want readily-available and easily-accessible data, but, I mean, we're talking about decisions that are going to have huge, long-term big impacts on people, and we're not at all close. Just using that one metric, we're not at all close to getting the whole picture, and I am not quite sure that, when it comes down to it -- If it's not this group of thirteen people sitting around the table, but it's some thirteen other people, a couple of years down the road, using this tool, and they're just using that, and it's not mentioned clearly in a fishery performance report, there's just a lot being missed, and so I would like staff just to sort of explore if there are other metrics that can go into the decision tree, other than that one value specifically for the commercial fishery.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, Kerry. Shep, did you have a specific legal point or something you felt like you needed to point out right this second, or a question? I was trying to get through council members, to make sure that I got all of them first.

MR. GRIMES: That's fine. I did, but --

MR. BELL: I will come back to you. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I want to echo what everybody else said, and staff has done an outstanding job on this, and it certainly is going to make it easier for us to debate these reallocations as they come in front of us, but I wanted to follow-up on what Kerry was saying, and I've been saying this for years now, probably close to twenty years, and the ex-vessel price for the commercial fishery products is just not fair, and I will take rock shrimp. Right now, the boats are getting like \$2.50 to \$3.00 a pound for rock shrimp, and so for a pound of head-on rock shrimp, but, by the time that same four-dozen rock shrimp lands on the table in front of a customer at my restaurant, it's \$48.00 a pound.

The fact that the multipliers have never been included in the commercial fishing industry's reporting of their economic impacts I think is something that we really, really need to take into account, and how does that product grow in value, once it leaves the dock and starts going out in the world of the consumers, and how does the impact from the truckers and from the ice machines and, I don't know, the people that rent condos or apartments to the commercial fishing crew when

they move into a community for the couple of months that they go fishing, and none of that is considered when you look into the impact from the commercial fishing industry, and so I hope that those kind of factors can be included as we move forward, but staff has done a really, really good job, and I look forward to tweaking it and using it. Thank you.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, Laurilee, and, to both you and Kerry's points, I mean, obviously, the economics of this thing, of anything like this, expands into the community and gets much more complex, but kind of the starting point for us, at the docks, is the ex-vessel, and that's where we start, but you're right that it definitely -- The economics expand through the whole community and the state and all that, and so it is a little bit more complex.

One thing to keep in mind, as we think about things that we can provide staff here, in terms of any additional input, is that we're so used to working together on developing amendments, and where we're making decisions right now about specific things, and, I mean, what we're doing now is developing a model, and so, you know, it's not binding in any way, and it's trying to help refine this tool so that it's the most useful tool we can have to help us make decisions when it comes time to make the decisions.

Again, if there are specific things we can provide staff now, as we kind of revisit this in March a little bit, to make sure we capture that, but I will go ahead and go to Shep right now, since he had his hand up, and just give that a little bit more thought. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are a couple of things that I wanted to touch on, but, since you want me to limit to legal advice on this, I will stick to that. I just wanted to point out -- So I figured, based on our past discussions about the decision tree, that it would be very general guidance that came out of it, right, and certainly you've seen that in the one example that we walked through today.

Maybe this is a bit of a balancing act, in maybe figuring it out timing-wise, but, anyway, the National Standard Guidelines, National Standard 4, relative to the allocations, I would say don't provide a lot of specificity, but there is some guidance in there relative to fairness and equity that's straightforward and says an allocation of fishing privileges should be rationally connected to achievement of OY and the furtherance of a legitimate FMP objective.

Now, OY and legitimate FMP objectives are inherently FMP-specific, on some level, and so maybe you, when you're giving this kind of general guidance, maybe it's difficult to incorporate them, but, also, they are broad conceptual things, and I just wanted to mention that maybe -- Is there some way to incorporate those into this decision tree in some way, so that -- Obviously, I would preface it to say, or should have prefaced it to say, that I think we could come along, and the council could look at it and get an outcome from the decision tree that favors, or suggests, maybe allocating more to one sector or another and, in developing the FMP amendment and doing whatever actions are associated with it, you could build the record for how that's around OY and furtherance of the objectives in the particular FMP. You can do that later in the process, but I think, if there's some way to incorporate it earlier, then you should, and this is just a consideration. Thanks.

MR. BELL: Okay. Thanks, Shep. Any other specifics from the council members related to things you're still a little uncertain of or things that you would like to maybe have staff work on before

we kind of take another peek at this in March, when we're together? John and company, I return to you all, and do you guys feel like you're getting some good guidance on this, or some things -- I assume, obviously, this is being recorded, and so we can capture it all, but, I mean, are you guys getting something useful from us?

MR. HADLEY: Yes, absolutely. I think that this discussion has certainly led to other items that we need to come back to, and we will come back to, in March, and so I appreciate the discussion, and, directly to your question, yes, I believe it's been useful feedback and clear guidance on where we need to go from here.

MR. BELL: Okay. I am not trying to shut all of us off, but, at this point -- I said, earlier on, if we have any members of the public that would like to comment on this, briefly, we can certainly accept some public comment, or those from outside that hands up, if they would like to say something, and we've got some time here, and it might be helpful for some additional input. Just raise your hand. Everybody went quiet. Okay. No hands. All right.

John, do you need something from us specifically, in terms of direction? Obviously, I think what the direction would be is let's look at this again in March, with you guys having taken input from what we've provided of things that were suggested. Do you need further specific guidance from us at this point?

MR. HADLEY: I appreciate that, Mel, but, no, I don't think so. I think that, eventually, before this thing goes live, so to speak, and we go beyond a guinea pig species and use this for an amendment development process, we could use a motion from the council that that is the desire to do so, but I don't think we're there just yet, and so that's something that we may hopefully get around to in March, to help make this thing go live, so to speak, but I think, between now and March, we have some information that we can bring to the council to address some of the comments that were previously stated.

MR. BELL: Okay. I will just echo what everyone else has said at this point. You guys, the working group and those of you who presented today, I mean, you all have done a fantastic job with this. It's not a simple thing, by any means, but just the development of the tool is quite impressive, and, again, you know, it is a tool, and it's designed for us to make our life simpler, actually, and that's the purpose of tools, is to improve our ability to do things efficiently and effectively, and so I do appreciate all the work that's been put into this and your receptiveness to our comments and input.

Anything else from anyone at this point? Last chance for comment or questions. You guys going to copywrite this thing? Okay. Well, I am not seeing any hands. If there is no further input for staff, or questions, we can go ahead and adjourn, if there is no other business to come before the council. I don't see any hands, and, if that's the case, then we will just adjourn this meeting. Thanks, everybody, for your participation, and we will be revisiting this a little bit in March, and so have a good rest of the day, and we'll see you in March, hopefully face-to-face, and we are adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on February 7, 2022.)

- - -

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
February 28, 2022

Decision Meeting Tool

Attendee Report:

Report Generated:

02/28/2022 11:34 AM EST

Webinar ID

856-159-227

Actual Start Date/Time

02/07/2022 12:27 PM EST

Duration

4 hours 10 minutes

Attendee Details

Attended	Last Name	First Name
Yes	BROUWER	MYRA
Yes	BYRD	01JULIA
Yes	Batsavage	Chris
Yes	Beal	Bob
Yes	Belcher	Carolyn
Yes	Bell	00 Mel
Yes	Bianchi	Alan
Yes	Brazer	Eric
Yes	Carmichael	01 John
Yes	Collier	Chip
Yes	Conklin	00The Real Chris
Yes	Cox	Derek
Yes	Crosson	Scott
Yes	Curtis	Judd
Yes	DeVictor	Rick
Yes	Diagne	A
Yes	Errend	Melissa
Yes	Foss	Kristin
Yes	Gill	Bob
Yes	Glazier	Ed
Yes	Grimes	Shepherd
Yes	Griner	00 Tim
Yes	Guyas	Martha
Yes	Hart	Hannah
Yes	Helmey	Judy
Yes	Horton	Chris
Yes	Hull	James
Yes	Iberle	01Allie
Yes	Iverson	Kim
Yes	Johnson	Denise
Yes	Kittle	Christine
Yes	Labocchetta	Mark
Yes	Marhefka	00Kerry
Yes	Marvasti	Akbar
Yes	McCawley	00 - Jessica

Yes	McGovern	Jack
Yes	McPherson	Matthew
Yes	Mehta	Nikhil
Yes	Murphey	Trish
Yes	Murphy	Rob
Yes	Newman	Thomas
Yes	Package-Ward	Christina
Yes	Patten	Willow
Yes	Pugliese	01Roger
Yes	Ramos	Saber
Yes	Rawls	Kathy
Yes	Records	David
Yes	Rindone	Ryan
Yes	Roller	00Tom
Yes	Schmidtke	01Michael
Yes	Spurgin	Kali
Yes	Stolpe	Nils
Yes	Strelcheck	00-Andy
Yes	Sweetman	CJ
Yes	Thompson	Laurilee
Yes	Travis	Michael
Yes	Whitten	Meredith
Yes	Wiegand	01Christina
Yes	Wolfe	Wes
Yes	Woodward	00 Spud
Yes	brewer	00chester
Yes	vara	mary