

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL SESSION

**Doubletree Grand Key Resort
Key West, FL**

June 12, 2015

SUMMARY MINUTES

Council Members:

Ben Hartig, Chair
Mel Bell
Dr. Jack McGovern
Jessica McCawley
Chris Conklin
Doug Haymans
Dr. Wilson Laney
Lt. Morgan Fowler

Dr. Michelle Duval, Vice-Chair
Jack Cox
Anna Beckwith
Charlie Phillips
Chester Brewer
Mark Brown
Zack Bowen

Council Staff:

Bob Mahood
Mike Collins
Dr. Kari MacLauchlin
Kim Iverson
Julie O'Dell
Roger Pugliese

Gregg Waugh
John Carmichael
Chip Collier
Dr. Mike Errigo
Myra Brouwer
Amber Von Harten

Observers/Participants:

Monica Smit-Brunello
Dr. Bonnie Ponwith
Dr. Nick Farmer
Sp. Agt. Jeff Radonski
Erika Burgess

Capt. Mark Gordon
LTJG Tara Pray
Rick DeVictor
Dr. Luiz Barbieri
Mark Marhefka

Additional Observers Attached

The Council Session of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened in the Tortuga Ballroom of the Doubletree Grand Key Resort, Key West, Florida, June 12, 2015, and was called to order at 8:30 o'clock a.m. by Chairman Ben Hartig.

MR. HARTIG: We're going to call to order the South Atlantic Council. The first item of business is adoption of the agenda. I guess the agenda is going to be a bit fluid today or not?

DR. DUVAL: My plan is to start with the Draft Snapper Grouper Committee Report that has been e-mailed around to everybody. We're probably going to have to readdress a couple of items that are already in the report and then we'll pick up with our regular business beginning with Amendment 36. A lot of folks have come here to hear that. We'll work through 36 and 35.

I have already spoken to staff about postponing the other items on our agenda until the September meeting, and I'll just sort of outline for everybody how we plan to do that, which is basically Regulatory Amendments 23 and 24.

MR. HARTIG: You've heard the agenda is going to be a little bit fluid from Michelle and we'll go with that. The next item of business is approval of the March 2015 minutes. Are there any changes, deletions or corrections to the minutes? Is there any objection to approving the minutes? Seeing none; the minutes are approved. That brings us back to the Snapper Grouper Report from Dr. Michelle Duval.

DR. DUVAL: Folks should have gotten the draft summary report from the Snapper Grouper Committee e-mailed to them last night by Mike Collins. We received multiple reports, as usual; status of landings, we received an update on the status of amendments for secretarial review. The next item under discussion was the red snapper 2015 season.

Staff presented an alternative approach for folks to consider. We have a draft motion here that if we could possibly get someone to make this motion to direct staff to explore the suggested approach and discuss at our next council meeting in September. This would be for an alternative approach to allow for some harvest in 2016. Mark Brown.

MR. BROWN: I would like to make a motion to have staff explore the opening for 2016. **Motion to direct staff to explore suggested approach and discuss in September 2015.**

DR. DUVAL: Motion by Mark; second by Zack. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved. We received the usual reports from our Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel Chair Jim Atack and our Scientific and Statistical Committee Chair Dr. Luiz Barbieri. The Southeast Reef Fish Survey Presentation, which we would normally have, we will have at the September 2015 meeting. Next we received a presentation on the MRIP Rare Event Sampling, and we will deal with sort of some next steps for that and our timing and task motion. The next item on our agenda was Regulatory Amendment 16, the black sea bass pot closure. **The first motion was to accept the IPT's recommended language for the purpose and need; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Is there any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.**

The next motion was to change the preferred alternative for Action 1 to Alternative 8, Subalternative 8A and change the closure period to November 1 through April 30; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Discussion? Jack.

MR. COX: With the black sea bass, the 8A looked definitely like something that we could work with. NMFS came back, after doing some analysis on 8A, and said that it still showed there was going to be more interaction or possible interaction with the whales. Anyway, we're just going to add some alternatives to it. I don't think we want to pick a preferred.

I think we're just going to go out to – I think we'll take a couple of more alternatives and put in there that NMFS that said would probably be a little bit better and something that they think that possibly Protected Resources could live with. That would be I think where we would probably make an Alternative 11; and we will take a hybrid of Alternative 4 and Alternative 8A.

What we would do is fish in 25 meters in November and 25 meters in April; and the other four months we would fish 30 meters; so that would be like Alternative 11. Then moving to Alternative 12, we could possibly just find a line and fish 27.5 meters and keep it pretty clean for the six months. They said the analysis are coming back and looking like it is something that would reduce the interaction by just changing it that much.

Personally I feel that there is not that much difference. When you're splitting hairs between 2.5 meters, I don't see where it is going to make a whole lot of difference. You start putting it into a model and putting it on through the computer, all of a sudden it changes a lot of things. I'm certainly ready to go fishing. I think we should put them in here and don't pick a preferred.

Charlie and I spoke about it and we spoke with Jimmy Hull about. We have certainly covered the range of where the fishermen are. We will get this down to the Sneads Ferry area and see what these guys think about it. That will go out in August and then in September we'll make a decision and then possibly in 2016 we'll be fishing that winter.

MR. PHILLIPS: We're working on something that just works for everybody as much as possible. The waypoints on this Alternative 12, I guess it would be – and I believe Jack has got the wording and stuff. We're going to have to show this to people like the fishermen down in South Florida and again in New York and then make sure that the line is – because the ridges run all over the place, so it is a little bit arbitrary on exactly – if you're going to use straight lines because we're not going to use contours. If we work with the fishermen, hopefully we can come out with something where everybody can survive. We're not going to get to fish this winter, but we should be able to make it work next winter and take it out to public hearing.

DR. DUVAL: Nick actually has a presentation to run through, I believe, where he has illustrated these new alternatives. I believe this was e-mailed to folks yesterday. It came from Mike Collins, entitled "Potential New Alternative for Regulatory Amendment 16 for Council Session on Friday from Dr. Farmer". I think Nick is on the phone and ready to go.

DR. FARMER: Jack and Charlie and some of the other folks had come by and were asking about the opportunity to look at an alternative that was similar to Alternative 8A but maybe did a little

bit more in terms of protections for right whales. I was thinking about what we could get analyzed quickly so that we could show you something at this meeting; and we came up with two options that Jack outlined there.

If you can go to the next slide, we can talk about those. The first one, which I'm calling Alternative 11, but you guys are welcome to do whatever you want in terms of ordering and whether or not you actually want to include this; but this would be a hybrid of Alternative 4 and 8A. Basically from November 1 through 30 and then from April 1 through 30, it would be Alternative 8A. Then from December 1 through March 31 it would be Alternative 4.

You've seen both of those closures in the document already. This would give a little bit more protection to the right whales in the southeastern U.S. and give some opportunities for pot fishing beyond those that would be provided by Alternative 4. I think a good thing about this alternative from a right whale perspective is it provides a very high level of protection from December through March for those calving whales that are close to shore.

One challenge of this alternative would be that it is a dynamic closure because you have two months with one spatial boundary and then four months with a different spatial boundary. That could be potentially confusing for endorsement holders and it could be potentially confusing for law enforcement.

One thing that makes it maybe a little less problematic is that this is already a time-dynamic closure in that it only applies during certain months, so there is already kind of a moving component to this regardless of how we go about it. If you want to go to the next slide, we can talk about a different alternative.

This is more of a stationary Alternative 12; and basically it is a closure that is midway between Alternative 4 and 8A. I analyzed this for applying November 1 through April 30. Basically this is stable through the winter. It doesn't have shifting boundaries. It is going to be slightly less protective than that Alternative 11 during the December through March period.

It will be more protective during the November and April, shoulder of the season. If you want to go to the next slide, this is what that Alternative 12 that we've analyzed thus far looks like. Obviously, we're more than willing to look at different configurations to accommodate the needs of various interested constituents; but this one basically goes midway between Alternative 4 and Alternative 8; and it roughly follows the 27 meter depth contour.

Here is a look at Alternatives 4, 8A and the Alternative 12 spatially; so 8A is the faint orange line that follows the coastline. It is a bit inshore of Alternative 4, which is the strong blue line. That dotted black line is Alternative 12. Alternative 11 would apply that orange closed area in November and in April; and Alternative 11 would apply the blue closed area from December through March.

What you're looking at here are two different scenarios for the distribution of pot gear. The one on the left is the 2008/2009 distribution of pot gear; and then the one on the right is the 2013/2014 distribution of pot gear. What you're looking at basically is the way we analyzed right whale risk.

If you recall that model where we overlay commercial fishing pressure with right whale distribution modeling on a monthly basis; and so you're looking here at February for those two scenarios, Scenarios A and B.

You can see kind of where the peak is on these maps and recall there were two different models; one for Florida through South Carolina and another model for North Carolina. If you want to go to the next slide, I've zoomed in a bit on some of the areas of interest here. This slide zooms in on Florida here, and what you can see is, again, Alternative 8 is that orange boundary.

Alternative 4 is the blue boundary and Alternative 12 is the dotted black boundary. You can see in February what happens here in terms of the model's risk to right whales is that Alternative 8 contains some but not all of what is classified as a high-risk area; whereas, in February under Alternative 11, the boundary would go out to the blue line. That would contain all of that risk for the most part.

Under Alternative 12 the boundary would go out to the dotted black line, which covers most of the high-risk area and some of that somewhat lower-risk area on the left-hand side. The same story is basically true on the right-hand side, although there is a bit of risk outside of that Alternative 4 closure under Scenario B, which recall again is the distribution of pots in the 2013/2014 season.

You can see where these boundaries lie with regards to their southern extent in relationship to Daytona Beach and New Smyrna Beach and some of the other major cities. Ponce Inlet is that 29 degrees 5 minutes north; so is just right there. On this map really you couldn't tell it too much apart from New Smyrna Beach.

If you go to the next slide, we can look off of North Carolina and you can see that again Alternative 8 is in the orange line, Alternative 4 is the blue line, and Alternative 12 is the dotted black line. You can see that outside of that orange line you do have some low-risk areas on the left. You've got moderate-risk areas on the right-hand side that are not covered by Alternative 8 but are covered by Alternative 4; and those are partially covered by Alternative 12.

If you go to the next slide, these are the projected closure dates for those alternatives. Recall that we ran these under a variety of different catch-rate scenarios and pot-distribution scenarios, whale environmental response to environmental condition scenarios, et cetera; and so we present all these things as a range because there were a variety of sensitivity runs performed.

Alternative 4 we've projected closure dates between December 7 and 30; Alternative 8A, we project that closure date between October 20 and December 12. Alternative 11, which is the one that has Alternative 8 on the shoulder; and 4 in the core of the season is projected to close between December 3 and 28; and then then Alternative 12 is projected to close between November 21 and December 23.

These alternative closures that we have come up with basically gets you pretty close to a full fishing season for the black sea bass commercial fishery. Here is a table for those who prefer their information in tables, and it will be followed by a graphic for those who prefer their information in figures. This is the relative risk of the Regulation 16 alternatives. On the left-hand side you

have the North Carolina modeled risk; and on the right-hand side you have the South Carolina through Florida modeled risk.

The North Carolina risk and South Carolina through Florida modeled risk are shown in order of alternative number, and the minimum and maximum registered relative right whale risk is presented in the table. You can see Alternative 8A off North Carolina was providing a risk range between 6 and 26 risk units. Alternative 11 was providing a range between 2 and 15 units; Alternative 12 between 3 and 15 units.

Similarly off of South Carolina and Florida; Alternative 8A is providing a range between 12 and 58 units; Alternative 11 between 0 and 13 units; Alternative 12 between 2 and 9 units. The sensitivity of these models is primarily due to the right whale response to environmental conditions.

During warmer conditions, the whales are closer to shore in these models; and so the closures are more effective; so 8A, which is closer to shore, becomes more effective under warm conditions and less effective under colder than average conditions. Under mean conditions, the results kind of fall in between these minimum and maximum ranges that are shown here.

You can see that Alternatives 11 and 12 do provide substantial reductions in relative risk as compared to the current preferred Alternative 8A. Here is another way of looking at this. Basically what I did is I added the risk units from North Carolina and Florida to each other so that you could see them in one graphic.

This presents as bars for minimum risk summed together from Florida and North Carolina, and that is in the blue color; and then maximum risk summed together in kind of the gold color. What you're looking at is it is sorted by the alternatives that have the lowest minimum risk. You can see Alternative 6 and Alternative 4 have the lowest minimum risk followed by Alternatives 11 and just thereafter 12.

Eleven has a slightly lower minimum risk total and Alternative 12 has a slightly lower maximum risk total. You can see that they're substantially lower than Alternative 8A's risk level. This is a nice way of kind of looking at the sorted risk. I think you guys have been referencing a table that we prepared previously, which is on the next slide, so I added these two alternatives to that table, which is Table 3 in the report that I prepared for the briefing book.

You can see highlighted in blue there Alternatives 11 and 12 both kind of fall under a relatively low-risk categorization; whereas, Alternative 8A is kind of up near the top of the moderate-risk to high-risk category; so it ranges from low to high depending on the environmental scenario. I believe the next slide is just a placeholder for questions.

There are many, many more slides in the presentation following this with monthly views of the entire east coast and then zoomed-in views for Florida and North Carolina if you want to really start looking at some particular details of the model, but I felt like that pretty much told the story that these alternatives provide some opportunities for sea bass pot fishing but do reduce the relative risk as compared to Alternative 8A.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks for that presentation, Nick, and really appreciate the work that I know he had to do to get this together quickly. I just had one quick question and I'm sure other folks have questions. Because the models for North Carolina versus the rest of the coast were different models, I didn't think the risk could be additive because they were basically entirely different scales.

DR. FARMER: Yes; and that is absolutely correct, Michelle, so it is probably more accurate to look at the table prior to that figure. However, I thought that stacking the risk in that graphic made a nice way of presenting the risk from both of the models. They're not in the same units, but the biases as compared between alternatives in terms of how that risk is presented are about the same.

I guess as a relative comparison that might be a fair way of looking at it graphically with regards to ranking alternatives in terms of total risk. You're absolutely right that the table is a more accurate representation of the fact that the models are different in terms of way they output information.

DR. DUVAL: Questions from the committee? Mel.

MR. BELL: Nick, I just want to thank you for going to the trouble of doing this and also recognize Jack and others that have really tried hard to make this work where we can come up with some options that really try to cut risk down as low as we can get it. I think that should be recognized by the industry we're really trying as hard as we can to make this work for all concerned, including the whales.

One think to keep in mind – and we certainly don't have to choose a preferred – when we get into the fine-tuning of the lines, keep in mind what law enforcement has told us over and over again; the straighter we can have line or the fewer waypoints involved, that is just better for everybody from a standpoint of all of those waypoints needing to be incorporated into code and then people having to deal with putting them in their plotters and understanding where the line is.

As best we can stretch those into long stretches or however we actually design it, that is the best way to go. I also say that if you can just have one line and that is the line and that will be the only line and we don't worry about seasonal changes to the line, that is better as well; because anytime you say, okay, now we're going to use a different line, it just adds the potential confusion. But thank you so much for doing all the work on this really quick.

MR. BOWEN: One thing I noticed when Dr. Farmer was going over this presentation was the projected closure dates. I don't have it front of me, but it seemed like the latest one is December 30th. Why are we going through all these alternatives about the closures when none of these are even going January, February, March or April?

DR. DUVAL: If you remember, we changed the fishing year just this year. It used to start June 1, so as of the effective date of Regulatory Amendment 14, which was in December of last year – I think it was December 7th – we shifted the start date of the commercial year to January 1st; so starting January 1, 2015, we've now started the new fishing year; so these projections are based

on a January 1 start date and so then they run throughout the year. I know it was confusing. Any other comments or questions on this? Jack.

MR. COX: I'll just say this; it has been 2010 since we've been fishing in the winter, and we are a long time from that, and it will be 2016 if we pick a preferred in September possibly. We'd be lucky, I guess, if we're fishing in the winter of 2016. I think it can work in my business model. I know a lot of the guys fish closer inshore than I do, so it will be interesting to see what the other fishermen have to say about it.

DR. DUVAL: So procedurally I just will remind folks that we do have a motion on the floor, which is the preferred alternative being 8, Subalternative 8A, so we would need to I think dispense with this motion. I would recommend either vote it up or down; and if it is the desire of the committee to add these two new alternatives, I would ask for a motion at that point to add the two new alternatives. Any other comments or questions on this? We have a motion before us, which is changing the preferring alternative – Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, just so we know what kind of path we're on, if we are – it is hard to change to a new preferred alternative, be it 11 or 12, which is probably where we would end up; but until we get the exact lines, it is hard to say – and talk to the fishermen after they see where the exact line is, it is hard to say that is going to be a preferred; so I'm not sure procedurally whether we just want to leave the preferred as it is or just not have a preferred or go ahead and move it to 11 or 12 as we hammer out where the lines are. I'm not a hundred percent sure which is the best of the three ways to go.

DR. DUVAL: My recommendation would be that if – I mean, first of all, I think we do people a disservice if we go out to public comment especially at this point if we don't have a preferred given the range of alternatives that we already have in this document. If it is the committee's desire to maintain this as your preferred alternative right now and simply add these two other alternatives that Nick has analyzed for us, then I would say vote this motion up and we will add the new alternatives in another motion. If it is your desire to not keep this as your preferred alternative and possibly choose 11 or 12, then vote this motion down, we will add those new alternatives, and then you can select a new preferred alternative. I think those the two pass-forward. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, that being the case, I'd be inclined to vote this motion down as 8A as preferred and to add the two alternatives and make one of the others the preferred.

DR. DUVAL: Well, that is not a motion; that is just a comment. We have a motion on the floor.

MS. McCAWLEY: I'm confused because I thought we did not have the full analysis on the new alternatives yet; so I'm a little concerned about making one of those the preferred without the full analysis.

My other question that I had my hand up for earlier was will the analysis be ready when the document goes out for public hearing for those new alternatives? I just was a little concerned about that, too, because I wanted the public to be able to see some of that so that we could get

usable comments on that. I don't them to just not comment on those two because they don't see an analysis.

DR. DUVAL: I think that is something of an IPT question. It is our intent right now to take this out to August public hearings; so effectively that allows about a month I think to get things done. I see Gregg coming up to the table so perhaps he and Jack might be able to give a little bit of insight as to whether or not those analyses would be complete. Gregg.

MR. WAUGH: Yes; I just spoke briefly with Rick and obviously Brian isn't here, but I would anticipate we could get the economic impact analysis done. I'm pretty sure we can get the rest done such that it would be ready for public hearings.

DR. DUVAL: Does that give you a little measure of comfort, Jessica?

MS. McCAWLEY: Yes; and also just to explain how I'm going to vote, I'm going to vote in favor of keeping this as the preferred since we don't have the analysis on those other alternatives yet.

MR. HAYMANS: If we need to explain how we're going to vote, I'm going to vote in favor of this one as well. I'm continuing to be frustrated by the fact that we're getting no credit for dropping from 2,000 to 1,000 pots, give or take, and then we've got another option on – I just continue to be frustrated. I'm going to stick to 8A.

MR. BOWEN: Me too.

MR. BELL: Well, I know we don't have the final analysis; but if I'm understanding this, 8A we were at 25 meters, was it?

DR. DUVAL: Yes.

MR. BELL: And now we're at possibly 27; so the risk is going to be less. I mean, we know it is less than 8A; so if we lean towards 11 or 12, even not having the detailed analysis, we know it is going to be less risk than 8A. It seems like you'd be in a better position if 8A is not doing it for folks right now with Protected Resources.

MR. PHILLIPS: And just one last thing to kind of consider. If you go from 25 meters to 27 meters, it is going to stretch the season out a little bit longer for the hook-and-line guys until we get some kind of a set-aside. We've still got to consider the hook-and-line guys and when it actually closes.

MR. CONKLIN: On the timing, either way, if we change our mind again and select a different preferred, it is not going to be any faster for the fishermen to be out fishing. It is still going to take whole 'nother season, so we still have time.

DR. DUVAL: Okay, I think there has been sufficient discussion around the table, so I'd like to take the vote. **I'm going to ask for a show of hands of those in favor of the motion, which is to change the preferred alternative for Action 1 to Alternative 8, Subalternative 8A; and**

change the closure period to November 1 through April 30. I see five in favor. Those opposed. The motion fails. All those against the motion, raise your hands again. Okay, the motion fails; five in favor, seven opposed. Now, I would entertain a motion to add these new alternatives to the document, if anyone is willing to make that motion. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Madam Chair, I make the motion that we add the new Alternatives 11 and 12 to the document.

DR. DUVAL: Motion by Charlie; second by Mel. Discussion? Jack.

MR. COX: Which one is Alternative 11; is that the one where we fish 25 meters in November and 25 in April? Okay.

DR. DUVAL: Any other discussion? Mel.

MR. BELL: But that one has the split – you have a point where you move it, right?

MR. COX: Yes, 11 is the hybrid; it is the one where you take 8A and Alternative 4.

MR. BELL: And 12 is the fixed line; it doesn't change; it goes farther out?

MR. COX: Yes.

DR. DUVAL: **The motion reads add Alternatives 11 and 12 to Regulatory Amendment 16 for analysis. Any other discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.** Is there a desire on the part of the committee to select a new preferred alternative?

MR. PHILLIPS: Considering Jessica's concern with not having an analysis and the concern that we don't have the exact waypoints laid down, I still think this is highly likely where we're going to end up, so I would like to take this Alternative 12 out to the public as our preferred so at least they know where we're leaning to go.

We can always change it if the analysis doesn't come out right or the waypoints doesn't come out right where the fishermen can do it. I'm thinking 12 is probably the most likely scenario of all the alternatives, so I would make the motion we make Alternative 12 our preferred.

DR. DUVAL: Motion by Charlie to select to Alternative 12 as the preferred under Action 1. Is there a second to that motion? Second by Mel. Further discussion? Jessica.

MS. McCRAWLEY: I'm going to vote against this motion. Not only have we not seen the analysis; from what I can gather and from what we've seen so far, it is not what is best for Florida fishermen. I'm voting against it.

MR. HAYMANS: Madam Chair, I believe we still have nine as a preferred; so doing this would give us two preferreds; 9A and 12. We didn't change it; we just voted down the alternative, which was 8A, so 9A is still our preferred so that would be adding another preferred.

DR. DUVAL: Doug is right because the original motion was to change the preferred from 9A to 8A and that motion failed; so, Charlie, you might want to amend your motion to select Alternative 12 as the preferred and deselect Alternative 9A.

MR. PHILLIPS: As you say, Madam Chair.

DR. DUVAL: And is that okay with the seconder, which is Mel? **Okay, so the motion now reads deselect Alternative 9, Subalternative 9A, as the preferred as select Alternative 12 as the preferred under Action 1.** Any other discussion under this motion? Mel.

MR. BELL: I would just say that is probably the best scenario from an enforceability and ease of understanding and for the fishermen as well, and it actually has less risk at this point based on the analysis from 11; if I read that right.

DR. DUVAL: Is there any other discussion? **Could I please see a show of hands of those in favor of this motion, six in favor; those opposed, six to six, so the motion fails.** Chester.

MR. BREWER: I would like to make a motion to deselect 9 as the preferred.

DR. DUVAL: **Motion by Chester to deselect Alternative 9, Subalternative 9A, as the preferred. Is there a second to that motion? Second by Charlie. Further discussion on this motion? Is there any objection to this motion? Motion passes with one objection.** At this point we have no preferred alternative. Is there any other desire on anybody's part to select as preferred? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: And I guess that's fine because we really need to talk to the fishermen and make sure the Florida fishermen can live or not live with these preferreds, and we'll just do it all in September. Hopefully, we can be on track to have something for the next season.

DR. DUVAL: I see that Gregg has come to the table. Gregg, do you have some wisdom for us?

MR. WAUGH: Just something for you to consider; we've been told in the past that you need a preferred for the biological opinion to begin. We had a preferred and then it was the DEIS would start the biological opinion. Now if you have no preferred and we have a DEIS, does that mean the biological opinion is going to start or will the biological opinion wait until after public hearings and you have a preferred?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: And it is not just a preferred to start the biological opinion; it is an action that is reasonably certain to occur. There is some value I think in waiting until you get public comment and you all decide after listening to public comment and after public hearing in September.

Gregg is right, there is no preferred so the biological opinion will not start until there is a preferred; but remember that the Service has to determine that preferred is one that is reasonably certain to occur; i.e., does it look like the council is going to change their mind and choose a new preferred

and then have to restart the biological opinion. There is some weighing of how much we think the action is reasonably certain to occur.

MR. BELL: And I was afraid that was what was going on; so based on that and based on the criteria that Monica shared with us, I would be willing to make a motion to select Alternative 12 as our preferred based on what we've just learned. Otherwise, it slows the process down I guess significantly.

DR. DUVAL: We just had that motion to select Alternative 12 as a preferred; so I think as a point of order it would be just making the same motion again that just failed; and that is not allowed.

MR. BELL: Even if we have new information. I mean that's fine if that's –

MR. BREWER: Point of order. The prior motion was to deselect and select. This motion is to select.

DR. DUVAL: A fine point of order. Ben.

MR. HARTIG: Basically I don't know how the Protected Resources could say that was a reasonable alternative that they're going to analyze based on we've been all over the map on this. Frankly, I wouldn't from Protected Resources be analyzing anything until after we've made our final decision on this amendment.

We have, frankly, been trying hard to work within both agencies, the council and the Protected Resources and SERO, trying to work on something that will work. It has been a tough process and still at this point I don't think Protected Resources would have – even if we did select a preferred with what Jessica said.

As how that is going to affect Florida fishermen, we have no idea until we get through the public process where we're going to be. My natural inclination is to tell Protected Resources to probably don't start the biological opinion and start it after we get through the final determination, which would save them a lot of work.

DR. ERRIGO: I also wanted to add that choosing either Alternative 11 or 12 may not help speed things along because they don't have any analysis. They don't have the full analysis yet. The biological opinion couldn't start anyways until full analysis is done. Choosing one of the old alternatives, maybe, because all the data and analysis is already done.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I don't want to speak for the regional administrator or for Jack, but I think that I've heard them say on the record before that they're willing to start the biological opinion before you take final/final action on this amendment. I think they have to be somewhat convinced that the action that you choose as your preferred is reasonably certain to occur.

It makes some sense, once you hear public comment – to me it makes some sense once you go to public hearing and you get public comment, you're more likely to be able to choose an action that

you might be able to stick with. I guess in terms of what Ben was saying, it's right, you've chosen different preferreds for good reasons.

You've had a lot of different comments, you've had analyses and now you have two new alternatives that are presented to you. There are various reasons you've chosen various preferreds, so I think we're moving along the direction of you getting closer to making a final choice on a preferred. Anyway, that is just my advice.

DR. DUVAL: We're still in the same place. If you don't want to select a preferred, don't select a preferred. We can wait until public comment. I just want to wrap this discussion up and move on. Okay, I'm not seeing any hands raised to go ahead and make a motion to select a preferred, so we're just going to move forward.

The next motion was to accept the IPT's recommended wording changes for Action 2; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Action 2 is dealing with the gear-marking requirements and weak links. Is there any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

The next motion was to use purple as the color for black sea bass pot marking in addition to that already required under the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

The next motion was to select Alternative 2, Subalternative 2A as the preferred alternative under Action 2; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

The next motion was to select Alternatives 3 and 4 of Action 2 as preferred alternatives; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Is there any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

The next motion was to recommend to the council to send Regulatory Amendment 16 out for public hearings; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

The next item on our agenda, which we actually didn't get to was Amendment 36; and, Gregg, are you ready to take us through that? Once we finish that, I'll say a few things about Amendment 38 and then we will go through Amendment 35 and finish with our motions on Amendment 37. We will pick up our other items in September. We are on Committee of the Whole now.

MR. WAUGH: We will be working with Attachment 7A that has the complete package of comments; Attachment 7B, which will be the decision document. We'll go through that. That has the motions. Attachment 7C has detailed background information that you may want to look at and we may refer to. Attachment 7D has the Draft System Management Plan.

What I'd like to do is just briefly run through the public hearing comments and then talk about the System Management Plan very briefly. Obviously, we don't have a lot of time so we won't get into that in a lot of detail. Then we would go through the Amendment 36 Decision Document. Mike sent around a summary of the overview of the public hearing comments.

It was a spreadsheet, Snapper Grouper Amendment 36 Overview of Public Hearing Comments. There are several tabs along the bottom of that spreadsheet. I'm not going to go through all of this. I'm going to hit some of the highlights. The NEPA scoping comment period was also done during this time period, and we got two letters in; one from the U.S. Department of the Interior, that their comments were positive; and one from SFA, the East Coast Fisheries Subsection.

They pointed out that we don't have the information to support the Daytona Steeples. Their comment was also included in the written comments as well. In terms of public hearings, we've used the webinar for this. I thought that worked out very well. We've got the comment package for the minutes from the public hearings.

I've got the PDF page reference so you can look through those particular minutes. We did two sites concurrently. The Charleston and Little River are combined in one set of minutes; and the Richmond Hill/Brunswick, Georgia, hearings are combined in one. We've got the number of attendees, the number of speakers. In terms of just overall support, in Morehead City we had three individuals basically not in support, one supporting an alternative site.

This should here in Little River there were ten speakers and they were against moving forward. There was some talk about that alternative site. Richmond Hill we had one speaker and talked about expanding the South Carolina Artificial Reef MPA, expanding it rather than moving it so we keep protection on the deep side.

Then Brunswick, Georgia, one no to the Snapper Banks Alternative. Then Daytona, one in support of the process if we have the data and then three noes. Again, in terms of major reasons for supporting the spawning SMZs, there was support for the area north of the 780 Bottom, variably called the Pile Wreck in 63 to 67 fathoms, as an alternative to the 780 Bottom.

We heard at the Little River hearing there is a lot of bottom longlining done in that area. Will Heyman is on a trip now that would hopefully give us some information in that area north of the 780 Bottom. There is agreement with the use of artificial reefs as SMZs when they're established for that purpose.

Major reasons for not supporting spawning SMZs; make use of existing area closures and supplement them with artificial reef habitat; two-thirds majority of the permit holders should be required before you decide which areas are to close; and to talk about the size of the areas. The 780 Closure impacts would be severe and put a lot of individuals out of business.

They would like to see proof that the fish are spawning in the 780 Bottom and Malchase Wreck, are recruiting to this area and not being lost northwards. HAPC expansion will give you the protection you're looking for. You don't have the data for the Daytona Steeples. You need science

before moving forward with sites like Daytona Steeples. We've got some other comments there that are helpful as we move forward.

If you look at the page with the public comment summary; again, we had 118 letters or petitions received. I have broken those out. You've got the PDF pages. We had 30 petitions coming in supporting. Overall the vast majority of the written comments supported moving forward. There is one correction I need to point out.

The Southeastern Fisheries Association, the East Coast Group, there was support for Preferred Alternative 2 in Actions 1 and 2, but then they don't support the actual sites. For Actions 3 through 6 they couldn't support. I'm not going to go through each of these comments. They're there. There is always a danger when you summarize these comments, people will feel that you don't adequately characterize their comments, so that is why you have the PDF page.

You can go to that individual page and see those comments. The first group is organizations and clubs, and we heard from 20 different organizations and clubs. We had comments from two advisory panel members; Bill Cole in support of this moving forward. Captain Jimmy Hull again indicating that he supports the idea and the implementation of small closed areas, but doesn't feel we have the information and don't have the funding and the sampling and the data in place; and we need to have that first.

Then in terms of the individual letters and e-mails, we had comments from 62 individuals. Some of them commented multiple times and that is indicated there, but there were 56 in favor and 6 not in favor. Again, you can see this is broken out by where the comment came from when we were provided that information, a brief statement of their support why or not, and then again the PDF page so that you can see where those comments are to read the full comment package. That is a quick overview of the public hearing comments and I'd be glad to answer any questions that you might have.

DR. DUVAL: Are there any questions for Gregg on any of the public hearing comments?

MR. WAUGH: The System Management Plan is Attachment 7D in your briefing book. The IPT has been working on this. We've pulled information together. Michelle Tessler has worked on contractual basis. There is a lot of information here and it is compiled. If you use the bookmark feature of these PDF documents, it will help you navigate through this. I'll be glad to show you how to do that one on one.

I'm not going to walk through this document now; but it is an organized. We've got an executive summary and outline and overview, the goals and objectives. The research priorities have been worked on by the subgroup, and I would call your attention to that information on Pages 50 through 56 – sorry, the resource protection, the enforcement is 50 through 56; research and monitoring, 57 through 68.

The one that's farthest along, that Amber leads that work and she has worked with Kim and the others – the outreach part is 69 through 77. That sort of outlines in greater detail what we hope to have for each of these sections. It will lay out for each of our – and remember this is for our

Amendment 14 MPAs; so it will lay out for each MPA, have the specific projects that are required for enforcement, for research and monitoring in that area and outreach for that area and have the specific projects with a timeline and a cost estimate.

The outreach one, if you want to see what the overall other sections are going to look like, look at that outreach part. They are much farther along. Then we've got site characterization, Page 93 on. The idea here is to take this out as a draft document when we go out to hearings. The bottom of the first page has the timing.

We anticipate having a complete Draft System Management Plan available for you at the September meeting. In addition, a draft SMP chapter will be included with the Amendment 36 for the second round of public hearings. We will have that outlined; but since we won't know the final choice on spawning SMZs sites, we won't have all the site-specific information.

We'll wait until after – right now the timing is to deal with that in September; develop the specifics for each spawning SMZ site just like we will have for each of the MPAs. We've already done some reaching out to our state partners. Luiz has offered to work with his staff to pursue sanctuary funding. I don't know if he has had a chance to talk with Jessica anymore about this, but he mentioned that they do this for other existing sites now.

Indeed, you've seen results of their work in Riley's Hump, some of that tracking work on mutton snapper. They're willing to contribute to the ongoing research and monitoring for sites off of Florida. Of course, Marcel and the MARMAP Program have continued to work with us. As we have cooperative research moving forward, the work that Dr. Will Heyman is doing, those individuals that are collected, the MARMAP Program works those up now.

Obviously, at this expands MARMAP may need some more resources to deal with this on an ongoing basis. We are already getting the support in place to do some of this research and monitoring, expand what is being done on the existing MPAs and also have a commitment to work with us to do the same thing for the spawning SMZs.

The SSC looked at a preliminary version of this System Management Plan at their last meeting; and we got some great comments from them and those are being incorporated as well. I know we're short on time here so we just wanted to entertain any questions you might have before we move into the decision document.

DR. DUVAL: Are there any questions for Gregg? Doug.

MR. HAYMANS: Gregg, I know this is being designed for the existing MPAs, but they will obviously have application in the SMZs, right?

MR. WAUGH: Yes, the intent is to develop – you have asked us to prepare an appendix to go along with Amendment 36 that will do this same thing for the sites that are chosen for spawning SMZs. When we go out to public hearings, we'll have an outline for that appendix, but we don't want to go in and do all the detailed work on all the sites until we know which ones you are going

to finally end up choosing. But, yes, Doug, you're correct; the exact same thing will be done on a scale matching each individual site that you ultimately select for a spawning SMZ.

MR. CONKLIN: When we do pick these SMZ sites, will there be an order of priorities in the plan; so if we wanted to look at the sites, monitor those first as opposed to some of the MPAs; could we do that?

MR. WAUGH: Yes; that would be up to you. It is going to be your System Management Plan. Ultimately we're developing a System Management Plan for the MPA sites now and then doing this smaller version for the spawning SMZs. Ultimately the idea is to have one System Management Plan that will have chapters that deal with each sort of managed area. It would be up to you to indicate your priority that you want this work done, yes.

MR. BREWER: Gregg, I'm thinking back how we sort of selected these SMZs, and it was done almost anecdotally. I remember our meeting for Florida and we were like, well, yes, I've heard that might be a pretty good spot to put one of these things. There was no scientific, quote, basis. There was no real hard data that we were acting on.

It seems like at least to me before we can say, okay, yes, this is definitely a spot that we would want to put in an SMZ. At least for me we need some more information as to the effectiveness of those spots that we picked. One was the Steeples, which I had never heard of before, but we don't really know.

We really don't know whether that is something that the council is going to want to put in. It seems like to me some sort of base study or minimal study needs to be made of these things before we can pick out which ones that we're going to want to go with. I hate to put more work on staff and whoever is going to be doing this research, but it is almost like we've got the cart before the horse here.

MR. WAUGH: Chester, you're getting into what we will be discussing in a few minutes in the decision document. We do have a range of sites, some of which are based on lots of information. For instance, the Georgetown Hole/Devil's Hole, that one has a lot of current information. You've heard presentations from Dr. Will Heyman. You've heard public comments the night before last.

We've got a range in those sites based on lots of different data, going from ones that have a lot of current data to ones where we have anecdotal information from fishermen from years past that they are important for spawning, like the Warsaw Hole. There is like the Daytona Steeples where we have had information that we would expect spawning to be there. We'll get into that discussion in a few minutes.

DR. PONWITH: On that point, we would be happy, if it would be beneficial to the council in this decision-making process from that standpoint, to help you with an evaluation of using social science tools of evaluating data that range from empirical data that were collected on cruises or with ROVs, ranging all the way from that to – you characterize it as anecdotal, but another approach is a very common process to use expert opinion.

There are social science constructs to enable you to use expert opinion in addition to empirical data. If the science center can help you in categorizing those data and characterizing the uncertainty associated with those types of data and then making decisions across a range of those types of data, we stand ready to help you with that.

Secondarily, it was to the question on the monitoring. I like the idea of having a monitoring plan. Again, what I'd like to offer from the science center is there will be questions that come up from the council in terms of meeting the desired outcomes for these MPAs and for the spawning aggregation sites. The science center can help you formulate those questions as testable hypotheses and we will be able to help you draft a plan for what type of sampling would have to take place to be able to answer those questions with any amount of precision.

I think it will be really important to make sure that the sample designs that you have for doing that monitoring are adequate to answer the question; and if we don't have enough sampling, to use that as a queue that we either need to modify the question or maybe use a notion of voucher sampling where you pick like MPAs or like spawning sites and use them as a proxy and then really intensively sample in one. Again, the science center stands ready to help you in refining the monitoring plan to make sure that you've got the statistical power to answer those questions.

MR. WAUGH: Thanks for that offer, Bonnie. That will certainly build on the work that Stacey, Todd and Andy have done. That is the subgroup that has written this resource monitoring component. Yes, that would be very, very helpful.

Remember, the approach here is to give us the sites that you want analyzed in detail, because there is still a lot of analyses to be done before we go out to public hearing and before you see this document again in September where the intent is for you to then say these are the sites we want to go forward. That type of analysis that the center is offering would be very helpful.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks for that, Bonnie. We definitely appreciate it and I know those guys have put a lot of work with the resources that they have into this. Wilson.

DR. LANEY: Madam Chairman, one quick comment I guess to Gregg's point about it being a system and to Chester's points as well, and that is down the road, in addition to looking at – monitoring these sites and looking at their effectiveness as spawning sites, we also need to look at the linkages between where those larvae are produced, where they wind up in those inshore nursery areas in the case of those species like gag and some of the others that do use inshore nursery areas. Hopefully, that's something we can maybe take a look at within the context of the SMZ Management Plan itself but also certainly in the FEP document as we move forward with that.

MR. WAUGH: That's an excellent point, Wilson. Roger has been pursuing with other groups projects that will do this. One that has just been funded and I believe will start next year – and Roger may want to add a couple of comments about this; but it is to characterize the oceanography in these areas. I'll let Roger just tell you what is going on with that.

MR. PUGLIESE: Just real quick; as part of our coordination with the Ocean Observing Group, SECOORA and oceanographers, in this year's funding budget for SECOORA, we were successful

in getting one of the letter's intents advance to full proposals that includes a component, working with North Carolina State University, actually, and some of the modeling efforts on characterizing the oceanographic features associated with marine protected areas and other managed areas; in addition, to look at how some of the model information may be able to provide exactly what we're talking about as linkages; so trying to begin to really bring together both the oceanography information we have with the fisheries' information to better support the marine protected area work.

I think it even may specifically be connected into how we highlight needs under the System Management Plan and beyond. I think the other aspect also is the desire that was highlighted in moving forward with the ecosystem model effort is to begin to integrate the oceanographic information in the ecosystem models so then you really get into trying to connect resources with the characterized areas, connect the resources with the oceanography and look at things such as connectivity between all the different systems.

MR. BREWER: Gregg and Bonnie, as we go through this process – first let me say that I think from the standpoint of the recreational community, you've got a lot of buy-in and a lot of support for these SMZs. They're focusing on what we have always thought needs to be protected in these spawning aggregations.

In the course of this process and perhaps to get even greater buy-in from maybe both the commercial and the recreational sectors, in doing the analysis I would hope that areas that are in existing MPAs that are not necessarily accomplishing the goals of what was set forth could be identified.

You'll get a lot better I think tremendous buy-in, quite frankly, if you can say, okay, we're going to close this area over here for a really good reason and that is to protect spawning aggregations; but we've got this area over here that apparently doesn't protect the coral the way it was supposed to or protect spawning aggregations, whatever you were trying to protect with the MPA. Then you say, okay, well, you know what, we'll open up this other area that is not being effective in sort of a tradeoff for these areas that we're going to close. I would hope that as the analysis is being done; that thought would be in your head.

MR. WAUGH: And that is certainly the intent; and I think we have to keep in mind the timing here. Some of these sites, it is going to take a little longer for the benefits to start to show up. You heard from Mark Marhefka during the public hearing comment that he is starting to see benefits from these existing MPAs.

Some of the ongoing research, as we get more years, that will start to document which areas are working and which aren't. You're absolutely correct; that's an inherent part of this system management plan is you evaluate these areas; and areas that aren't working, then the council will come back and look at how they want to open those or modify those regulations in those areas.

DR. DUVAL: I had Jack and then Mark; and remember we're talking about the System Management Plan here, and we still have to go through the Amendment 36 Decision Document. I just want to make sure that the conversation is relevant to the topic at hand. If the comments are

about particular sites, then let's kind of finish with the System Management Plan and then move forward.

MR. COX: I just want to thank Chester for making those comments because he is coming from what he is hearing from recreational guys and the commercial guys are telling me the same thing. I think of an MPA we have off of North Carolina that we think is way too big, but it is doing really a good job protecting snowy groupers. As we do this, we are going to get buy-in from the fishing community as we give them back something that doesn't need to be stretched out as big as it is.

DR. DUVAL: Mark, did you have a comment on the System Management Plan?

MR. BROWN: Well, mine is similar, but I'll wait until you get through to the end because I just want to offer up an idea. I'll wait until you get through, but it is similar to what Chester said.

MR. PUGLIESE: Specific to Chester's comments, one of the things I've also raised with the group is the opportunity to engage commercial and recreational fishermen in the collection of environmental information to fine-tune these area sites. I think the other aspect that affects as we move forward with this system is the ability to use technologies.

The better we can use some of that technology in either monitoring the area or understanding the capabilities of that, you can refine and do exactly what you're talking about and kind of really hone in on the areas, to enforce the areas, select those, connect the ones that are appropriate and go forward. I think engaging fits very well in the discussions we're having on citizen science and bringing into a whole new realm; because information even on environmental monitoring can fine-tune a lot of these models that are being used to do exactly what we would like to see.

DR. DUVAL: Absolutely; couldn't agree more. Doug.

MR. HAYMANS: I was searching for an answer to a question that I couldn't find; but in doing that, I have another question. The plan that is on the screen says the System Management Plan for the Amendment 14 MPAs; but yet in the SMZ document that we're about to get into, number seven says the council has directed the staff to develop a system management plan for the spawning SMZs. Do we need to put that in the – my question previously; that probably should go there as well.

MR. WAUGH: Yes; this document is the System Management Plan for the Amendment 14 MPAs. What we are also working on is an appendix that will go along with Amendment 36 that will do the same thing for the specific SMZ sites that you ultimately approve. Then in the future we will modify this document so it becomes the System Management Plan, period, for managed areas or something like that. It will have chapters dealing with each of the MPAs and each of the spawning SMZs.

DR. DUVAL: So remember where we started from was that we didn't have a system management plan for our existing MPAs, so that was the genesis of this; and as we walk down the road of SMZs, we knew that we were going to need to have something similar for that. It may not look like it, but there is a plan. Anything else on the System Management Plan before we get into the decision

document? Mark, did you have something you wanted to offer right before we get into the decision document?

MR. BROWN: Well, I was just looking at our existing MPAs and what Chester was saying. I thought about it a long time. Some of the areas that developed the MPAs with, they were broadcast over a large portion of bottom, similar to what Jack was saying, and some of it doesn't even have hard bottom. It is just soft areas.

When I look at our area off of Charleston with that Edisto MPA, half of it doesn't even have hard bottom. Half of it extends off shore; and it was supposed to be I think originally designed to protect golden tile. One of my thoughts is that if we were going to add an SMZ in another area is to reduce the size of some of the existing MPAs that don't actually benefit what they were originally designed to benefit – they extend out way past any area of hard bottom – and to alter the size of those if we're going to implement any other area. That way it is a give and take.

DR. DUVAL: I just remind folks that the existing MPAs that we have were designed to be deep-water MPAs, so they were focused on those deep-water species. It was sort of designed to be a phased approach; but certainly we want to make sure that they're doing what we set out to do and that they're having a benefit to deep-water species as we continue to move forward with this. Wilson and Mel and then we're moving on. We don't have all day; I don't have all day.

DR. LANEY: Just a reminder to everybody that when you're trying to protect functionality of an ecosystem, you want to include a buffer around the thing as well. I think we need to factor that into our thinking when we're talking about sizing these things. They need to have an appropriate buffer them as well.

Also, we've made the point multiple times before when it comes to our deep-water shrimp areas; that some of these areas that we are being asked to consider opening up do have some important functionality in terms of providing foraging habitat for juveniles of some of the species that use the coral areas themselves. Again, the buffer concept just needs to be factored into our thinking here.

MR. BELL: And we were trying to provide softer bottom habitats for tilefish and things, too, so it is not just hard bottom.

MR. HAYMANS: And to Mark's point, as we move into the SMZ document, Page 4 of the box that you'll see, the last bullet point says the spawning SMZ approach will not make any changes to existing MPAs. I know we heard it in public comment; but if we want to go that route, as we get into the SMZs, we might need to take that statement out.

DR. DUVAL: All right, moving on.

MR. WAUGH: Okay, the decision document, the IPT has worked on this some and in addition to what you say basically at the last council meeting, we have added some information on Chapter 3 for the habitat and for the economic and social environment. We have done a first cut at some of the social and economic impacts. Those need to be expanded.

The biological impacts, we have not done that yet. We are waiting until after this meeting where you say these are the sites we want you to analyze in detail and to go out to public hearing. There is a lot of work that the IPT is ready to do after this meeting in order to get this document ready for public hearings.

In terms of an estimate of impacts on catches, we have Nick's model that was used before. The AP has pointed out some issues with that; but in terms of the available data that we have and the quantitative impacts we can assess, that is one approach that will be in there. We have some other ideas we will explore to look at how you might measure the impacts; but then that is one of the things we want to get from the public is some quantifiable information from them on what level of catch on their part comes from each of these areas.

We've got a lot of detailed analysis to do between this meeting and before we go out to public hearings; but you do have a start to that information. What we're going to do is work through this document. I'm not going over where we already have preferreds. We can come back to that if anybody is interested. If you go to Page 10, this is where we deal with Action 3 with the North Carolina sites. Yes.

MR. HAYMANS: Before we move into sites, can I make sure – I have a clarifying question and that is we're selecting sites to be analyzed. That analysis is going to take – I guess the basic question is when do we think that the sites that we have selected will actually get closed?

MR. WAUGH: Well, that is up to you. At the back we have timing laid out. The current timing now has you choosing sites for detailed analysis and to go out to the second round of public hearings. We do that in August. This is on Page 77 of that decision document. Then you look at the public hearing input, and you will have the revised amendment at that stage.

Then you select the sites you want to go forward. Now, this is an environmental impact statement, also, so what we hope to do is the DEIS will be combined with the amendment document. We hope to have that ready – and Rick and I are working together to keep this moving along – we hope to have that ready to be filed with the version that goes out to public hearing. That will have all the detailed analysis.

Then there is a comment period on the DEIS. That comment period will not end before our September meeting. When we get to this decision about timing, we're asking you to give us some guidance on a slight change in timing where at the September meeting you will still review all the detailed information, the public comments, and you will make your decisions on which sites you want to go forward.

Then the document will be revised and at December you will review any additional DEIS comment periods and approve for secretarial review. Then it takes generally approximately six months for it to be reviewed and implemented. If we meet that time period, you're looking at some time mid-2016 for this to go into effect.

MR. HAYMANS: So just to be clear, the detailed analysis will not include any additional dive, ROV, direct observations of the site that we're selecting. Of the sites that we're selecting, it is

going to be based on the MARMAP data, the data that we've already got there with those few points that are in some of the squares?

MR. WAUGH: Well, for some sites that is true; but as you see when we get into the specific sites here, we have results of work done last night in the Warsaw Hole on a Nancy Foster cruise. We have that information coming in. We also have the work that Dr. Will Heyman is doing. That is continuing; and in fact right now they are up in North Carolina trying to do a cruise that got blown out a month ago on that area north of the 780 Bottom. That work is ongoing; so as we accumulate additional data and information, that will be presented to you in September.

MR. HAYMANS: So the last question along that line, if I could. Would it be reasonable to take the sites that we have the most information on, specifically those that Dr. Heyman has already done some work on, look at those first as SMZs in this document; and as these other things come on line and we start doing more work and we've got the SMZ process in place with the passage of 36, then we add additional areas over time rather than trying to add four or five or six new areas here now?

MR. WAUGH: Well, that is the decisions that you are going to start making right now.

MR. HARTIG: Doug has hit on something that has been real sensitive to the fishermen from our area and it is something that actually for me has been going through the whole process of MPAs. There is a gradient of information available for a number of these sites. The great thing about Devil's Hole is that we have some information we can bite our teeth into.

We have some spawning fish that have been collected from that area. That information has convinced me so far that Devil's Hole is probably a great place to do this. Our fishermen – I mean, you're talking about the Steeples. You've got 27 square miles, 12 square miles and 6 square miles. What if the steeple we want is within the 27 mile area?

To me as a fisherman you know there are special sites in the ocean, and there aren't that many of these special places. If you picked the six square miles and the pinnacle you want is in the 27-mile area, you haven't done a darned thing. This whole citizen science and this whole cooperative research program is to me you design a program where you work with the fishermen on their platforms and you let them do the research with their information that they know where the areas are productive.

You've already cut off your scientific search for an area within this big box; so you've narrowed it down with the fishermen you're working with. You're using their boats to go there, and then you do the research, document it, and then you close the area based on the information you get from them and that research. To me, that is a much better way to go about this. You get buy-in from the fishermen because they own the data that they did for selecting these sites.

They've worked on it; they own that data; so you get buy-in. I know the MPA process, we closed these areas and we had these big grandiose ideas on how they were going to be monitored and look at what we've gotten from oculina. I'll go back to Gregg on how we got to where we are now. We were going to go and close some more MPAs; and based on the information we had, I think

the council made a conscious decision to not go ahead with MPAs and to do this, because this is something we can get buy-in from the fishermen and buy-in from the public to do knowing that we would get crushed based on the information we had for our MPAs to date that showed that we hadn't done any research in them.

Given that we hadn't done a good job there, to me I think we back-track here, do the research, get the buy-in from the fishermen, use their platforms to do the information. This hasn't taken a whole lot of time to convince me within a one- or two-year timeframe I think we can get the information we need to work on these. Chester has made the suggestion, Doug has made the suggestion, and I think it is an excellent way to move forward in the process.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks for those comments, Ben and Doug. I think as we move through the decision document we're going to be talking about the bottom off each state specifically and the information that is currently available or is not available. I think now as we go through this document is when the committee can make some of these decisions if you choose to do so. My suggestion would be that we move forward with running through this decision document. It is ten o'clock right now. We still have other business to conduct; so I would like to let Gregg move through this, keeping those comments in mind.

MR. HARTIG: Nothing I said precludes us from moving through the decision document at this time. The sites are great, but to me I think where the rubber hits the road is when do you close them? That's the key. That's my only difference. I think the amendment is good as we are.

DR DUVAL: I think my only response to that is just that I think that's a great conversation to have – once we've moved through the document, we can see everything that's there and make decisions about timing; is that okay? All right.

MR. WAUGH: Okay, what we've done here is this is looking at the North Carolina sites. Again, this is on Page 10 of your decision document. We've added in the input from the spawning SMZ workshop and public hearings. Where there was input at the SMZ Workshop, public hearings, public comments, we've added those in this potential list indicating their new alternative.

What you had in here before for North Carolina was the Malchase Wreck at 2.47 square miles; 2B is the Malchase Wreck at 1 square mile; 3A, the 780 Bottom, 12 square miles; 3B, 780 Bottom, 4 square miles; 3C, 780 Bottom, 3 square miles. Then we had the suggestion for a new area north of the 780 Bottom; and then we had a suggestion to pull in the Cape Lookout Site that was included in the Expert Workgroup Report; and we have got that. That's in the folder detailed information.

In terms of a quick overview, the 780 Bottom has examples in terms of species found at that location, speckled hind and Warsaw grouper; the Malchase Wreck, speckled hind; and then south of Cape Lookout, examples of species that spawn, vermilion snapper; species found in that site, blueline tile, gag, greater amberjack, red grouper, red porgy, scamp and speckled hind. What we are looking for here is guidance on which sites you want to go forward for detailed analysis to go out for a second round of public hearings.

We expect to have some more results from this area north of the 780 Bottom. The Cape Lookout Site, again, was suggested by the MPA Expert Workgroup and public comment. That has information from MARMAP and other sources. The Malchase Wreck was offered up as well, and that is input from the fishermen.

The idea is to basically look at this list; and what I would offer as a suggestion is start removing ones that you don't want and then we can have a motion to take these sites forward; or if you know which ones you want, a motion to take which sites you want. Again, this is to go for a detailed analysis, additional public input and then at the September meeting you would decide which ones you want to approve.

DR. DUVAL: Gregg, where is that table that you had up on the screen, what document is that in?

MR. WAUGH: The additional detailed information is Attachment 7C, and it is entitled "Input and Table from Pew with Amendment 36 Comments". What they have done is they've looked at the scientific literature and pulled this information together. We've got additional publications in that folder. Nick Farmer has a manuscript that he is working on. That has the MPA Expert Workgroup Report and the minority report in there.

DR. DUVAL: I don't think that table is actually in there and that's just why I was asking.

MR. WAUGH: I'll look for it.

MR. COX: Okay, is this the time to make a motion on a new alternative if you want to add a site in to be analyzed?

DR. DUVAL: Yes.

MR. COX: Okay, with that said, for North Carolina I really don't think with the work going on right now up to the north that we can take anything out; but I would add a new Alternative 5, the south Cape Lookout Site as a place to be analyzed. It is a place that I've been talking with Will and George about.

It is a place that has documentation of the species of interest that we're looking at. Then after spending some time with Nick this week and looking at the map, it actually goes inshore enough in 23 fathoms to give us some protection of the red grouper that the commercial fishermen in North Carolina are asking for added protection for that spawning fish that is having problems.

It looks to me like it would be a really good place to go into and look at. However, I think on the map it is showing 72 square miles. That is way off the table and we would have to do something more like a 3 to 5 square miles area for the South Cape Lookout Site. I would say between 3 to 5 miles I think it would have to be to get the buy-in from the fishermen to even think about it.

DR. DUVAL: Jack, you see all the highlighted stuff right there is all the different sizes that are off of North Carolina. It includes the area north of the 780 Bottom that the guys are out looking

at this week as well as the South Cape Lookout. I just want to know the intent is to keep all of those on the table for detailed analysis; is that correct?

MR. COX: Yes; for the analysis I think it is fine. Subalternative 3A with the 12 square mile area off the 780, I would like to see that taken off.

DR. DUVAL: Then this is the time to do that. I think if there is any of these out of that list that are acceptable, let's take them out right now because the more we can narrow things down for the analysis the better off we're going to be. That is one you would like to see removed?

MR. COX: Yes; that Subalternative 3A. I want to make a motion that we remove Subalternative 3A, the 12 square miles off the 780 Bottom.

DR. DUVAL: Okay, there is a motion by Jack; second by Anna to remove Subalternative 3A, which is the 12 square miles off 780 Bottom. All other alternatives remain in there for a detailed analysis. Gregg.

MR. WAUGH: Do we want to carry forward the one square mile on the Malchase Wreck?

MR. COX: I would leave it in there.

DR. DUVAL: Okay, there is a motion by Jack and second by Anna to remove Subalternative 3A from Action 3. Is there any other discussion on this motion? Any objection to this motion? Seeing none; that motion stands approved. Ben.

MR. HARTIG: Before we go on, Gregg, within the document do we have a place that really documents what fully analyzed means, saying what that particular thing means? I think the fully analyzed, if you have that as, I don't know, actually an option, in way it may be something to get at what I was talking at before. I'm just asking from a viewpoint of do we have something that we know what fully analyzed really means.

MR. WAUGH: Yes; I mean we don't define that, but it is just – you just dealt with Amendment 16, so you fully analyzed those areas. We would go through and look at all the scientific information that we have for any of these areas, input for any of these areas. We would go in detail for each area and describe the biological information that supports or does not support this area, the social and the economic, just like we do in each amendment for each action that we consider.

MR. HARTIG: The only reason I mention it is because for a spot like Devil's Hole we have additional information from Will Heyman that I would consider under fully analyzed that we need to move forward, but that is just me.

MR. WAUGH: Well, in that respect, then fully analyzed with information that we have. That's all we can do.

DR. DUVAL: All right, North Carolina, we're done; moving on. If we want new Alternatives 4 and 5, which 4 was the area north of the 780 Bottom. This came out of the Snapper Grouper

Advisory Panel Workshop. It came from North Carolina fishermen. Jack just spoke to the south of Cape Lookout Site. If you want to offer up another motion, Jack, that would be good to add those.

MR. COX: I will make a motion that we select the new Alternative 4, the area of the 780 Bottom that was talked about during the AP. The coordinates are published somewhere in the AP document. That is where they're doing work now. That is an area that fishermen said would probably be a better location than the Malchase; so I think that's what we need to keep in the document here.

DR. DUVAL: Do you want to also add new Alternative 5, the South Cape Lookout Site that you mentioned.

MR. COX: Yes; I thought I just did. Okay, I'll make a motion that we add new Alternative 5, the South Cape Lookout Site.

DR. DUVAL: How about one motion to add new Alternatives 4 and 5 to Action 3? (Alternative 4; area north of 780 bottom; Alternative 5; South Cape Lookout Site (3-5 miles)).

MR. COX: Yes.

DR. DUVAL: Seconded by Anna. Any other discussion? Any objections? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

MR. WAUGH: And the table I was referencing is in the public comments' tab. It is in public comment that we received. Next is Action 4, the spawning SMZs off of South Carolina. The alternatives that were in there before were Devil's Hole or Georgetown Hole. 2A is 13.5 square miles; 2B is 4 square miles; 2C is 1 square mile.

We have added these new subalternatives. 2D is Devil's Hole at 3.1. That's the motion that was supported by the AP. Subalternative 2E, Devil's Hole at 15.2 square miles. That is the area that was suggested in public comment by Mark Marhefka, and you heard him speak to that at public comment on Wednesday.

New Alternative 2F, the area south and offshore of the northern South Carolina MPA as an alternative to the Georgetown Hole. That was suggested during the workshop and during public comment and discussed at the AP. Then we've got the existing Areas 51 and 53. It seems Devil's Hole/Georgetown Hole, that area is where we have the most information. We had these three alternatives ranging from 1 to 13.5 square miles.

You may want to consider removing those and going forward with these two new alternatives that basically encompass the range from the AP's approved 3.1 square mile area and the area suggested at 15.2 square miles, which is a little bit bigger than the area that you had before; but this is the area that we have lots of detailed current information that has been collected during the cooperative research. That would give you a range of sizes.

MR. CONKLIN: I had a question about Alternative 2F, the northern South Carolina extension that was brought up at the AP meeting. It looks to me like that is essentially doubling the size of the northern South Carolina MPA. Is there a way we can make that a little smaller or can we speak to how we got to that?

MR. WAUGH: Yes; I'm glad you mentioned that, and I apologize. I should have pointed that out. What we had was a suggestion to expand that south and offshore and no guidance on size. What we put together here was just basically taking the existing site and expanding it equal to the size before. It is on Page 21 of the document, Figure 2C.

If you want this to go forward as an alternative, then give us some guidance on what size. That was just done as an example. You can see in Figure 2C where we have information on fish occurrence and fish spawning is in this area; the lower right-hand quadrant of that area. There has been some mapping in this area. That is what is shown in the blue.

If you want to know, Roger can explain to you what that shows. We did get some input at the Little River hearing that there is a lot of bottom longlining that has gone on in this area in the past. It has got bottom that is conducive to blueline tile harvest. We got some preliminary input on how that would impact fishing.

But, yes, if you want that to go forward as an alternative, give us some guidance on what sort of size you want to look at and whether you're interested in trying to capture this offshore area here that would pull in where we have some observations. The option exists to expand it and go a little farther south and pull in more of these observed sites; but we would just need some guidance on that. Thanks for pointing that out, Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: It doesn't actually have to extend off of the MPA and touch it; like there is an area on offshore there with all the point observations. We could designate that area as an area to move forward with as opposed to doubling the size of the MPA?

MR. WAUGH: What you would be suggesting – I guess this is a latitude and longitude line running across here; but basically a box that would pull in these observed sites that are down on this right-hand corner.

MR. CONKLIN: I think I'm prepared to make a motion to do that. Do I need to make a motion to remove new Alternative 2F or should I just fix it?

DR. DUVAL: That has actually not been added. It is just a suggestion so it has not actually been added.

MR. CONKLIN: So I will be making a new – okay, I'll make a motion an area with the point observations Page 21 of the document. I really don't have a scale at what size those are; but I will direct it to staff, I guess.

DR. DUVAL: So basically direction to staff to construct a box based on the point observations you see on Page 21 in the lower right-hand corner of that red box; is that what you're looking at, Chris?

MR. CONKLIN: Yes.

DR, DUVAL: Are you seconding the motion, Mel?

MR. BELL: Well, I'll do that, too.

DR. DUVAL: Okay, discussion.

MR. BELL: I remember when this came up and the individual was drawing our attention to this area down here and suggesting it might work. That is great; so the trick is direction to staff to draw – it is kind of hard to describe – to draw a smaller box more focused on the area I think as it was originally explained to us, perhaps. I can't give you dimensions and I can't give you a specific spot, but I know that was the one area that did come up. You can see there is some existing data there.

MR. CONKLIN: And just to have some more discussion on it; I remember in the AP meeting the fishermen that were out there working that area a long time ago couldn't quite recall the exact spot. I understand that is why the box is big; but I think he is kind of leaving it up to us to find a sweet spot.

MR. PUGLIESE: When looking back at the area, we didn't really have other guidance other than that; so that focus that once we actually looked at the data and looked at the – essentially that is all snowy grouper spawning area. If you compress down the box, an area probably approximately 4 by 2 or 3 by 2 captures essentially that entire break or that edge that it constitutes.

DR. DUVAL: Is there any other discussion on this motion? **The motion reads add a new subalternative to Action 4 for an area south of the northern South Carolina MPA of sufficient size to encompass the point observations for observations/spawning (4 miles by 2 miles or 3 by 2)** Any other discussion? Question from Gregg.

MR. WAUGH: And the intent would be when Roger refines that, if it is 4 by 2, that's fine; if it is 3 by 2, that's fine; and not to take out two? Okay.

DR. DUVAL: **Okay, any objection to the motion? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.** Is there a desire to modify or remove any of the other alternatives that were already included? We've had a suggestion for a 15.2 square mile area around Georgetown Hole rather than the 13.5 square mile area that is already in there under Subalternative 2A. Mel.

MR. BELL: So for moving forward with further analysis of sites, I'm fine with the full suite, including the 15.2, but that would have to be added?

DR. DUVAL: Yes; so wherever you see highlighted in yellow new subalternative whatever, that would need to be added. It is on Page 17 of your decision document. Doug.

MR. HAYMANS: I simply have a question on 51 and 53. Do we actually have locations on those?

DR. DUVAL: They're secret.

MR. HAYMANS: Right.

MR. BELL: Yes; we have the locations. What we were trying to do was just not fully disclose those until we had to.

DR. DUVAL: I think Doug's point is that it probably makes it difficult for the public to evaluate if those locations aren't being disclosed. If we're going out to get public comment and the public can't see exactly what you're looking at, then that makes it a little bit difficult. To that point, Mel.

MR. BELL: And we described them in detail. They were flat, featureless sand bottom, no existing hard bottom, no interest to anyone whatsoever, other than us after we established these sites for experimental purposes. Now what we're trying to do is actually provide some level of actual protection for the sites other than their secrecy; but at some point they're obviously going to have to go on the chart.

In terms of what they are or the public's understanding of what they are, they're sand bottom in 70-ish and 100-ish feet of water and that's all they are. They happen to have some artificial reef structures on there that have been out there for quite a while; but at some point we're obviously going to have to put them on the chart and have the coordinates. We were just trying to not do that; because once that is done, the public can go out there and have a heyday.

MR. BROWN: I'd like to see that new Subalternative 2E removed. I don't think it is necessary to have it that big.

DR. DUVAL: Is that in the form of a motion? Well, it hasn't been added so you don't need to worry about that. Zack.

MR. BOWEN: In regards to Area 51 and 53, two points I'd like to bring up that probably everybody is aware of, anyway; but like Mel said, they're in 70 or 100 feet of water. When this amendment came out or designed or whatever, I think it had intentions of protecting deep-water species. No? Well, anyway, my second point I'd like to make is if they're secret, they're not being fished on anyway, so it is something to consider.

DR. DUVAL: Okay, based on this, the alternatives that would move forward would be Subalternative 2A, that 13.5 square mile Devil's Hole option; 2B, the 4 square mile Devil's Hole option; 2C, the 1 square mile Devil's Hole option; and then Areas 51 and 53 as well as the new subalternative that was just approved, sort of encompassing the collection of spawning points.

MR. BELL: I have no problem with 2E being on there. 2E offers a slightly different option with some additional habitat in it that seems to be of interest. Maybe that's an issue we have internally here, but I'm fine with the full suite.

DR. DUVAL: If you want it, you need to make a motion to add it. Subalternatives 2A, 2B and 2C are ones that have already been approved previously as well as Alternative 3 and 4. Wherever it says "new subalternative", if you want that to be included for analysis, that is what you need to make a motion to add.

MR. BELL: Okay, I'll do that right now. I move to include new Alternative 2E.

DR. DUVAL: There is a motion by Mel to add new Subalternative 2E. That is Devil's Hole, 15.2 square miles. Is there a second to that motion? The motion dies for lack of a second. Anything else with regard to South Carolina. Those other alternatives are in there so we don't need to add them again. At this point I'm going to suggest we take a quick break, and then we will come back and run through what we have for Georgia and Florida.

I've had a request. I know Dr. McGovern had a question about South Carolina. I think Mel's previous motion, which died for lack of a second, was to add a Subalternative 2E for a 15.2 square mile option for Devil's Hole. I know Jack had a question about that. Jack.

DR. McGOVERN: I did have a question about that. I thought Mel said 2D. I don't hear that well sometimes, but I know Mark Marhefka came all the way down here from South Carolina. This might be the site that he proposed. He has done some work out there and he is wanting to have this alternative considered.

I know he has done a lot of work out there and he think this is important, which I think is part of this whole SMZ process. I think he has had his own boat sampling out there and stuff like that. I don't know if I can second it at this point or if it is too late, but I'd like to support Mel's alternative, if I could.

DR. DUVAL: Mark, I was wondering if you wouldn't mind coming up to the microphone and just clarifying which alternative you were supporting through your public comment. I thought it was the 15.2 square mile alternative.

MR. MARHEFKA: If I'm understanding correctly, it is the three mile by the three mile; is that the square that we're talking about on that alternative?

DR. DUVAL: I think that's what we have a question about was exactly the alternative that you had recommended.

MR. MARHEFKA: And one of the things is when we've been doing the research in this area, the currents sometimes get pretty stiff in there. The expansion part of that is you can be on the edge; and if you just had one by one, your lines can drift right back into that area and you're still going to be fishing into it.

The larger of the box goes and protects that particular site where we were actually pinpointing and grabbing the Warsaw from. With that being said, there is Warsaw all on the outer edge of that hump, even in the deeper parts. That eastern wall break there is where we were trying to go and want to kind of protect also.

That was the main reason why I decided to go and sort of get back out there again, go the points, check the points off in a little bit better accurate place to go and protect the Hole itself and then just the existing outer edges of that; that also do hold the Warsaws, too, because they're moving in and out. They're not just staying right there. They're moving around with the bait and everything within that spot.

DR. DUVAL: Was that the 3.1 square mile area or was that a 15.2 square mile area. I think Gregg is trying to scroll around on the screen here to bring that up. You might be able to see it on this screen.

MR. MARHEFKA: Okay, the black box was also the one that grabbed that northern pinnacle up there where we interacted with the blueline line and also interacted with some spawning yellowedge. That depth of that pinnacle also would have possibly gone and held the Warsaws, also. We did not really interact with the Warsaw on that one, but it very well could.

Like I say, you're just sort of kind of – if for enforcement reasons they wanted to go and draw square boxes; so it may look a lot bigger than what it really is; but we could have taken that northern pinnacle there and sort of kind of chopped it down to the southern corner of the box; but for enforcement reasons it was just easier for us just to go out there and do the box area there.

MR. BROWN: Mark, wasn't that the northern – that pinnacle or that corner right there; isn't that part of that 2E F that we were talking about earlier where what Wayne was talking about where it was going to drop down from the existing northern MPA; isn't part of the same –

MR. MARHEFKA: No; the northern MPA is a lot farther up. From that northern pinnacle there, you're looking at about ten miles to the north to get to that MPA.

MR. BROWN: I was misunderstanding. Also, I thought that your preferred originally was that three square mile area, the red box. I remember when you went up and did the presentation or discussion on it, I thought that was your original preferred.

MR. MARHEFKA: The three square mile box was my original preferred. Enlarging it to that larger black box; once again it sort of kind of grabs that northern pinnacle that we were sort of looking at for the yellowedge. Also, up on that northwestern corner in there is also where we've interacted is a 40 fathom sheer wall there that we had picked into a lot of speckled hind in that area, also. I just think if we leave it on the table to be analyzed and let it go from there.

Let's not go and remove it but let's look at it a little bit. I understand Dr. Will Heyman's presentation about how the spatial area that the fish actually sort of move around in and it is really sort of kind of important to give them that room to go and do what they need to do. To be honest

with you, I think if you go and you run an economic analysis on that area for the commercial industry, I don't really think you're going to go and see a huge impact.

Maybe years past, possibly, but now I just don't think so because the sharks that are in the area, the predators that are there. We did the video monitoring down there and I mean the sharks are from the top to the bottom. As soon as you go and you hook up a fish, he is getting nailed.

If any fisherman is going in that spot right there and trying to go and catch fish and just going and letting the sharks eat them up, he is not really a fisherman. He is just somebody who just sort of taking away that shouldn't be even doing it. It is just sad. I mean sometimes you can get in there and you can go and catch without the sharks interacting; but for the most part they've gotten really bad out there. It just my observations.

MR. BELL: My point original point was to keep the suite of options there. We've got everything down to one square mile and then up to as large as the 15.2. It's options to further analyze. Whether it is the economic analysis or fishing analysis; that was what I was trying to achieve. I don't know procedurally – since I already made a motion, I don't know if we can do it again or not. I would move to add 2E to that particular subalternative, right?

DR. DUVAL: There is a motion by Mel and a second by Jack McGovern to add new Subalternative 2E. That would be the 15.2 square mile Devil's Hole alternative. The motion reads add new Subalternative 2E to Action 4. Is there further discussion on this? Opposition? Seeing none; that motion stands approved. Now I think we might be moving on from the great state of South Carolina into the great state of Georgia.

MR. WAUGH: Here on the draft list you've got Subalternatives 2A, 2B, 2C for the Georgia MPA, reconfiguration ranging from 71.5 square miles to 18; Subalternatives 3A, 3B, 3C for St. Simons Area 2, from 23.5 down to 9.4. As Doug pointed out, I had missed pulling in a recommendation from the AP; and this shown on Page 24 of the document where the Snapper Grouper AP approved a motion that the council consider all Alternatives 3A through C as well as 3D smaller; so I have added that as new Subalternative 3D.

MR. HARTIG: Which one is that, Gregg?

MR. WAUGH: It is Subalternative 3D, which is St. Simons 2 area; and the AP just recommended that we look at something smaller. We would need some guidance from you if you want that to go forward, whether you want all these other alternatives to go forward and what size you think that should be.

MR. HAYMANS: Gregg, with regard to that, all of our other SMZs – not all – most of our other SMZs are 2 by 2 square miles; those being our artificial reef sites. I would think if we made that a 2 by 2 area; that would be at least acceptable in the public's eyes when viewing it in relation to our other SMZs.

While I have got the mike, if it is okay, I'll go ahead and discuss the other ones. I think if you notice, the Georgia MPA, reconfigure MPA up there is quite large. I went back and looked at the

Regulation 17 point observations and in none of the reconfigurations up there do I see any spawning indications of two of the target species of speckled hind and Warsaw grouper.

I'm considering removal – and I'll make this in the form of a motion in moment – removal of the Subalternative 2s. I also think in Subalternative 3, 23.5 square miles is pretty large when we're looking at trying to minimize these areas to specific spawning areas. I'm thinking I will ask to remove 3A as well.

Then, finally, the new subalternative 25 to 35 miles; I don't even think I want to include that as part of a – recommending it because quite honestly that's due east of Brunswick and St. Simons. It is less than a hundred feet of water. I simply think I'm not willing to take a bloody nose over that one. With that said, I will make a motion to remove Subalternatives 2A through 2C and Subalternative 3A and add new Subalternative 3D, which will become 3C when they're all reordered. I will leave that there.

DR. DUVAL: There is a motion by Doug to remove Subalternatives 2A through 2C and 3A and add new Subalternative –

MR. HAYMANS: Gregg has got “and removing subalternative”, but that is new so it hasn't been approved yet. I wouldn't even include it here. We don't need to remove it because it hasn't been accepted yet.

DR. DUVAL: So it would just be to add new Subalternative 3C?

MR. HAYMANS: 3D.

DR. DUVAL: 3D?

MR. HAYMANS: Correct, which is not in the document you're looking at. It is on the screen because it got inadvertently –

DR. DUVAL: The 2 by 2 mile area.

MR. HAYMANS: Yes.

DR. DUVAL: Okay, motion by Doug; second by Charlie. Discussion? Zack.

MR. BOWEN: Doug, you mentioned – and it may be because it is new, it is not in the new document or hasn't been approved yet; but you also said, which I'm in favor for, of removing the area between 25 and 35 miles east of St. Simons.

MR. HAYMANS: Right, but because it is a recommendation of the AP but hasn't been considered by the council yet, if we don't want it we don't need to consider it. We would only need to remove it; it wouldn't be part of it.

MR. BOWEN: Because it is really not there to begin with?

MR. HAYMANS: Right.

MR. BROWN: Doug, I thought you said that you couldn't remove – you saw something in the document where you couldn't remove any mileage from an existing MPA; and I see under Option 2, that's what it says.

MR. HAYMANS: Right, but Option 2 is again a recommendation from the AP; and if we don't consider it, then it wouldn't be part of the document either. Is that right; that's not part of the document? At this point, it is a recommendation of the AP.

DR. DUVAL: Right, it is just a recommendation so it hasn't been added. It is not part of the alternatives for analysis.

MR. HAYMANS: It is there but it is not.

DR. DUVAL: Very, very tricky we are around here. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I had one of my fishermen give me a chart that I could put on my computer. I overlaid their fishing spots over some of the Georgia reconfiguration, and it just blacked them out. There would be no support from the commercial fishermen, anyway; and a lot of the recreational fishermen also fish out there. It is on the fishing chart and it is a long ways. We might get some support for St. Simons, which is still on the ledge.

MR. HAYMANS: And one final point about the St. Simons extension; based at least on Regulation 17 here, there is a single point observation a spawning speckled hind in that box. At least there has been some documented spawning down there.

DR. McGOVERN: My question was along with Doug to say I was wondering what we know about spawning in these different alternatives here. Maybe Gregg has a table of that.

DR. DUVAL: Gregg is pulling up his table, and you can see the St. Simons Area 2; red snapper, scamp, vermilion snapper that is spawning.

MR. HAYMANS: Gregg, at least looking back at 17, it does – and maybe because the box shifted just a bit, I don't know, but I do see a spawning speckled hind down there. It may be that the box changed just enough between the two documents that it didn't get picked up. I don't know that this is going to show you.

MR. WAUGH: I don't think this would show it here as to what it was. We could pull up, if you're interested, the MPA Expert Workgroup Report. I think that has a chart in there that would show the speckled hind and Warsaw.

DR. DUVAL: All right, we have a motion on the floor. I'm probably going to have to go back and read that. It was a little convoluted. **The motion is remove Subalternatives 2A through 2C and 3A and add new Subalternative 3D to Action 5, which would be a 2 by 2 area of that St. Simons 2. Any other discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.**

MR. WAUGH: Next we move to Florida; and we've got alternatives in there for the Warsaw Hole, 2A, 2B, 2 and 1 square miles; Daytona Steeples, 3A through 3C, 27 down to 6; and a new alternative that was suggested during public hearings for the Push Button Hill Site that is 9.4 square miles.

We received some input – Lora Clarke forwarded some information from Beth Dieveney. This is exciting because this is information that was collected last night. We've got this plot, and what Roger has done is overlaid the boxes on this. Roger, do you want to come up and sort of explain what we're looking at here.

MR. PUGLIESE: This was perfect timing because what you see is the multibeam mapping that really do show you the characteristic of the hole and then the associated bathymetries, the real steep bathymetries to the west and to the south of the hole itself. You do see that the alternatives that you have, the two alternatives, capture the core footprint of the Warsaw Hole as well as the larger one even gets into some of the other complex ledge forms. I think the alternatives are right on the money in terms of getting just how large of an area you would like to be able to look at.

MR. WAUGH: And Mike sent an e-mail for you to download Nick Farmer's revised presentation. He and a number of other authors – we had that originally included in that folder with all the background information, so he incorporated this. Also this Nancy Foster cruise planned to drop cameras in there and also collect some fish sonar data.

This is exciting that in terms of fully analyzing sites, we will now have information to show the bottom topography in this area, what information they collect from the cameras to show what is down there, as well as information on fish sonar results in that area. Thank you to Beth and the folks that are out on the cruise and all the folks that participated. Some of our AP members have been instrumental in helping them find locations out there and so forth.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks, Gregg, and thanks for that new information. Jessica.

MS. McCAWLEY: Yes; that is great. I hope that can be included in the document. Based on what we saw, I wasn't sure if we needed to take the green box out on the left a little bit. It looks like we're pretty good, but I can't tell if we're missing something over there on the far left.

MR. WAUGH: In terms of looking at your alternatives, we've got two square miles. You could give us direction to come up with another alternative that might extend this a little longer down here. I think this is, Roger, a 2 by 1 now or 3 by 1, so maybe a 4 by 1 if you want to add.

MS. McCAWLEY: I think that we could keep that same size box and just move the whole box to the left a little bit.

MR. WAUGH: Okay, when you make the motion, just give us – or give us some direction to basically take that box and slide to the left to pick up what is going on over here.

DR. McGOVERN: I would support a bigger box because just two alternatives with two square miles and one square mile; that is awfully small. I think that is kind of a difficult thing to enforce, and Jeff might want to talk about that. I would support something like what Gregg suggested with another alternative that has a bigger area.

MS. McCAWLEY: Do you want to make a motion about that bigger area, make a suggestion for that?

DR. McGOVERN: Yes; I would make a motion that there is a bigger area according to what did you suggest, Gregg, four square miles or four by one or something like that? I would make that motion.

DR. DUVAL: A motion by Jack to add a new Subalternative 2C, which would be something bigger than two square miles around Warsaw Hole; so four square miles is what we have here. Is there a second to that; second by Jessica. Discussion? Mel.

MR. BELL: Jack, hit it on the head in terms of enforceability. Obviously, bigger is better, but if there is also sort of a sweet spot that you're trying to protect, if that is in the center, that is even better. It just gets you away from the edges is always easier.

DR. DUVAL: Any other discussion? Chester.

MR. BREWER: I just had a question for Gregg. Do we have any idea, and may well not, but which direction the prevailing current is in that area?

DR. DUVAL: I'm not sure Gregg would have that, but –

MR. WAUGH: I don't know; but we will certainly add that information into the document.

MR. BREWER: That might go into – you know, it is fairly deep and so it might be that the side where the current is or the direction it is coming from, you might want to have maybe a little bit more buffer on that side; that is what I was thinking.

DR. DUVAL: Good thoughts. **The motion reads add new Subalternative 2C to Action 6, Warsaw Hole, four square miles.** Is there any other discussion? Mark.

MR. BROWN: Yes; can we ask to remove any of the subalternatives?

DR. DUVAL: Why don't we dispense with this motion and then we'll get into any removal of subalternatives. Any other discussion? **Any opposition? Seeing none; this motion stands approved.** Jessica.

MS. McCAWLEY: I would like to talk about that item where it says a new alternative, the Push Button Hill Site. I know that was brought up in some of the public comments that we received. We had a lengthy discussion about this particular site at a previous council meeting. I believe we were in Charleston.

We talked about the oceanography and kind of where the currents are going, and some of the characteristics of that area are no longer in place in that particular area anymore. I would not want to add this particular site because I don't believe it exists in the area that the fishermen remember as Push Button Hill. I don't believe that area exists anymore; and that is what we had a lengthy discussion about at that particular meeting.

DR. DUVAL: Any other comments? Ben.

MR. HARTIG: We talked about these spawning SMZs as small targeted areas, and then all of a sudden we're going to four square miles based on whether you can enforce it or not. When we talked about how these things were going to get public buy-in, they're going to really be enforced by fishermen that are in that particular area.

To me I think you go back to the citizen science thing I went through before where that MPA watch in California is that fishermen in those particular areas that could ride through and document the kinds of interactions that are occurring in those areas; not as an enforcement tool but just as something that can be done.

From my experience with Warsaws, in any particular area that I fished, if you closed a one square mile area on all the areas that I've caught them – and I've caught hundreds of them – you will protect 90-plus percent of the animals on that particular spot. It is a little bit disconcerting to go to four square miles, but for the analysis I'm not going to vote against it. But what I would ask is that since we have – we got that great new information last night.

Let's move that red box so Warsaw Hole itself is in the middle of that red box if that is what I'm interpreting as Warsaw Hole is. Let's move it to the middle of the box so you could at least get the maximum protection if you went with the smallest area.

DR. DUVAL: Gregg is getting a draft motion up there for you, Ben.

MR. HARTIG: And that is to move the two square mile area of the Warsaw Hole in the middle of that box.

DR. DUVAL: Second by Chester. Discussion?

MR. HAYMANS: Ben said the red box and I thought the red box was the one square mile and the green was the two square mile.

MR. WAUGH: Do you want the one square mile area, Ben?

MR. HARTIG: I'd really like to see both of them, that it encompass that the best way we can give a buffer around that area, so rephrase my motion. What do I need to do? Okay, for the one and two square mile areas for Warsaw Hole – yes, place Warsaw Hole in the middle of those boxes.

DR. DUVAL: Chester, are you okay with that as the seconder?

MR. BREWER: Absolutely.

DR. DUVAL: **The motion reads move the one and two square mile areas to have the Warsaw Hole in the middle of those boxes. Is there further discussion on this motion? Any objection to this motion? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.** Is there a desire to consider all of these alternatives under Action 6 for analysis? Are there any you would like removed? Mark.

MR. BROWN: I'd like to ask that Subalternative 3A be removed.

DR. DUVAL: There is a motion by Mark to remove Subalternative 3A, which is the 27 square mile Daytona Steeples. Jessica, are you seconding that or do you want discussion?

MS. McCAWLEY: I'll second it.

DR. DUVAL: Okay, discussion? Ben.

MR. HARTIG: It gets back to a little bit of what I said before. I know it is uncomfortable to the public to have 27 square miles in there; but to get the analysis and get maybe an appropriate area within that area, I have no intent – I'm going to put that on the record right now – no intent of closing 27 square miles for Daytona Steeples. I'll put that on the record right now; but my intent would be to find the very best spot within that area to protect.

In this particular instance that happens to fall within the 27 square mile area and we go to a smaller area, it wouldn't be in the best interest of moving forward. Now, Gregg, with the 27 miles, how much is the analysis different going to be given that we really don't have that much information other than anecdotal. What kind of information – I will ask you that – what kind of information do we have within that area now?

MR. WAUGH: It is the anecdotal information. Rusty has provided lots of historical information for that area. We've got some occurrence data of greater amberjack, snowy grouper, speckled hind and vermilion. We would have the detailed bottom topography to identify where the pinnacles are within that area.

MR. HARTIG: Okay, the occurrence data; where does that come from?

MR. WAUGH: The MPA Expert Workgroup Report and the NMFS 2013 distribution of speckled hind and Warsaw Grouper in the U.S. South Atlantic, SERO, LAP 2012-08; those two publications.

MR. HARTIG: Okay, if I recall being involved in that workgroup, that is anecdotal information. In some of these, when we're just dealing with anecdotal information – and this gets back to what I said earlier in the meeting – we have a gradation of information about these different places. When we get to a place in particular that only has anecdotal information, really we need to do more of the research to be able to really get to what we really need to be doing.

We don't need to be going in there and closing an area larger than we need, and we need this pinpoint pinnacle areas that are the best areas that we can protect in that area. To me this is where we get in particular to the research needs where you don't have anything to really – other than anecdotal information to sink your teeth into.

I think in this particular we need to do the research first, before we figure out what we really want to be closing to the fishermen. Basically, you want to really be able to get to what you need; so the 27 square miles, if we close that, that's a big impact on the fishermen; but however the pinnacle you close may be within that area. We're kind of in a quandary here.

You don't want to have that impact on the fishermen, but you want to close the best spot; so what is the best way to move forward to do that is all I'm trying to get at. It seems to me that in these particular instances, as you go through Florida, where we don't have the information; that you're probably going to want to – and especially for the Steeples is you want to have some information gathered first.

DR. DUVAL: Ben, would you like to hear a little bit from Rusty about some of this anecdotal information before I go to Wilson and Jack?

MR. BREWER: Gregg, in the analysis – and let's say you've got a 27 square mile area and you're able to pinpoint a particular portion of that area that really would be an area of concern or a good area, and you're able to pinpoint within there that, okay, this is where the spawning is taking place and it is taking place from June through July; just because it has been analyzed as a 27 mile area, that does not preclude us in any way, I don't think, from coming back and saying, oh, this is the spot, let's plot this out, that is the good spot. Is my understanding of that correct?

MR. WAUGH: You are correct. If you take that 27 square mile area out as an alternative, you would be able to choose a smaller area within that 27 square mile area. If you wanted to choose something larger, we would have to go out and get additional public input; but anything smaller, you would be able to choose any area within that 27 square mile area; you're correct.

MR. HARTIG: And if I may, Madam Chairman, to the question you posed before about Rusty – all right, I think specifically, Rusty, if you came up to the table, the question I have is do the smaller boxes incorporate the area that we talked about through the MPA Workgroup, from your experiences in the past?

MR. HUDSON: That has not been validated. The C-Loran numbers have been in the possession of various entities to be examined several years ago, and it hasn't been touched yet. Now, the problem is that those are male speckled hinds on that one particular steeples. That steeples is not that large. Probably the base of it is like this room.

When you find it in the soon-to-be-implemented Coral Amendment 8, inside of that HAPC, which is 50 percent is effective as an MPA – and that is going to be 800-something square miles with bunches of pinnacles – I believe that we really should take in mind that those males are probably moving back inshore and mixing with these smaller females.

That way they're getting out of the current in order to do the spawning probably in that period May to June when speckled hinds tend to have their peak spawning period. I have been asking for several years now for the validation of that particular spot, as well as the Daytona Ledge. Both are found on the western side of the soon-to-be-implemented HAPC; not all the way out there to 340 feet out to the eastern side.

There is nothing out there except rock shrimp ground that they're actually going outside the soon-to-be-implemented HAPC. I have a lot of issues with that; and I brought it up, as you remember, at the public hearing in Daytona that you and Erika attended. Thank you very much for the comment opportunity.

DR. LANEY: Madam Chairman, I was just going to agree with Ben. To me what makes good logic is you analyze a larger area, you get your specific information, you include the buffer around the spawning area that you have defined as best you can. To me that is just a very logical process. If you start small, as Rusty just pointed out, I think you can miss it; so start with something larger. Remember it is just for analytical purposes. This is not saying, as Ben pointed out also, you're not going to necessarily close 27 square miles.

MR. COX: I was just going to say that new area that I proposed off of North Carolina, I'm looking forward to getting with fishermen and discussing what we're going to do in that area and shift that box around that encompasses exactly where those fish are we're trying to protect, which would be the red grouper spawning and those bigger fish in the deeper water. That is how I see that area coming together.

DR. DUVAL: **We have a motion on the floor that is still under discussion. It is to remove Subalternative 3A from Action 6.** Is there any other discussion on this motion? We've had a lot of good discussion here. I think about the value of analyzing a larger area and that has the council has the opportunity to select a smaller area should the information that we receive inform a much more specific and smaller place.

Are people prepared to vote? **Can I see a show of hands of those in favor of the motion to remove Subalternative 3A from Action 6; can I see a show of hands of those opposed. The motion fails in a tie, four to four.** Ben.

MR. HARTIG: And even though we've had a lot of discuss at the table today saying that we're going to make it a smaller area; I think within that alternative, somehow we need to put some wording in there that we're going to analyze the 27 square mile area with the intent of narrowing it down to a specific set of pinnacles that are appropriate for the SMZ process. Does that make sense?

DR. DUVAL: Perhaps that can be direction to staff to add some language to indicate that the intent is that we're analyzing a larger area during the public input process to find a good spot within there.

MR. HARTIG: Yes, exactly.

MR. WAUGH: And we'll add that discussion and make sure that is clearly reflected in there. I would assume the intent would be this – well, if you analyze the whole 27 square miles, you're analyzing all the area within the 12 and the 6 mile box, too.

DR. DUVAL: That's it for Action 6. Action 7 was the movement of the Charleston Deep Reef Artificial MPAs and we already have selected Alternative 2 as our preferred to move that. The advisory panel has recommended that. I don't think we have any desire to change that as a preferred. I think moving on to Action 8, then, which would be the transit and anchoring provisions. I think there is some language in there that we might have to approve.

MR. WAUGH: Yes; you asked us to look at revising the wording here. The IPT has provided the revised language on Page 41. Rich DeVictor was the one who spearheaded putting this together. It clearly states what the no action alternative is. Again, this is on Page 41. Alternative 2 would be in the proposed spawning SMZs allow transit with snapper grouper species aboard a vessel when fishing gear is appropriately stowed.

Alternative 3 is prohibit anchoring in the proposed spawning SMZs. In the box we've got the definitions that go along with this. It defines transit. It defines what fishing gear appropriately stowed means. The Snapper Grouper AP supports the transit provision and the anchoring prohibition.

DR. DUVAL: We would be looking for a motion from the committee to accept those recommended changes. Jessica.

MS. McCRAWLEY: I move that we accept the recommended changes by the IPT for Action 8.

DR. DUVAL: There is a motion by Jessica; second by Jack Cox. Any other discussion on this motion? Any objection to this motion? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

MR. WAUGH: The next item is timing on Page 77. Originally the intent was to give final approval at September, and we're just clarifying that we're targeting the DEIS going out when the public hearing document goes out. The closure of that DEIS comment period will occur after our September meeting. The DEIS comments that we get prior to and up to our September meeting we will look at in September.

You will review all the public hearing comments and approve all the actions; so that will be the final list of sites. Then we will finalize the document. It will come back to you in December. You will review any additional DEIS comments, make any additional changes that are necessary to address those, and then approve for secretarial review. We've got options there for you to give us guidance on how we proceed from here.

DR. DUVAL: Earlier we had considerable discussion about the timing of this. I just want to make clear that under the schedule that Gregg has laid out we would be selecting final sites in September and then approving the document for formal review in December. Ben expressed concerns with regard to a process for how best to move forward with designation of these areas.

I just want to make sure we have some discussion with that. I also know that Chris has drafted up a motion, which would be appropriate prior to this motion to approve for timing that would add a provision to this action. I guess I would like a little bit of committee discussion on what everyone would like in terms of timing, and then also I'd like Chris to bring forward his motion, which has to do with sunset provisions. Well, you all were very vocal at the beginning.

MR. HARTIG: I thought you were going to take Chris' motion first.

DR. DUVAL: I don't have to.

MR. HARTIG: Well, that's what you said you were going to do.

DR. DUVAL: No, I said that I wanted more discussion and that I also wanted to take up Chris' motion. There was no order to that. Jessica.

MS. McCAWLEY: I would like to hear Chris' motion first before we talk about the timing.

DR. DUVAL: Okay, Chris, go ahead, the draft motion is up there.

MR. CONKLIN: This is just some ideas that we've been bouncing around and I have got a lot of public feedback from it. We can maybe come up with some other variation if this isn't going to work. Okay, the motion is to add a new Action 9 to put a sunset clause on any new natural bottom designated as an SMZ. Sites must be monitored and evaluated through ongoing work outlined in the SAFMC SMP. SMZ designation would be removed if no proof of spawning snapper grouper species is found within two years, three years or four years.

DR. DUVAL: That is in the form of a motion and you're making that motion right now?

MR. CONKLIN: That's correct.

DR. DUVAL: Okay, seconded by Mark. Discussion? Wilson.

DR. LANEY: Chris, what would you consider constitutes proof of spawning?

MR. CONKLIN: Well, that's where I was going to look for some discussion. The SSC report on this amendment says there is not too many samples taken or not enough. Well, it doesn't say it is not enough, but it says there are very few. For us to make decisions on something like this, we need more information. If we're on the timeline that we are and we're designating spots as SMZs, I think we owe it back to ourselves to call ourselves accountable and make sure that the places we're picking actually are spawning areas.

DR. LANEY: Madam Chairman, I would just suggest that proof of spawning could be eggs, it could be larvae, it could be gravid adults, maybe.

MR. CONKLIN: To that point, Mel and I were speaking about the resources in South Carolina and the process that has been done by Dr. Heyman of actually harvesting the fish and taking the eggs out and sending them off to the lab and the gonads, I guess, but that is what my intent was.

MR. COX: I support this, Chris. I think it is a good idea. I think we have quite a few sites to check out; and I'm not quite sure how much time we'll be able to spend in each one of them. I would just say that maybe we add one more year and maybe go to five years out on it.

MR. BELL: I like the discussion of the concept. I think this has some merit towards allowing us to move forward eventually with this. I'm not particularly fond of all the wording. Let's say we were to vote this down; could we bring it back up or spend some time finessing proper wording for such an action and then bring it back up and add it in September.

I'm fully willing to have something that is sort of provides some accountability for us and decision points; and then we'd have to, of course, figure out criteria for how we determine success. I like the idea and I think it would help us to gain some public trust and move forward in a way that we can actually this new potential tool and put it in use; but I'm not particularly fond of the wording as it is right now.

MR. BOWEN: I'm leaning to support this. Chris, if you could kind of clarify the phrase or the term "any new natural bottom"; if you could clarify that for me. Then to Mel's point, I think that if the public is aware that if we're trying to – if something is not being found, then we would open it back up. If the public is aware of that, I think it would restore some faith. But, Chris, if you could clarify those words, please.

MR. CONKLIN: Yes; I sure can. In the decision document for Amendment 36, I believe it is in the purpose – well, no, it is in Chapter 1, introduction. Anyways, that language came from the document. It is under the purpose, I think, to protect or identify new natural bottom sites as the purpose of this; so that's where I got the wording.

MR. BOWEN: My question is once we designate an SMZ, then it wouldn't really be considered new natural bottom anymore, right?

DR. DUVAL: I'm not quite sure what you're getting at.

MR. BOWEN: Well, if he is wanting a sunset clause to – I think once we designate a special spawning management zone, then it wouldn't be new bottom anymore. It would already be designated or am I reading too much into that? Do you see what I'm saying; it would be new anymore. We would already have it locked down, quote-unquote.

DR. DUVAL: Yes; I think that might be just semantics. Yes; obviously once you designate an area, it is designated, but it could be removed in the future should this action go through. I think you might be trying to dig down too far into the weeds on this one.

MR. BOWEN: Okay, that's fine; thank you.

MR. HAYMANS: My point was specifically to the timing. I'm in favor of the sunset. Two years is way too short. I was going to suggest three, five and ten, realizing that ship time and all that kind of good stuff may not come around every other year; but I am in favor of a sunset.

MS. BECKWITH: I was going to echo some of Mel's and Doug's points. I also thought that two and three years was likely a bit short, but three, five and ten would be more appropriate. In terms of an automatic removal, maybe we can sort of finesse this into a review of information at three years for consideration, something like that, but not necessarily an automatic removal.

I think we will need to finesse the language as well. But, also, some of these areas are being chosen because they already have some record of having spawned-condition fish in them; so we would have to sort of go through and specify criteria that says – you know, proof of spawning fish; we have proof that there has been spawned-ready fish in some of these areas.

MS. McCAWLEY: I just wanted to echo some of the other things that I heard. I agree with three, five and ten. I think two is too short because of, like what Doug said, ship time and other projects, people getting funding; but I would support this motion. I would be in favor of putting something out there and then letting the IPT bring us something back that is cleaned up a little bit more with some suggestions for the next meeting.

MR. CONKLIN: That was my original intent was to give it to staff and see what they could do with it and let's just give them some direction.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, I agree, two years is too short; ten years may be too long; but maybe some wording in there instead of an automatic sunset. It sets a review for possible removal because there may be other reasons we want to keep it.

DR. DUVAL: All right, Mel, and then I think everybody has had a chance to talk, and I'm going to make a suggestion.

MR. BELL: I was just going to suggest that having looked at other areas and watched things; three, five and seven would be fine with me. You will see what you're going to see. The hardest challenge will be the assets to get out and do what you need to do probably from a scheduling standpoint. In terms of getting results, I don't think you need to go over seven.

In talking to Gregg, if we can put something in here and take it forward and have staff kind of tweak it a little bit, I think then that will take it into the public realm. They'll know what we're looking at, and I think that would be a good thing. I think this would really help us to sell the concept and gain some trust.

MR. HARTIG: Can I get a clarification from Gregg? When we started down this path, it is spawning SMZs – and I'm losing this now – was there an overarching particular way in which we were going to try and protect Warsaw and speckled hind or not or was it always particular to spawning? That is what I'm losing a little bit in this.

MR. WAUGH: The intent was that we were using these spawning SMZs to focus on providing additional protection for snapper grouper species, including speckled hind and Warsaw grouper. We can take this and move forward and put something in the document for public hearings. What we will need is clarification on the timing and then some clarification – we have done this before.

We did this with the Oculina Experimental Closed Area. In that case the council had to take action to continue the oculina; so just some clarification. We can flesh this out, but we need to clearly get your guidance on the years; and then if you want it to pattern after what we've done before where the council would need to take action to continue the spawning SMZs or do you just want to trigger a review in three, five and seven. That would give us what we need.

DR. DUVAL: The first thing I'm going to suggest is a little tweaking of the motion that perhaps direction to staff to add a new Action 9 and modify accordingly, but we need to address both the timing – I've heard three, five and seven; three, five and ten; and then also several people have spoken to whether or not that should be a trigger for a review – if insufficient evidence of spawning does come forward, whether this would trigger a review or it would come back to the council to determine whether or not the SMZ would continue. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, if we used it to trigger a review, we could use a shorter timeframe, say, three years, and just say we've looked at it – and they've looked at it and they didn't find anything so we'll just stop now or we haven't had a chance to look at it fully, so we're going to keep going forward. That kind of keeps our finger on the pulse of it; so I'm inclined to go for a shorter timeframe and then go to a review.

MR. BELL: I think you need to have the consequences in there. Let's say we do review and there is nothing that says they're going to go away. I think to gain the public trust and the public buy-in we're going to need to hold our feet to the fire. That's why I think it needs to be sunsetted at some particular date, but we will hold our feet to the fire.

If we cannot demonstrate in that appropriate period of time that it has done what we say it can do or decide it is just not what we thought it was going to be, then it goes away. I guess the way you work around the sunset, we would have to redesignate them or something at that particular time. I think we need to hold ourselves accountable.

MR. HARTIG: I hate to draw this out and I could probably do it later, but if you look at spawning fish throughout the area – I mean if you look at red porgy in particular, everywhere there is a red porgy spot there is a spawning spot, just about. They spawn through the entire jurisdiction. If you have a spawning SMZ that has red porgy spawning, what does that really mean?

It is not a spawning aggregation of red porgies because they spawn – and each species has particular behavioral differences for spawning. I think you almost need a decision-tree approach to look at this, and maybe staff could work on something like that.

MR. BELL: And that's why I was – I like the approach, but I wasn't satisfied with the wording because what are the success criteria. Those success criteria and how you measure them isn't something we can figure out right now; and that's why I didn't want to get bogged down in that.

I think we need to do this in order to help us get the buy-in; but you're absolutely right, there are all kinds of ways to demonstrate spawning, a little spawning, a lot of spawning. That just takes a little bit of finessing.

MR. HAYMANS: Multispecies spawning.

MR. BELL: Multispecies spawning; that is a good point, but we don't have the time right now to flesh all that out. There does need to be – perhaps direction to staff could be to help establish some clear success criteria that we're looking for in order to say, yes, that is a good spot for these three reasons or whatever.

MR. WAUGH: We can take this guidance. Perhaps the easiest thing would be to pattern it after what we did with the oculina. We had a three-year review and a ten-year sunset. If you're going to have a hard sunset, we need to have a little longer period of time, because then we need to build in that ten-year sunset time to develop an amendment, get it reviewed and approved. We did this before and we can pattern it after what we did for the oculina. It was a three-year review with a ten-year sunset. You'll have a good idea of what is going on in three years and it automatically would sunset in ten.

DR. DUVAL: I just have a question; but the process we have set up in here is a regulatory-type amendment process, so it wouldn't have to be a full plan amendment. It would be an abbreviated process. Okay, thank you. In terms of this motion, Gregg, would it be more helpful to – do we need to include direction to staff in the motion?

MR. WAUGH: Given how controversial this will be, I think it would be clearer – tell us what years and then if you want it to sunset. It would be a three-year review, ten-year sunset, and that would make it very clear to us what you want.

DR. DUVAL: Chris, you were the maker of the motion and, Mark, you were the seconder; so I think we want to be specific here. Would it be a three-year review and a ten-year sunset? Does that capture the intent?

MR. CONKLIN: I was just thinking – you know, I'm not inclined to say we're going to model it after what we did with oculina because I'm not familiar with that document. I would want to read it first. I'm looking to direct staff to come up with some alternatives. Maybe we could pick our hard numbers like you're saying – just tell me what you want me to do.

DR. DUVAL: So with a three-year review, any spawning SMZs that we put into place through this process, they would all come back before us for a three-year review of information and evaluation of their effectiveness. They would all sunset at ten years unless we took action to ensure that they continue. That is how the oculina worked. There would be an automatic sunset provision. If we direct staff to develop something similar for this process; that is kind of what it would look like. Mel and then Mark and then Charlie, and we're not going to be continuing this much longer.

MR. BELL: So the oculina was one area that you could focus assets into, so we're talking all kinds of multiple areas. I'm just a little concerned about the three-year review. Trying to cover

all the work that might need to be done in three years; I'm wondering if it should be like a five-year review and a ten-year sunset, just given the scope of all the sites we've got and all and the limited available to work in those depths of water.

DR. DUVAL: Might I make a suggestion that perhaps you include alternatives for a three- or five-year review and a ten-year sunset? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Okay, so no matter what the review said or at whatever years, it is going to sunset at ten, if that is what the motion is, and that is that. I just wanted to sure that was clear.

DR. DUVAL: Yes, it would require action by the council to continue spawning SMZs. Gregg, do you guys have what you need so you can –

MR. WAUGH: Yes, if we replace what is here, two, three, four, five, with these two bullets here.

DR. DUVAL: And then if we can add at the beginning of the motion "direct staff to add new Action 9"; we want to give you all the license to tweak this as necessary to sort of model it after what was done for oculina.

MR. WAUGH: If that is the motion, we've got it.

DR. DUVAL: The motion reads direct staff to add new Action 9 to put a sunset clause on any new natural bottom designated as an SMZ. Sites must be monitored and evaluated through ongoing work outlined in the SAFMC System Management plan. SMZ designation would be removed if no proof of spawning (eggs, larvae, gravid females, et cetera) snapper grouper species is found within three- and/or five-year review; ten-year sunset unless council takes action to continue.

MR. WAUGH: Keep in mind when you say ten years, at the end of ten years it is gone. We have to take action beginning at the absolute latest at the start of nine years; and that would be cutting it close.

MR. CONKLIN: What happens at the three- and the five-year review? If we don't have any information, we just keep trying to get it for another five years?

DR. DUVAL: That would be a decision that the council would have to make. If you have a three-year review and you decide by whatever criteria there are that is insufficient information to demonstrate spawning, then we could develop a regulatory amendment to remove that particular area.

MR. CONKLIN: I'll be brief. One more thing to Ben's point about the red porgy spawning all over the place; would I need to change the wording from snapper grouper species to multiple – like I heard maybe Doug said – or just come up with the details later?

DR. DUVAL: I think we can establish a priority species for which spawning activity is we're focusing this spawning protection, so perhaps not just every red porgy. Mel.

MR. BELL: And I think the concern is that one spawning red porgy does not make a spawning aggregation, so there needs to be some clear sense of what success looks like, and that is what he is concerned about. It can't just be, oh, yes, we found one fish or two fish. Yes, it does take two, doesn't it?

DR. LANEY: Unless they're hermaphroditic.

DR. DUVAL: **Okay, if there is no other discussion; is there any objection to this motion? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.** Now we would have to approve the proposed change to the timing and approve for a second round of public hearings. Doug.

MR. HAYMANS: I would make that motion, Madam Chair.

DR. DUVAL: **Motion by Doug; second by Charlie. Any discussion? The motion reads approve the proposed change to timing and approve Amendment 36 for a second round of public hearings. Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.** That concludes our business on Amendment 36.

We are also going to continue to operate as the Committee of the Whole for Amendment 35, which is removal of species. Mr. Chairman, I would like to at least get through the Snapper Grouper Committee Report. Amendment 35 would be our last item of business as a Committee of the Whole. Then we'll move back into the committee report, picking up with the hogfish motions from Amendment 37, and then we'll just discuss how to move forward with the items we didn't get to at this meeting for September.

CAPTAIN GORDON: Madam Chair, could I just maybe one minute. My name is Captain Mark Gordon. Thank you for the moment. I know you're in a hurry. I just wanted to introduce myself for the record. I'm Chief of Enforcement up at District 7. I represent Admiral Buschman. I think the council met Admiral Korn. There was a change of command on the May 1.

Our hope is to bring Admiral Buschman down. He does have fish experience. While our focus most of the time at District 7 is drugs and migrants and port security, it is a priority for us. We're limited in resources. I thank Morgan Fowler for keeping us at times focused and back to the fish business so that we can pay good attention to it that it deserves.

Also, as you may know, this will probably be Morgan's last council meeting. She will be in the office at least for another year, so you may see her. I want to introduce Tara Pray. Lieutenant Pray will be taking over Morgan's spot. She is a former boarding officer, fisheries experience. I think you will be in good hands. That was all I had and any questions I'll take offline. Obviously, you can get to me through Lieutenant Pray or still Lieutenant Fowler. I appreciate all you do at the council and thanks.

DR. DUVAL: And we appreciate all you do and thank you very much for being here. It is always great to have our enforcement here to hear the sausage being made. We are on Amendment 35. We are slated to approve this for formal secretarial review. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: You walked through this amendment in March. I wasn't planning on walking you through it again. You approved both actions. The only changes that were made to the document from the version you saw in March is we added the chapter with the council conclusions. We captured some of the concerns that you heard about earlier this week from the Habitat AP regarding removal of schoolmaster from the FMU. That recommendation has been added to Chapter 5 of that amendment. What we would need is just a motion to approve it for secretarial review and editorial license to make any minor tweaks that still need to be made to the document.

DR. DUVAL: Just to remind folks, the first action in this amendment is to remove species from the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan; specifically, black snapper, dog snapper, mahogany snapper and schoolmaster. Our preferred alternatives are to remove each one of those from the fishery management plan.

The intent is that the state of Florida would I believe extend regulations for those species into federal waters. I'll remind you that the Gulf Council has already removed this from their Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan. The second action dealt with golden tilefish longline endorsements.

Our preferred alternative was to revise the golden tilefish longline endorsement regulation to indicate that vessels with a valid or renewable golden tilefish longline endorsement at any time during the golden tilefish fishing year are not eligible to fish for golden tilefish using hook-and-line gear under the 500 pound gutted weight golden tilefish hook-and-line trip limit.

The codified text is I believe Attachment 9B. Again, what we would need is a motion from the committee to approve Amendment 35 for formal secretarial review and deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate. Jessica.

MS. McCAWLEY: I would make that motion, Madam Chairman.

DR. DUVAL: Motion by Jessica; second by Mr. Haymans. Discussion? Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: You might remember that Joshua McCoy had testified against this amendment before, specifically to Action 2, because it would affect him in his ability to fish with another vessel permit I think he purchased in the snapper grouper fishery. Anyway, he forgot to mention it at public hearing that he was opposed to this amendment; and I told him that I would tell you when you were considering it for final approval that he was still opposed to this amendment, and I would bring that up. I'm sure you're not surprised that he is opposed to this amendment, but anyway I wanted to put that on the record.

DR. DUVAL: We appreciate that, and Josh has definitely spoken to everyone about that. **The motion reads approve Amendment 35 for secretarial review and deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate. Give staff editorial license to make necessary changes to the document.** Because this is final action and we are operating in full council as a committee of the whole, this is a roll call vote.

MR. MAHOOD: Ms. Beckwith.

MS. BECKWITH: Yes.

MR. MAHOOD: Mr. Bell.

MR. BELL: Yes.

MR. MAHOOD: Mr. Bowen.

MR. BOWEN: Yes.

MR. MAHOOD: Mr. Brewer.

MR. BREWER: Yes.

MR. MAHOOD: Mr. Brown.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. MAHOOD: Mr. Conklin.

MR. CONKLIN: No.

MR. MAHOOD: Dr. McGovern.

DR. McGOVERN: Yes.

MR. MAHOOD: Mr. Haymans.

MR. HAYMANS: Yes.

MR. MAHOOD: Ms. McCawley.

MS. McCAWLEY: Yes

MR. MAHOOD: Mr. Phillips.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes.

MR. MAHOOD: Chairman Hartig.

MR. HARTIG: Yes.

MR. MAHOOD: Chairman Duval.

DR. DUVAL: Yes.

MR. MAHOOD: The motion passes with one negative vote.

MS. McCAWLEY: I just wanted to clarify for the record why I voted yes. I was against our preferred that was chosen in Action 2; but since the state of Florida initiated the other actions through the council process, I voted yes on that amendment.

DR. DUVAL: This is back to the committee report. The next item that I'd like to go through is Amendment 37; so this is hogfish. If everyone can go back to their committee report and we're going to be starting at the bottom of PDF Page 5. Jack.

MR. COX: I think I missed my vote. I didn't get called on the roll call, but I would vote yes.

MR. MAHOOD: The vote passed with one negative vote.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks for that reminder, Jack. Okay, picking up with Amendment 37, hogfish, the committee made the following motions. **The first was to approve the purpose and need as modified; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.**

The next motion was to approve inclusion of overfishing definition language in Amendment 37 with appropriate modifications to apply to the Florida Keys/East Florida hogfish stock and all assessed snapper grouper species for which this language has not yet been adopted. On behalf of the committee I so move. Is there any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

The next motion is to approve the modified language and two-alternative structure under Action 1; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

The next motion was to use Shark Point as the boundary line between – we don't even need to do this motion. This is a motion that we took yesterday during full council by both Gulf and South Atlantic Council, so it is just included in here for completeness.

The next committee motion was to move Action 2 to the considered but rejected appendix; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

The next motion is to approve the range of alternatives under Action 3 for detailed analysis; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved. There is just guidance to staff to modify the title of the action to specify MSY for two stocks and structure Alternative 2 with the subalternatives. There are several directions to staff for the remainder of many actions throughout the document.

The next motion is to approve the range of alternatives under Action 4 for detailed analysis; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

The next motion was to approve the modified wording of Action 5 and Alternative 2 and the range of alternatives under Action 5 for detailed analysis and specify the recreational ACL in numbers of fish; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

The next motion was to approve the range of alternatives under Action 6 for detailed analysis; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved. The motion was to approve the range of alternatives under Action 7 for detailed analysis and specify the recreational ACL in numbers of fish; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

The next motion was to approve the range of alternatives under Action 8 for detailed analysis and specify the recreational ACT in numbers of fish. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

The next motion is to approve the range of alternatives under Action 9 for detailed analysis and add subalternatives under Alternatives 2 and 3 to include size limits up to 20 inches; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

The next motion is to approve the modified range of alternatives under Action 9 for detailed analysis; and on behalf of the behalf of the committee I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

The next motion was to add an alternative similar to Subalternative 3G to Alternative 2; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

The next motion is to analyze trip limit alternatives of 250, 500, 750 and 1,000 pounds for the Georgia/North Carolina stock; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

The next motion is to analyze trip limit alternatives of 50, 100, 150 and 200 pounds for the Florida Keys/East Florida stock. Any discussion? This was a reconsidered motion so I will just read the reconsidered motion.

We reconsidered that motion; so once we reconsidered it, the new motion was to analyze trip limit alternatives of 25, 50, 100, 150 and 200 pounds for the East Florida/Florida Keys stock; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

The next motion was to add a subalternative to Alternative 2 to examine a similar commercial trip limit option to that currently in place in North Carolina. That motion failed. **The next motion was to approve the range of alternatives under Action 11 for detailed analysis; and on behalf of**

the committee I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

The next motion was to include subalternatives under Alternatives 2 and 3 to examine a bag limit of one fish per person per day; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

We had direction to staff to add actions to establish accountability measures for each stock that mirror those established in the Generic Accountability Measures Amendment. What we would require now is a motion to approve Amendment 37 for scoping. Ben.

MR. HARTIG: I move that we approve Amendment 37 for scoping.

DR. DUVAL: Motion by Ben; second by Charlie. Discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved. Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Just to clarify the record; you may or may not remember, but when we were discussing this amendment earlier in the week I brought up some questions as to whether we needed under Action 5 ABC alternatives. This would be for the Georgia/North Carolina group. I reread the National Standard 1 Guidelines and read some comments and responses. I agree with Gregg and Myra that we do not need ABC alternatives for this. I just wanted to bring that up and make it clear for the record.

DR. DUVAL: At this point we're going back into the Committee of the Whole for the remainder of our items, which include Snapper Grouper Amendment 38, which is blueline tilefish; Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendments 23 and 24.

For Snapper Grouper Amendment 38, this is blueline tilefish. This included options and alternatives that you saw at the last meeting in March when we were discussing this issue previously; that the council had considered back in 2010 to potentially extend the fishery management unit northward into the Mid-Atlantic and New England areas of jurisdiction.

It also includes I think a draft action to look at different means of splitting up the ABC. I think my suggestions, just based on the fact that the SSC just had a webinar last week, that they're in the process of requesting updated projections from the science center that consider other recruitment alternatives; that we perhaps hold off on considering this amendment right now.

What we would have done is approve this for scoping. I will just let folks know that the Mid-Atlantic Council has approved items for scoping. They've held a few scoping meetings for development of a fishery management plan to manage deep-water species in their area of jurisdiction. There is one being held in North Carolina Tuesday night. That is my suggestion. Dr. Ponwith, you look like you wanted to say something.

DR. PONWITH: I have been in communication with our staff about those requests for the projections. Certainly, we are going to do everything we can to bring the best information we can

to light on these difficult decisions. We're eager to see the additional guidance that Dr. Barbieri referenced that they're developing on those exploratory projections.

Exploratory can also become one giant fishing trip, so we want those refined. We do remain concerned about with the information we have just how much more we can squeeze out of those projections. We're concerned about it and we're looking forward to interacting with the SSC on their idea but are just being cautious about how enlightening those additional analyses are going to end up being.

DR. DUVAL: Thanks for that, Bonnie. I think we all have some concerns about that, and we're all looking for the best path forward. All right, with the committee's concurrence, is everyone okay with proceeding forward in that fashion? All right, thank you. The next two items that we're simply going to have to cover during our September meeting will be Regulatory Amendments 23 and 24.

If you recall, Regulatory Amendment 23 is one that contains a couple of actions dealing with management of the golden tilefish fishery. There is one action in there to modify the fishing year start date for the hook-and-line component. There is another action that considers alternatives to lengthen the fishing season for the longline component of the commercial golden tilefish fishery.

Regulatory Amendment 24 contains some actions related to revision of the composition of the jacks complex, potentially splitting that out; removal of size limits for deep-water species; modifications to the spawning season closure for shallow-water grouper; modification to the size limit for red grouper; and modification of the bag limit for black sea bass.

I think given recent developments, one of which is we'll be getting an update assessment for the golden tilefish stock – one of the reasons we were looking at modifications to the spawning season closure for shallow-water grouper was the result of the South Florida Issues and wanting to kind of consider any modification to spawning season closures in total.

Obviously, based on the work we did yesterday, that process is not moving forward as quickly as we thought. The other thing we have is mutton snapper. In the options paper for mutton snapper, there are a whole bunch of actions that deal with revisions to the minimum stock size threshold, revisions to maximum sustainable yield, revisions to the ACLs and ACTs. We also received some recommendations from the advisory panel with regard to mutton snapper management.

I think it is my recommendation and I think that Myra has a potential draft motion to direct staff to initiate a regulatory amendment to revise the biological benchmarks, fishing levels and management measures for mutton snapper. We'd take those mutton snapper actions and put them in their own regulatory amendment.

With regard to all the other things that are Regulatory Amendments 23 and 24 and just stepping back and taking a look at the big picture of all the work that we've done as a council, I'm a little bit concerned that we're sort of getting off track again with ad hoc management. The visioning process was about trying to step back, look at the big picture, have a plan that would inform our management going forward.

I think there are several actions between those two documents that – and I’m just as guilty as anybody else where sort of bleeding into kitchen sink type of management. Thinking specifically with regard to lengthening the fishing season for the longline component of the golden tilefish fishery, the advisory panel recommended no action on that; and especially I think given that we’re going to be receiving an updated stock assessment, let’s hold off on that.

Similarly, splitting out the jacks and revision to the jacks complex; I see that as something that is probably more appropriately addressed when we’re taking a look at the complex as a whole. We’ve received a lot of input with regard to management of the fishery. I would rather see some of those actions as well as things like looking at a split season for red porgy; I would rather see some of those grouped in more management-related actions.

Like these are actions the council is going to be taking to do things to reduce discards, such as removal of size limits for those deep-water species. Similarly, we’ve heard lots of input from the public on aligning our seasons to do such things as providing increased access as well as reduce discards.

I see those red porgy things as being a part of vision-related management actions that we would want to take. When I step back and look at the big picture, we have had so many amendments come through lately. The time period between when we submit an amendment for formal review and between when it is noticed for public availability or a proposed rule or a final rule has stretched out. That is because we’ve shoved a lot of things through the pipe, and the pipe is only big.

It is a lot of work for the regional office staff, it is a lot of work for our staff, and I would just recommend that you allow staff to remove those mutton actions to another amendment. We obviously have to deal with those; but it might be my recommendation to just deal with a couple of the actions that are pretty immediate and have been sitting out there for a while, such as the modification to the black sea bass bag limit.

That is an action that has been out there since before the quota was increased; and that’s something that we can do I think sort of short and sweet. We’ve heard a lot about the modifications to the start date for the golden tilefish hook-and-line fishing year. I think that’s something that could be done in short order.

In terms of the jacks complex, I think splitting that up and reorganizing that is something I’d prefer to tackle as a part of visioning, but there certainly is a need to kind of slow down the burn rate of that ACL; so maybe just considering a commercial trip limit for the entire complex and dealing with the splits later. Those would be my three recommended actions that the council look at moving forward with. Those are my recommendations for moving forward, and I’d just like a little bit of input on that before moving forward with, say, a draft motion on mutton snapper.

MR. BELL: I think you just made a lot of sense. I would concur.

MR. COX: I think that would be perfect to do something with a trip limit, to go ahead and take care of that, and we could it out later makes a lot of sense to me.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: And to the extent when you deal with mutton snapper and changing some of the status determination criteria; I've looked at the framework and I think you have to do that in a plan amendment, not a regulatory amendment.

MR. HARTIG: Thank you for that. Sometimes you need to bring us back to reality and that is probably a good place to be. I appreciate that.

DR. DUVAL: I think Myra has a draft motion up here to direct staff to initiate a plan amendment to revise biological benchmarks, fishing levels and management measures for mutton snapper. I think if I could get a motion from the committee; that would be helpful. Mark.

MR. BROWN: I make a motion to direct staff to initiate a plan amendment to revise biological benchmarks, fishing levels and management measures for mutton snapper.

DR. DUVAL: Motion by Mark; second by Charlie. Discussion? Is there any objection to this motion? Seeing none; that motion stands approved. Now we have a timing and task motion. What Myra has up here is staff from the Science Center, the Regional Office, and the Council will examine how suggested approaches to monitor recreational landings of rarely encountered species would work for deep-water species in the South Atlantic; specifically, blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, snowy grouper, and wreckfish. Also provide information on cost of implementing new approaches. Send a letter to the Science Center requesting new projections for blueline tilefish. Prepare Amendment 37 for scoping. Conduct public hearings for Regulatory Amendment 16. Conduct public hearings for Amendment 36.

Finalize Amendment 35 and submit for formal review. Retain actions to revise bag limit for black sea bass, implement a commercial trip limit for the Jacks Complex, and change the fishing year for the hook-and-line component of the golden tilefish fishery in a regulatory amendment. Initiate amendment for mutton snapper.

MR. CONKLIN: Do we put anything in there about the red pogy?

DR. DUVAL: That was one of the things I was recommending that we, yes, sort of put it in the visioning parking lot or the visioning marina. I think it is fairly well developed. We wouldn't be rejecting any of these actions. This is just my personal opinion; I see it as part of a bigger picture of potentially doing similar things for other species. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: And just the expanded shrimp area and for the golden crab expanded fishing area; that is not part of visioning, so we're just going to do this, get into visioning and then fit that in as we can?

DR. DUVAL: I'm confused about why golden crab access area and shrimp access areas are coming into here.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, it is hard for me to see all of that, so I just wanted to make sure. I just kind of want to know where that was going to flow in the total.

DR. DUVAL: This is the Snapper Grouper Timing and Task, so maybe in those other committees.

MR. WAUGH: As far as mutton snapper is concerned, that is a new plan amendment now. We've tagged Amendment 42 to update the Wreckfish ITQ for next year; so I'd suggest we use that number. We would need to add that to go out to scoping along with Amendment 37.

DR. DUVAL: I'm a little bit lost, so you're suggesting Amendment 42 for mutton snapper?

MR. WAUGH: Correct. Previously you approved a motion directing us to begin a new amendment for dealing with mutton snapper; so that would be Number 42. The first step would be to take it to scoping, to scope what we're looking at in mutton snapper; or is your intent to deal with that on a slower pace?

DR. DUVAL: We would approve that for scoping in September; correct?

MR. WAUGH: Okay.

DR. DUVAL: We haven't looked at any of the mutton snapper actions unless you want us to go through and do that right now. All right, so initiate an amendment for mutton snapper has been added to timing and task. **I would entertain a motion to approve the task and timing items as indicated. Ben.**

MR. HARTIG: I make that motion, Madam Chairman.

DR. DUVAL: Motion by Ben; second by Mel. Any other discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved. I know of one item under other business and this concerns snowy grouper. It is something I have received a lot of comments on, Jack has received a lot of comments on, so I'm just going to turn things over to Jack to outline this; and then, Mr. Chairman, we will be done with snapper grouper.

MR. COX: When we went through that Amendment 20, we suggested that we would take a 200 pound trip limit on snowies starting in January. Well, that looked real good. Years ago we had good weather in January and February. After this past year with the weather in North Carolina, it restricted a lot of access to fishermen for snowy groupers, especially in the north end part of our state. The guys to the southern end part of the state had a little more fishing. I was just going to say going into visioning, we're just going to really have to take a serious look at the state management on snowy grouper especially for North Carolina. It just makes a lot of sense for us.

DR. DUVAL: Any other business to come before the Snapper Grouper Committee. If not, the committee is adjourned.

MR. HARTIG: Thank you, Michelle. Some of these committee reports are going to be much shorter because we accomplished a number of the committee actions in the Joint South Florida Committee with the Gulf or the joint Gulf meeting, like mackerel and data collection. Let's take a ten-minute break.

We're going to start and we're back to the committee reports. The first committee report I'm going to have is the Personnel Committee. Jessica.

MS. McCRAWLEY: I'm assuming that we're not going through the whole report. We're just going through the motions to save time; is that what we're doing?

MR. HARTIG: That would be great.

MS. McCRAWLEY: All right, then I will go right to the motion that was made during the Personnel Committee. **The first motion was to select Option 2, Suboption 2A to provide a retirement benefit; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Is there any discussion of this motion? Any objection to this motion? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.**

The committee also made a second motion to provide analysis for a 100 percent, 85 percent and 75 percent option for Medicare B, F and D coverage under Option 3; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Any discussion on that motion? Any objection to that motion? Seeing none; that motion stands approved. Mr. Chairman, that concludes the motions from the Personnel Committee.

MR. HARTIG: Okay, let's go to SSC Selection.

DR. DUVAL: **The SSC Selection Committee met on June 9th; and the motions were move to reappoint Drs. Belcher, Boreman, Smith, Larkin; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.**

The motion was to appoint Dr. Sharov to a 3-year term; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved. The next motion was to appoint Dr. Serchuk to a 3-year term; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

The next motion was to appoint Dr. Irwin to a 1-year term; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved. The next motion was to direct staff to evaluate adding 3 additional SSC seats devoted to social and economic expertise; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

The next motion was to appoint Dr. Jim Waters to the SEP; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved. The next motion was to move that SEP members who are not SSC members serve 5-year terms and that all terms begin in 2015; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion stands approved.

Then we have one timing and task motion to send letters of appointment to new members and letters of thanks to those not appointed; and so I would just entertain a motion for someone to do that. Jessica.

MS. McCAWLEY: So moved.

DR. DUVAL: Motion by Jessica; second by Chester. Any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; the timing and task motion is approved. Mr. Chairman, that concludes my report.

MR. HARTIG: All right, the committee report for SEDAR. The committee received reports on SEDAR projects, the annual research plan and the MRIP effort survey transition effort. There was considerable discussion on the research and monitoring plan and acknowledgement that these plans are becoming more important for guiding grant programs and allocating scarce resources within the agency.

Therefore, the committee recommended changing the presentation and content to be more descriptive regarding specific research projects while preserving the information on overall monitoring needs. **The first motion we had was to approve the red grouper update assessment terms of reference; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Is there any discussion? Is there any objection? Seeing none; that motion is approved.**

The next motion we have was to direct SAFMC staff to begin a process to develop a video-trap index across multiple species; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Is there any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion is approved.

The timing and task motion was to modify the research plan to include a list of specific short-term and long-term needs that will improve guidance for researchers considering projects as well as those developing requests for proposals; and offer a revised version for consideration at the September meeting. The revised version should separate research and monitoring topics and consider upcoming assessment projects and past assessment research recommendations.

DR. DUVAL: Mr. Chairman, I move to approve the timing and task motion as laid out.

MR. HARTIG: Second by Anna. Discussion? Is there any objection to that motion? Seeing none; that motion is approved. Is there any other business to come before the SEDAR Committee? Seeing none; we'll move on to Visioning.

DR. DUVAL: The committee reviewed the final draft version of the strategic goals for science, management, communication and governance and the Vision Blueprint Glossary. We approved the additional language under both science and communication strategic goals that were made as a result of our March meeting.

We also suggested adding terms for bycatch limit and bycatch allowance and spawning special management zones to the glossary. We then reviewed the public input promotional materials and strategy; so the promotional flyer, which will be mailed to all permit holders and sent out via e-mail through the constant contact list and port meeting participants.

We had a few suggestions for changing the images on the flyer to match the different goals or the different focus areas. We also reviewed the web comment form. Then in terms of the planning

discussion for public input and schedule, we reviewed the draft schedule that was put together by staff.

It will include sort of a three-pronged approach of webinars, webinar comment stations and in-person meetings in conjunction with the scheduled public hearings in August. The draft schedule, which you see on that chart, will be finalized by June 19th. There were no motions; and, Mr. Chairman, that concludes my report.

MR. HARTIG: I was going to kind get back on track and do mackerel next. The Mackerel Committee; basically all the items that we covered under mackerel during our committee meeting were taken care of during the joint committee meeting with the Gulf. Unless there is any other business to come before the Mackerel Committee; the Mackerel Committee is concluded. All right, Habitat Protection and Ecosystem-Based Management; Dr. Laney and Mr. Haymans.

DR. LANEY: The committee met on June 8, 2015, and address a whole bunch of reports. I'm not going to read that whole list. It is in front of you on the screen. We had a couple of recommendations for the ongoing Fishery Ecosystem Plan II development. Those specifically were to develop an executive summary for the six-volume set of documents, which we anticipate being produced; and also to enhance the use of online tools and visibility of habitat conservation, ecosystem-based fishery management and FEP II development. In other words, use the council's digital dashboard to highlight the effort and collaboration with regional partners. No motions were made, Mr. Chairman, so that constitutes my report unless there is some other business for the Habitat Protection and Ecosystem-Based Management Committee.

MR. HARTIG: Seeing none; thank you very much, Wilson. That brings us to Doug, I believe, or it goes back to you.

DR. LANEY: I think it is back to me, Mr. Chairman, for Protected Resources Committee Report. That committee also met on June 8th. We adopted the agenda and approved the minutes of the March 2015 meeting. Ms. Jenny Lee updated us on the South Atlantic Protected Resource Related Updates from the National Marine Fisheries Service. We had an update on the Acropora Recovery Plan by Jenny, also.

With regard to the Coastal Migratory Pelagics Fishery Biological Option; that opinion has not been released, so we deferred that until the September meeting. We discussed with Dr. MacLauchlin the ESA/MSA Integration Agreement. We went through that document. The bottom line on that is that the committee made some recommendations to staff.

If we have additional comments, those will be provided by staff for their further consideration. We had updated on the American Eel Status Review and Red Knot Listing. Under other business, the committee recommended that council staff provide comments on the ESA Petition Proposed Revisions by the National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They will be preparing comments for our consideration. The committee did not make any motions.

Unless we have additional business, I think that constitutes my report. I do notice that under timing and task we just recommend the staff revise the Integration Agreement per discussion and work

with the Southeast Regional Office Protected Resources staff to further develop the document and provide comments on the ESA Proposed Petition Revisions. That constitutes my report, Mr. Chairman. Dr. Duval.

DR. DUVAL: Do you just need a motion from the council to approve the timing and task? **Okay, then I move we approve the timing and task as indicated.**

DR. LANEY: Second by Chris. Since I'm not a voting member, Mr. Chairman, I think you'll have to call for a vote on that, right? I didn't make a motion and I didn't second it; but doesn't a full voting member have to call for the vote? Michelle made a motion and Chris seconded it; so if the chairman will just call for the vote, I think we're good, right?

MR. HARTIG: Is there any discussion on this motion? **Is any objection to this motion? Seeing none; that motion is approved.**

DR. LANEY: Mr. Chairman, that constitutes my report.

MR. HARTIG: The next committee report is the Executive Finance Committee Report. We have a little more business to get on this one. The first item of business was status of the Calendar Year 2015 budget and budget expenditures. **We had one motion during that discussion; and the motion was to approve the final Fiscal Year 2015 Council Budget; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Discussion? Is there any objection to that motion? Seeing none; that motion is approved.** The item of business was council follow-up and priorities. We actually have to have that presentation given to us now.

MR. WAUGH: This is using Attachment 3B.

DR. DUVAL: Is that 3B under the Executive Finance Tab?

MR. WAUGH: Yes, it was under Executive Finance. What I've done is update that; and I'm going to just go through what we are recommending. I've discussed this with the chair and vice-chair. You have modified Snapper Grouper Amendment 37. That is hogfish; that will deal with hogfish alone. Snapper Grouper Amendment 42, mutton snapper, we have to start that. Let me back up to hogfish a second. That carries a two-year statutory deadline on it, so we have to be finished with that at the latest within a year and a half so that can be implemented by NMFS. Regulations have to be implemented within two years.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 42; that is dealing with the results of the new stock assessment on mutton snapper. We need to reduce our ACL from approximately 1.1 million down to 725,750; so it is somewhat time-sensitive. Continuing work on Amendments 36 and the System Management Plan; Snapper Grouper Amendment 38, blueline tile, we will determine the timing on that at September.

The Joint Charterboat Reporting Amendment; we made good headway on that. What we're starting to indicate on here for these joint plans is to indicate the amount of time involved in these.

When we have a joint plan, as you all saw yesterday, it involves quite a bit more coordination. That is roughly twice as much work as an amendment we just deal with.

We're incorporating that so when people look at this list, they don't think it is light. Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 16; we've had a couple of new alternatives. That was approved to go out to public hearing. That still has quite a bit of work between now and the end of the year. FEP II is continuing on.

Coastal Migratory Pelagics Amendment 26; the Gulf is lead, but again that is going to involve quite a bit of Kari's time. We are responsible for the economic and social impacts' analysis for items dealing with the South Atlantic. Then the Joint South Florida Amendment with the Gulf; again roughly that is the activities associated with two amendments.

We just finished Amendment 35 so we have to clean that up, review it and then get it to Ben and submit it. We're done with it, but then we hand it off to NMFS and NOAA GC, and so those same individuals that participate on the IPT; even though we're done with it now, they have that to go through their whole process.

Then the one you talked about in snapper grouper, we had a Regulatory Amendment 23 that dealt with golden tile. We're talking about using that number and modifying it do deal with the black sea bass bag limit, the jacks trip limit and the golden tile fishing year start date. Then visioning, if you remember way back to Monday, there is a ton of visioning workshops to be held in July and August. That is going to take up quite a bit of our time.

That is what we would propose that we work on for the rest of this year. We move down into next year; Snapper Grouper Amendment 24 dealing with the other items in there, picking up golden tile and perhaps folding those two into one amendment. CE-BA dealing with bycatch; we'll get a more detailed presentation from the region and center in September.

We will have some questions and then we'll see where we're dealing with that in December; but that work will take place in 2016. When we get to September, you'll start looking at your list for 2016, and then we finalize our priorities for 2016 in December. That is what we would suggest as our list of items to work on for the remainder of this year.

MR. HARTIG: Questions of Gregg on what he has laid out about the priorities in our schedule?

MS. McCAWLEY: Can he e-mail around that updated list to all of us?

MR. WAUGH: Yes.

MR. COX: In the schedule, Gregg, I was just going to ask you about the almaco trip limit. When would we see a trip limit go in place; what would the timing be on something like that?

MR. WAUGH: We are proposing that you would look at options in September and approve for public hearings in December. Those public hearings would take place before our March meeting

so you could finalize at the March meeting; so then you're looking at approximately six months after that.

MR. HARTIG: Any other questions of Gregg about the priorities? The next item of business to come before the Executive Finance Committee –

MR. WAUGH: We need a motion to approve the revised priorities.

DR. DUVAL: **I move that we approve the revised priorities list for 2015 and 2016.**

MR. HARTIG: Motion by Michelle; seconded by Doug. Further discussion? Is there any objection to that motion? Seeing none; that motion is approved. The next item of business was Florida's consideration of management of barracuda in federal waters. **We did have a motion under that item, and the motion was to send the state of Florida a letter indicating the South Atlantic Council has no intention of managing barracuda in federal waters. On behalf of the committee I so move. Is there any discussion? Is there any objection? Seeing none; that motion is approved.**

The next of business was an overview of the Citizen Science Program by John Carmichael. **We had a motion that came out of that; and that was to have appointments to the Citizen Science Workgroup Participant List occur through the Data Collection Committee; and on behalf of the committee I so move. Is there any discussion? Any objection? Seeing none; that motion is approved.**

The South Florida Committee; Jessica made the presentation to the committee on the background. We discussed that in Joint Council Committee Meeting. I guess we're going to move that into the Snapper Grouper Committee discussions. Did you mention that, Michelle; I don't know if you did or not?

DR. DUVAL: I did not, but I guess I would ask Jessica for a little bit of input here. I think just given the fact that people have felt maybe a little disconnected from the process although that wasn't the intent. The intent was to have something as efficient as possible by having a smaller group of folks from both the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils be involved in this.

It probably makes more sense to go ahead and consider it within the Snapper Grouper Committee. I think the Gulf was going to keep it in their Reef Fish Committee; but they, I'm sure, are going to have participation from other members, particularly those from Florida who are interested in this.

MS. McCRAWLEY: Yes; I think that is fine. One point to remember is remember the Goliath Grouper Ad Hoc Committee was kind of dissolved and stuck into this South Florida Committee. We have that Goliath Grouper Stock Assessment I think coming out later this year; so I guess just think about how you want to handle the Goliath Grouper parts. Does that just come through snapper grouper also or what? Gregg is nodding his head.

MR. MAHOOD: Yes; I think in fact the Joint Florida Committee has pretty much done its job and will be disbanded. I think everything that we deal with now will go to the Snapper Grouper Committee to deal with.

MR. WAUGH: Just a question and it has to do with the citizen science. I know during the Executive Finance Committee you talked about this. The request for the council put up \$30,000 next year to host that meet.

DR. DUVAL: \$35,000.

MR. WAUGH: \$35,000; and I think the decision there was to explore other options. I would just ask the question that in dealing with Amendment 36, the spawning SMZs, you've now included a sunset provision with a requirement that work gets done sooner rather than later, which is good.

Since we've put that sort of requirement on, I was just going to ask the question does the council feel maybe a little more compelled to cough up the 35 grand for the workshop in January that would help get this Citizen Science Program going? There are lots of opportunities out there to get additional money. The tricky part is having that workshop to sort of kick things off. I'm sorry to bring this back up, but I just asked that given that we put that sunset in on SMZs.

DR. DUVAL: I would be more than happy to make a motion that the council approve \$35,000 for use in conducting the Citizen Science Workshop or moving that forward. If I can get a second, I will discuss.

MR. HARTIG: Second by Mel.

DR. DUVAL: I think as the workgroup has discussed, there is certainly opportunity to bring in other resources. One of the things that we're doing is I've had some conversations at least in North Carolina with some of the North Carolina Sea Grant staff. We've had discussions about how this kind of thing really fits in nicely with Sea Grant's mission, the whole citizen science and really connecting scientists with fishermen.

In North Carolina we've already employed that cooperative relationship to help set up these listening sessions for the visioning workshops, the webinars. I think if we can have some outreach towards the different Sea Grants in the different states, I think that also provides them the opportunity to see how this aligns really nicely with their mission and incorporate it into their priorities and potentially use some of the seed funding that the different Sea Grants get to support those kinds of efforts.

It is good for them; it is good for us; it gives them exposure. It helps us get some of the citizen science work that we want to get done done. I think there may be an opportunity to reach out to those folks in each of the four states to see if they might have resources whereby they might be willing to provide travel for participants from their states to come to this workshop. I just throw that out there.

MR. HARTIG: All right, we've got a motion and a second. Is there more discussion?

DR. DUVAL: The motion reads the council approved \$35,000 for the Citizen Science Workshop in January 2016.

MR. HARTIG: Is there more discussion? Is there any objection? Seeing none; that motion is approved. Well, that ends the Executive Finance Committee Report. Is there any other business to come before the Executive Finance Committee? Seeing none; we will move on.

Next is the Golden Crab Committee Report. The Golden Crab Committee met June 8. **The committee made the following motion; and the motion was to develop a coral amendment that would look at alternatives for expanding the northern allowable golden crab fishing zone. On behalf of the committee I so move. Discussion? Is there any objection? Seeing none; that motion is approved.** Is there any other business to come before the Golden Crab Committee? Seeing none; we will move on Mel Bell, data collection.

MR. BELL: The Data Committee met on June 9th. Recall that we had a number of presentations on ongoing work and projects, but we spent the majority of our time dealing with the Joint Charterboat Amendment. There were a number of motions associated with that, but all of the motions were dealt with yesterday during the joint session and all eight motions were approved yesterday by full council. That concludes my report.

MR. HARTIG: That brings us to the Shrimp Committee Report; Charlie Phillips.

MR. PHILLIPS: Mr. Chairman, the Shrimp Committee met on June 8th. The agenda was adopted and the minutes for the September 2012 meetings were approved. Mike Merrifield, Chair of the Deepwater Shrimp AP gave an update on the April 15th meeting of the Shrimp and Deepwater Shrimp Advisory Panels.

Mike went over the discussion of the AP that had a recent biological opinion for the Southeastern Shrimp Fishery and the results of the SEDAR Procedural Workshop for Shrimp and the Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation TED Workshop. The motion to recommend not supporting the Oculina Marine Sanctuary Proposal – there was a motion not to recommend that.

The committee discussed the changes and shifts in the fishery due to the environmental and economic factors. Based on the discussions, a motion was made to develop an amendment to change the eastern boundary of the northern extension and develop allowable fishing areas for the rock shrimp fishery. **On behalf of the committee, I move to develop an amendment to the Coral FMP to change the eastern boundary of the northern extension and to develop allowable fishing areas for the rock shrimp fishery. On behalf of the committee I so move.** Chip.

MR. COLLIER: With the allowable fishing areas for the rock shrimp fishery, that is going to make it a joint amendment with the shrimp plan. I just wanted to make you guys aware of that.

MR. PHILLIPS: Is there any other discussion? Michelle.

DR. DUVAL: At least it is a joint amendment with ourselves.

MR. PHILLIPS: Any opposition to the motion? Seeing none; the motion passes. Under timing and task, I suppose we need to draft a motion that would be worded something like “develop an amendment to the Coral FMP to change the eastern boundary of the northern extension and develop allowable fishing areas for rock shrimp. I need somebody to make that motion, please.

MS. McCAWLEY: So moved.

MR. PHILLIPS: Second by Michelle. Is there any discussion on that? Is there any opposition? Seeing none; the motion passes. I suppose that concludes my report, Mr. Chair.

MR. HARTIG: We’re back to Mel with the Law Enforcement Committee Report.

MR. BELL: The Law Enforcement Committee met on June 9th. We had one point of business which was selection of the 2014 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. We accomplished that by a vote of all voting members of the council. The individual was selected and will be notified, and the presentation will be made at the September 2015 meeting. There were no motions associated with the meeting. The only other business was a presentation from Colonel Frampton, Chair of the Law Enforcement AP. It was a briefing on the AP meeting and some discussion. That was it, so that concludes my report, Mr. Chairman.

MR. HARTIG: That brings to the SERO Report; Dr. McGovern.

DR. McGOVERN: We are getting commercial landings every Friday now from the science center. We’re getting them up on our website the following week, like Monday or Tuesday the following week. Jack Cox, after I gave the landings’ report this week, he asked that I get a breakdown of vermilion snapper and snowy grouper by state.

I asked Dr. Ponwith’s staff, Heather Balchowsky, and she gave me a breakdown. For vermilion snapper, thus far in 2015 – it closed in April – 50 percent of the landings were from Georgia/Florida. Georgia is combined with Florida because Georgia landings are confidential. 32 percent were from South Carolina and 18 percent of landings were from North Carolina.

Usually what happens, you have the two seasons for vermilion snapper, so in the second season that starts in July more landings are from North Carolina. I think North Carolina dominates the landings in the second season. For snowy grouper, thus far 60 percent of the landings are from Georgia/Florida; 19 percent from South Carolina; and 21 percent from North Carolina.

Other things going on; the Southeast Regional Office has a draft strategic plan for 2016 through 2020. We’re currently requesting comments on that strategic plan. It is on our website at SERO.NMF.NOAA.gov. We’re requesting comments through July 11th. The plan identifies strategies that are intended to help us accomplish our core mandates, which are productivity and sustainability of fisheries and fishing communities, as well as the recovery and conservation of protected resources.

It is considered to be a living document that would be updated on an annual basis. If you have comments, you can comment on the web or you can submit comments to Roy or to Heather Blough. Another thing I want to bring to your attention is that Bill Kelly gave me an application for an EFP this week. The applicants are the Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation and the Florida Keys Commercial Fishermen's Association.

This EFP is going to be brought to your attention for a recommendation in September and to the Gulf Council in August. We're going to get more information on this application. The application, which hasn't been funded, is to develop a trap-testing initiative for lionfish in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic. We will have the application for you to review in September. That's it.

MR. HARTIG: Monica, from your office do you have anything?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: We've got some stuff percolating, but it is not baked yet. At the next meeting I will be able to give you a better report.

MR. HARTIG: Dr. Ponwith.

DR. PONWITH: I've got three reports that are in the briefing book and then a fourth one that was just sent to you as an overarching report. I think in the interest of time what I would do is the first report is about the headboat. That is in the briefing book and you can look at that. The punchline on that is that we have moved from annual reports to generating those reports on a per-wave basis in the same periodicity as the MRIP waves.

Again, we recognize we get those data from the industry on weekly basis. We have to accumulate enough length/weight data from the dockside intercepts to be able to convert those into pounds because our ACLs are operating under pounds right now. We generated our first wave estimate and that is out right now. We will continue to do that.

I did want to say that if you want to contemplate moving on the recreational side from pounds to numbers, that is technically feasible. It is math; it is basically math. The challenge is we spent a lot of time discussing the relative merits of that in the Gulf Council. In the process of those discussions, the one thing that was brought to light is that it is a lot more complicated than it seems, because, of course, you have to have your ACLs in essentially the same units to be able to ensure that you are mapping to your allocation formula for allocating the commercial and the recreational.

Again, you can think about that. If we were reporting in numbers, our ability to generate that information more quickly would be there, but for right now we're working on a per-wave basis. The second report that's in your briefing book is on the SERFS or the SEFIS. As you know, we've got complementary programs that are linked right now.

That is the SEFIS that began in 2010, the MARMAP work and the SEAMAP work; and collectively they're calling that SERFS. We are looking at approximately 120 to 130 days at sea collectively in 2015, which is good. Again, we'll be sampling from Cape Hatteras down to Port St. Lucie, Florida.

If we go to the next slide, you can see the breakdown of the days at sea and what kind of camera-trap deployments we're looking at for 2015. This is the foundation of that fishery-independent index that we have already talked about. Now, there has been some discussion about wanting to see the SEFIS data at these council meetings. What I will say is that the raw data are public information; anybody can see them/

I am gravely concerned about showing those raw data and having people infer changes in population densities by looking at the raw data. The ultimate tool for being able to see trends is looking at the index, which is there is a lot of post-data collection mathematics that go into developing those indices, weighting the samples according to the strata and things like that.

We've talked in the past about the notion of rumble strips, of doing some sort of annual specification or looking at indices on an annual basis. That is something that I'm willing to go into discussion with you about. I will, however, say that the very people that do those are the same people that are generating indices for the stock assessments.

Right now the convention is you accumulate years' worth of data; and when the stock comes up for an assessment, you create those indices all at once. Shifting from that practice to generating the index on an annual basis basically multiplies the amount of effort. The volume of the data, the number of years' worth of data isn't what is driving it. It is the process of running those models is what takes the time.

Instead of running five years' worth of data once, you'd be running this on an annual basis. Doing it on an annual basis has its merits because you could keep an eye on it and see if there are some leading indicators that say this stock may be rebuilding faster than we thought or this stock is tanking and maybe we need to take some additional measures.

But, it does cost time so there are some pros and cons. I'm willing to spend some time talking with you about that if that is of interest, but at this stage I would caution against using raw data as that indicator because there are all things that can go terribly wrong with that. That concludes that presentation.

The last one is the headboat survey data evaluation. I know there was some interest in this. For the data evaluation, we are tracking on time. We ran into some hiccups with the database and are revising some of those analyses. The report will be completed.

We will send it outside of the center for a careful peer review, and then the intent is that report will be rolled into a report which becomes an input for the red snapper stock assessment that begins in August. We are cutting it close but on track for that. I see we've got a question.

MR. HAYMANS: My question dealt with the previous presentation, so are you finished with this one?

DR. PONWITH: What I just said was basically a summary of all of those slides. These slides you've seen before. It goes through the rationale, the approach. Those are all slides that you saw

at the last meeting. The verbal narrative that I gave on this is sort of the punchline. We're writing the report right now. That will go through IQA and a peer-review process. Then that will become the foundation of a report that will be submitted for the data workshop for the red snapper assessment.

MR. BROWN: Bonnie, did you say that using the recreational numbers and landings by numbers would be more efficient and more timely than trying to convert it from pounds?

DR. PONWITH: What I'm saying is that right now we are delivering the headboat data to you instead of on an annual basis, as has been the convention, starting this year we will be delivering those data to you on a two-month wave at the same periodicity as the MRIP data that is being supplied for the charter and for the private boats.

The reason that it is that two-month wave is we need to do the dockside sampling to be able to collect enough length data to be able to convert those numbers into pounds, because pounds are the units that the ACLs are being monitored in the general case. That is sort of the relevant metric. What I wanted to say is that I've heard people ask the question should we be doing this in numbers; and the answer is that can be done, but it is harder work than what would seem intuitively obvious.

It is because your commercial ACLs are monitored in pounds. One fish will always be one fish. It is one when it is an egg; it is one when it is at its oldest and largest size. One is one. That same fish will go from a milligram to 20 kilos over the course of its lifetime, and its weight will change on a daily basis.

If you set your allocation in pounds for one group and numbers for another, that number of fish that seemed like it was perfect match for the allocation over the course of the fishing season can suddenly not be. You have some decisions to make about how you would handle that. It is handleable. It is just complicated. What I'm saying is that it is something that the council can think about, and I'm willing to go into discussion with it; just be aware that there are those allocation implications.

MR. BROWN: I'd like to request that we look at that and maybe just have some discussion on it in September.

DR. DUVAL: Bonnie, if you recall, I brought up exactly this point at the March meeting with regard to snowy grouper weights and conversions from weight to numbers of fish, because in SEDAR 4 the average weight was I think 9-point-some pounds per fish. That was the weight that was used to calculate the 523 fish allocation for the recreational sector at that point.

Then the average weight from SEDAR 36 says – I mean, it increases as the stock rebuilds, but it starts out at like 6.7 pounds per fish, so we had had some discussion about why the change in average weight. Obviously, those weights are dominated by samples from the commercial fishery because we simply don't get that many samples from the recreational fishery.

I had asked specifically about concerns that I was hearing regarding depending on that average weight per fish that you're using to convert from pounds to numbers of fish, if you have a numbers

of fish ACL and your average weight per fish is really 10 pounds instead of 5 pounds, then obviously you end up with a big disconnect when you come to the stock assessment.

I think I had sent you a follow-up e-mail asking about this in terms of tracking of the ACL and when we get the numbers from a stock assessment or from a set of projections, we get them in both pounds and numbers of fish; but it is really which is more appropriate and which is going to allow us to track things effectively but also without doing damage to the stock and without running into allocation battles, as it were, based on things like that. I think we sort of started the discussion at the last council meeting and certainly can continue it, but they're all good points. I think my question was really more around using an average weight per fish for the recreational sector for snowy grouper specifically, just given that the average weights on the commercial side tend to be less, and the MRIP average weights were pretty big in some cases. I'll stop.

DR. PONWITH: And to that point, the TIP sampling for the commercial, the dockside intercept for MRIP and for headboat, you're exactly right, the higher the sample size the tighter the precision on those average weights. You know weight can range quite broadly across catch. I think for the snowy or some of the things that you were bumping into is – you know, to really be able to tackle the question, we would have to sit down and ferret out exactly what numbers people were looking at to make sure we had an apples-to-apples comparison.

In some cases we're using the age-structured-modeled weight for a species within a stock assessment and in other cases where we're looking at recreational catch, we're actually – and we're talking about average weight, we're actually looking at dockside-intercept-weighed fish and the average of those. MRIP has a policy – it is a data policy they use for how they deal with how many weights do you have to have before you can call that the average weight.

Their data policy is slightly more generous than ours is. We're pretty demanding in terms of how many weights to make sure that we are getting a number that is representative. Those policies give you rules for borrowing weights from cells that are outside of a strata to make sure that strata is populated enough that you don't get these flaky, well, this fish weighed a hundred pounds; therefore, all fish weigh a hundred pounds.

Again, we can have that discussion and maybe what would be good is to sidebar or exchange some e-mails and then set up a tasking memo to discuss what level of detail you want to explore this, and we'll have to explore it both from a science standpoint and then also from a management standpoint so we understand the implications to allocations and other things and go into this with eyes-wide-open in terms of the strengths of doing it this way and the risks of doing it this way; and we can land on a decision that seems it is going to work.

MR. HAYMANS: First of all, regarding status and trends and an annual-wise trend, the state of Florida does it on an annual basis, multiple species status and trend reports. I would think it would be very beneficial – we had a discussion earlier in the week regarding SAFIS reports and having some automation of that process.

Even if they're not annual, biannual perhaps, but you've got enough biologists scattered across the region. If you split the species up, I would think that would be great information for us to get is

what levels of information, what levels of data are coming in, what does that status look like, those sorts of things. I would appreciate if you'd try to find a way to do that. I have a second question as well.

DR. PONWITH: My response to that is I absolutely agree; seeing those indices on an annual basis would be very valuable. They come at a cost. It is a very technical process to do it. One thing that's going to help is our agreement that we're going to create a follow-on sort of SEDAR, SEFIS or SERFS Index Workshop to reach some agreement on how those indices are developed. Once that's standardized and we have that protocol documented, it certainly makes it more straightforward to do. I agree; that's a goal to aspire to. We can take a look at what it would take to do that on an annual or more frequent periodicity than simply when the assessment is going to be rerun and get back to you with what the costs of that in terms of horsepower for other things will be.

MR. HAYMANS: If I may, my second question deals with cost. My apologies in advance for putting you and Jack both on the spot; but your presentation dealt with MARMAP. I believe a couple of weeks ago Director Boyles from South Carolina send you, Roy, Dr. Merrick, and I'm not sure whether the Commerce Secretary or not, but sent a letter asking about a reduction in MARMAP funds.

Because that letter that went to multiple chiefs, which chief takes responsibility for the letter? When might we expect a response? When might Robert – and I'm asking this on my behalf, realizing it came from him; but I remember the last time we asked a response from multiple parties, it took quite a while. When might we get a response to that and do we have an indication as to what it might say?

DR. PONWITH: The preliminary answer came back from Paul Doremus. He is the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Operations, so he is the guy that – he is not the chief financial, but the budget shop falls under his responsibility. His preliminary answer was that, yes, we have a solution for this for 2015.

That is taken care of; it is going to be rounded up to its traditional levels for 2015. Of course, the response back from that was, well, what are you going to do in the future? Paul's response back was that he is looking into these policies and revisiting those policies and will be back. I will make a note to myself to encourage that to happen sooner than later; but my take on his response is that will be in his court.

MR. HARTIG: Any other questions of Bonnie? I would just like to follow up that we've had some discussion about the annual reports and possibly a multi-agency way to get those to the council. Jack had mentioned that he had worked on kind of a SAFE report thing. You are actually reviewing the way you think it can happen and maybe somehow council staff can get involved in that, and maybe everybody can put their heads together on a way that we can split the work load and make this happen so the council can get what they need.

To follow up on that, I'm really heartened to hear you talk about the rumble-strip approach and your willingness to look at that. I don't see that like an annual type situation, but some of the rest

of the council may. In specific rebuilding plans like king mackerel, where the council has the flexibility to move within those different alternatives, those different numbers increase or decrease, I think that is probably where we really want to see that.

It may be overly broader than that as well, but that is where I see value in it. The AP has asked us in two years to try and take a look at that for king mackerel to make sure that their high recruitment recommendations are panning out and is the best way to go. Certainly, I understand your raw data concerns.

The council, we were kind of looking at raw data based on – it was data from the TIP Interview Program, but it was raw data. Certainly, something that is vetted through the science center would be much better to look at from my perspective. Somehow if we do this in the future and talking to you, I think what we need to do is get together with our council staff, lay out kind of a plan on how we envision this happening and then working with you come to something that we can bring back to the council,

DR. PONWITH: I appreciate those remarks. The SAFE reports, we recognize this is a requirement. We are doing our homework on it, working with SERO and the progress they've made thus far; and again we see absolutely the benefit of having one-stop shopping for statistics about our fisheries, what was the latest result from the stock assessment, what are the regulations, having this all fingertip ready.

Again, our approach on this is going to be all but two elements that are required in a SAFE report as prescribed by the national standards are readily available. The other two we can spend some longer time working on how do we get these and make them periodically available. The rest of it is ready.

Our analysis is, is that information systematically available in the same spot so we can create sort of electronic pointers to that and then create sort of a pigeonhole picture of all of those hot links to those. Once we understand the availability, the timeliness of the data and how to link it into a one-stop shop, then what we can do is sit down with SERO and with the council and figure out who is the best person with the highest level of efficiency can be responsible for populating this on an annual or some frequency basis.

I think it will be simple and the product is going to be something that is going to be useful for all of us. Because as Gregg has already said, it is saves you having to go hunt for this for every single person who needs it. There is one person finds it, hits the hot link to it, and then no one else ever has to look for it; it is all there in one spot. That's the goal.

I just had one more update; and this is just an overview update and touches on some of the issue that you have raised in your Science and Monitoring Priority Plan. This a good one; and a lot of this in here is quite good news. On the topic of stock assessments, of course, we have already discussed the fact that we've got the resources acquired to bring on board that contract stock assessment scientist at the Beaufort Lab.

She will be there for six months starting in September. The agreed-upon update assessment we're going to do is golden tile as opposed to greater amberjack. The assessment will commence in September and we anticipate giving that product to the SSC in April of 2016. The news on blueline tilefish is that I've acquired resources to be able to conduct an exploratory fishery-independent data collection beginning this year.

We've devised the program plan for that heavily relying on input from the fishing industry through the recent workshop that we had plus state scientists. Our plan is that this is going to be using short bottom longline and long bottom longline gear on vessels that are accustomed to that gear. These will be commercial vessels that are contracted to carry this work out.

They will carry biologists with them. We have sampling regime across the heart of the geographic extent of the species into the northern zones. We will be focusing on the distribution and the abundance of these animals across that distribution. Secondly, we're partnering with the Mid-Atlantic Council to do a genetic study. I know Marcel is already working on one, and he is going to have results, I'm hearing, in December.

This one is going to actually use the tissues collected from the fish that we catch across that geographic range that are going to be georeferenced in exactly where they were caught as opposed to kind of, well, we fished from here to here on this trip and the fish came from somewhere between those two points.

We will actually have georeferenced to be able to kind of refine the spatial aspects of that work. That work will commence the second that our bottom longline survey begins; and that is going to hopefully happen starting this summer so that we span the peak of the spawning season so we also get some really good biological information, including the reproductive status of these animals.

The other thing that we talked about was management strategy evaluation, and this figured prominently in the peer review of our stock assessment programs within the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. It was a really big deal nationally across all of them. If you remember the national response that basically was the longitudinal look across all of those stock assessments; it was clear that additional investments in MSE's needed to be done.

This is to strengthen our decision-making capabilities using analytical tools, using simulation tools to help scope out these decisions and make good decisions. Again, one of the national actions was to make these investments. We are in the process of recruiting for a brand new position to spearhead and coordinate management strategy evaluations throughout our region. This is not just for South Atlantic but throughout our full jurisdiction.

I've also acquired resources to extend the sabbatical of our university professor, who is going to Duke University, for a six-month sabbatical. I have acquired money to extend that sabbatical from six months to a full year. This professor is going to be housed at the Beaufort Lab, and he is going to be working on designing an approach for conducting simulation evaluations on fisheries' management systems.

By management I mean the whole enchilada and not just the council's job; and that is our observing systems, our data processing and sample processing, the assessment modeling approaches and including some of the physical parameters. The model species that we've selected because of the robust data we have on it is red porgy.

We will be even looking at things – if we've got enough time we'll even be looking at things of how the physical environment influences the fishing fleets' behavior when they're targeting these species and how things like ocean currents and temperature influence recruitment processes for these species.

This is a model species so essentially the notion is to create a generic tool that has utility across many species. This is an exciting step because it is a contribution to MSEs; it is a contribution to ecosystem approaches, to stock assessments and to management in our region and certainly gives us tools to be able to more effectively look at things like climate change and climate cycles and its impacts on recruitment and migration of these animals. This is a big deal and we're looking forward to this. That also commences in September of this year; so one year starting in September.

The Data Methods Workshop; if you will recall, another one of the outcomes from the stock assessment peer review was to streamline the decision-making process by taking decisions that are routine, that become a step in every single stock assessment. Instead of making them one off for each stock assessment, make them in a framework setting, make them once and then document the daylight out of them.

From that point forward, all you have to do is cite that discussion and decision in the stock assessment report. The only time you would do more than that is if you chose to depart from that decision for some justifiable reason. That Best Practices Workshop is going to be happening in two weeks.

I want to thank the SEDAR staff for the work that they've put into this and the Service and the Steering Committee for developing that plan, as well as folks from my own staff. This is going to be both Gulf and South Atlantic wide; to be able to look at spanning these jurisdictions. I think it is going to go a long way to streamlining the stock assessment process and making those reports more approachable by making them skinnier.

A Protected Resources Peer Review is coming up in August. As you recall, I said five years; it has gotten bigger than five years now, nationally synchronized peer reviews across the country. Data collection was the first one in '13; stock assessments was last year; this year is protected species. That is happening the week of the 24th of August. I will be sending a Save the Date out anytime now. That is also going to be held in Miami.

Then just for grins, looking into the future, in 2016 we're looking at ecosystems and climate science; the year after, economics and social science; and the year after that, the strategic plan review. Basically we take the results of all these reviews and use them to revise our Science Strategic Plan for the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. I believe that is the last slide. Any questions?

MR. CONKLIN: Thanks for the presentation; a lot of interesting stuff going on. I'm just curious about the bottom longline survey in the golden tilefish stock assessment update coming through. Will they need that information or will that program be running in time for any of the information to go into the stock assessment?

DR. PONWITH: The shorter answer is nope. Chances are the habitats that we're going to be fishing will span out of blueline and into golden, and it is possible we will have some golden in those catches, but it simply will not happen early enough to include in the update.

DR. DUVAL: Bonnie, that's great news. I really appreciate all the efforts that the Beaufort Lab staff went through. Todd Kellison, Nate Bacheler, and obviously John and Marcel and myself were heavily involved in that workshop, but I give kudos to Todd and Nate for kind of pushing that idea forward. It was a great workshop; it really was.

We didn't talk about it at the last council meeting because it hadn't happened yet. It was the first week of April. We had great participation by fishermen. We had great participation by Beaufort Lab staff. The way it was set up, the fishermen were very supportive of this and had lots of recommendations for this is how you design a survey or this how you work with industry to help take advantage of their knowledge and help to design a survey in the future.

I can't say enough good things about it. It was great because everybody was in small breakout groups and they could exchange information freely. It was really fantastic and hats to your staff and everybody else who was involved in that and also for following up and pursuing. This is like light speed for getting things done for us; so I very much appreciate that.

MR. COX: Bonnie, I was just going to ask you when they do that longline tile survey and when they have the fish, after you guys have collected the data, have you ever thought about letting those guys sell their commercial catches to help pay for the research?

DR. PONWITH: In this instance, because we're doing this literally in a nanosecond, as Michelle has already said, we're treating this as a scientific research cruise and those fish will not be able to be sold. Now, going into the future, I'm interested in your views. This is one-time money for right now, and it is going to get us some data that we're desperate to have to answer basic foundational questions about this population.

What we need to be doing now is that next step of what is the long-term sustainable approach to having data going into the future and what is the best business model. The best business model may be instead of a one-off study, creating some sort of a long-term cooperative research program; and that cooperative research program includes as part of its business model the fishermen selling that catch. This year the answer is no because we needed permits, we needed them fast, and there wasn't time to dally. We needed to get the type of research and the type of permit that could be done the quickest.

DR. DUVAL: And to that point, Jack, that was one of the things we discussed at the workshop was different options for a long-term approach to this, a cooperative means using both scientific vessels and industry vessels, so we explored all options, including offsetting the cost of a vessel

day for cooperative research by allowing sale of those fish, particularly when those fish are in season. We had some discussion about what do you do when you have a fish like blueline tilefish where it is closed in our area and you're running into significant ACL issues. It is not that it wasn't discussed and I think that's something everybody would like to see.

MR. HARTIG: I wanted to respond to that blueline tilefish. The one thing I would hope you would do would be to get them throughout the entire range. I know that if you don't; that the people in the Keys are going to be hollering at me about why didn't we sample blueline tile, because they do catch a fairly large number of bluelines in the Keys.

Hopefully, we can get those samples throughout the range of the species. All right, any other questions of Bonnie? I would just like to thank her again like Michelle did. My gosh, that's a lot of stuff coming at us that we've asked for quite some time, so thank you very much. All right, the next item of business is agency and liaison reports. Erika, do you have anything from the state of Florida? Michelle.

DR. DUVAL: Mr. Chairman, just really quickly, as you know, we've had some interesting discussions regarding pursuing a for-hire logbook in North Carolina. Our commission will be voting on whether or not to move forward with rules implementing the existing statute at its August meeting. Currently things are in flux simply because there are multiple bills moving in multiple stages through the legislature regarding changing the statute that would require submission of a for-hire logbooks. Things are in a little bit of a state of flux right now.

I think one of the disappointing things was that we did have a member of Congress from the southern part of the state introduce something or tried to introduce something in the NOAA Appropriations Act that would have prohibited North Carolina from using any money from the National Marine Fisheries Service to implement any kind of logbook in North Carolina.

It wasn't limited to a for-hire logbook, which is very concerning to us. The concerns that were noted were inaccurate in terms of the timeframe; sort of an accusation that the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council had been looking around for a state to do a pilot project and North Carolina raised its hand, which is exactly the opposite.

The council did not embark upon moving forward with looking at an electronic for-hire logbook until really last year. We submitted information regarding the timeline of those events, so the concern is just that language heavily impacts any federal money we might receive for any fisheries statistic data collection in North Carolina. We were concerned about that.

The only other thing I'll say is there was some mention of a Joint Enforcement Agreement earlier this week during the Law Enforcement Committee. Once again, we are in flux with getting a Joint Enforcement Agreement. There is again some activity in the legislature that would prohibit North Carolina from doing so.

In the previous legislative session a bill passed to allow North Carolina to enter into such an agreement, and we were moving forward with pursuing that, particularly because the legislature had docked our budget \$250,000 from marine patrol in anticipation of us getting an agreement like

that, and then we were prohibited from entering into one. We're kind of looking to be made whole, and I have no idea where things are going to end up. That concludes my report.

MR. HARTIG: Any questions for Michelle? Wilson.

DR. LANEY: Mr. Collins very graciously distributed my report in writing to everyone, so I'll just briefly mention the five items on that. The first one is that our Dan Ashe opened up 21 additional National Wildlife Refuges to increased hunting and fishing opportunities. A couple of those are in Florida; so if you're interested in big game hunting, check them out.

The planning is well underway for the 2016 Cooperative Winter Tagging Cruise. It is looking like we may have a couple of new partners. We've been approached by the United States Navy and BOEM, both of whom are interested in seeing us doing some more work with the Atlantic sturgeon. We're working on a permit to NMFS that would allow us to do that; so we're hoping to have that all squared away by next January.

We're continuing to work with the North Carolina Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit of the USGS at NC State to do some interesting work on American eels, looking at the age structure of the eels that are using the eelways there versus the ones that are resident in the river below the eelway; so that is going to be kind of interesting, I think.

We had a very interesting law enforcement case, which is outlined for you there. There is a memo from the Department of Justice, if you want all the details. Finally, this is National Hunting and Fishing Week, so we should all take advantage of that and get out and go fishing after this meeting is over. We have been talking about fishing all week, so let's go do it.

MR. BELL: Nothing interesting from the state legislative process this year affects us. There was some discussion of things regarding sharks, but, of course, we don't manage sharks in this group, but we'll see how that goes next year. Speaking of legislation, remember we discussed this earlier with the issue of cobia in our inshore waters, and we'll probably be moving forward in this legislative session next year to adopt some stricter regulatory measures for our inshore DPS of cobia.

Remember that we were able to distinguish that we had this unique distinct population segment because of the genetics work that our folks have been able to do at the lab there. We'll see how that goes, but we have some concerns. We briefed the Mackerel AP earlier this year on that, but we'll stay in close touch with the council on that as that progresses.

I think we'll be able to adopt some stricter regulations related to cobia in state waters only and particularly focused on trying to take pressure off of this DPS that we're concerned about. We will keep you posted as that goes. Speaking of genetics – and Bonnie already mentioned this – Dr. Tanya Darden from our staff is going to be working on the blueline tilefish genetics' work.

We were hoping to get that done Bonnie said this summer and possibly maybe with some results as early as December but certainly by next spring. She is also working in conjunction with folks from VIMS; I think Dr. McDowell at VIMS, who may be working on the Mid-Atlantic stuff as

well. Hopefully, a lot of this will come together and we'll have a better picture of what is going on with blueline tile related to their population structure.

Also, of course, due to the schedule here, Marcel wasn't able to talk to us, but he did appreciate the opportunity to be here and asked me to pass along a couple of things. One is related to something that already was mentioned that MARMAP was looking at, I think, a 17 percent cut this year, which I believe the Southeast Regional Office was able to help us out.

That may have been part of the solution this year and how they fixed this year; and then what happens after this year, of course, will be of interest. MARMAP is an essential component in terms of generating data that we need. For example, I know doing some work with I believe Dr. Ballenger from our staff has developed a chevron trap index that will feed into the SEDAR 41 for red snapper and gray triggerfish.

I don't need to go into all the things that MARMAP does; everybody is aware of that. If we can maintain at least stable funding for them, that is essential for us. Also related to funding, SEAMAP apparently took close to a 10 percent cut this year. They have readjusted some work within that, and some of the things that got eliminated were like our Gag Ingress Study.

We're trying to reduce impact on other work that they are pursuing like the trawl survey, reef fish survey, red drum survey. Also just to point out, we all tend to think of SEAMAP a lot as a generator of data for our work that they are. They actually do feed data into our plans as well. SEAMAP and MARMAP kind of go hand-in-glove a little bit.

What was good about being able to retain the funding this year, thanks to efforts from Dr. Crabtree and Dr. McGovern, was that we were able to get the short bottom longline, keep that up and running. I just happened to see a report yesterday where – I don't know where they were exactly, but they were doing quite well, apparently probably with snowies, I would guess. They were catching some ones on the short bottom longline, so that's great. Hopefully, we'd be able to resume the long bottom longline work at some point related to feeding into golden tile data and then working in conjunction with Dr. Kellison and the science center and hopefully the industry and that whole generation of data that is essential for the golden tile.

Of course, we appreciate being able to continue to work with the science center and staff. That is a constant thing. When I look at MARMAP, I see state people with me; but really because of the funding structure and the close ties, everybody is all working on one team. We really appreciate the opportunity to keep doing that.

The interesting thing I learned yesterday is the Pisces will be underway I believe this week and next week and hopefully will be able to go by the Charleston Deep Artificial Reef again. Remember last year they were – I think the Nancy Foster went out last year and took the Pisces mission, but Pisces should be out there and be able to get an ROV down on that reef again this year, so we'll have the baseline video from the beginning and then hopefully we'll pick up some video now of what things look like down there on the Deep Reef at Year One. That will be really interesting.

The commercial shrimp trawl season opened on the 27th of May, which is a big deal for us. That's our number one commercial fishery. We're hoping for a good year. We had good projections on white roe shrimp and that can turn into a good fall as long as we don't have drought, hurricanes or black gill or all the above. We're hoping for a good fall this year.

One other thing; we were able to provide some pretty good input to the BOEM permit application process for seismic survey work off of South Carolina. Working with our Office of Coastal Resource Management, we were able to discuss some of the things in a little more detail that had come up at the Habitat AP meeting and at our meeting when the BOEM folks presented.

Our concern was we wanted to just make sure they understood that our reef fish communities out there are extremely important to us; as habitats are important; and some of the assumption that seemed to be taking place about, well, the fish will just move and everything will be fine. We provided them with some data and the MARMAP staff was essential in that.

I do want recognize Roger from the council staff as he was critical in terms of providing maps and background information and policy. I think we were able to kind of at least allow South Carolina, in dealing with them, to kind of leverage for if we're going to do this, let's do this correctly and let's do it in a way that we're trying to minimize any potential negative impacts of that type work. I do thank the council and Roger, especially, for working with us on that. That's all I have, Mr. Chairman.

MR. HARTIG: Lt. Fowler, the last report.

LT. FOWLER: I don't think Tara has anything to say.

MR. HARTIG: Well, we gave you an opportunity.

LT. FOWLER: Yes, I want to say thank you. You guys have been absolutely great the last years that I've been working with you. You have my e-mail address, I'm sure; and if she takes sick one of the days, I'll come back to see you.

MR. HARTIG: We have certainly enjoyed working with you. I just wanted to let Tara know that normally you give a half hour report, so she really needs to be ready in September.

CAPTAIN GORDON: Mr. Chairman, if I could, I'm not sure of the general awareness. AIS is going to become mandatory for vessels greater than 65 feet. There is a Federal Register Notice out not until 1 March 2016 that would potentially – well, it would apply to commercial fishing vessels over 65 feet.

MR. HARTIG: Mark, aren't there some other commercial fishing requirements coming online this October as well?

CAPTAIN GORDON: Yes; for Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Act requirements, it is going from a voluntary program to a mandatory program. I believe 1 March 2015 that goes into effect.

If there is interest, we can probably arrange a presentation at a council meeting in the future on that. It is not within the enforcement realm, but we're certainly willing to facilitate that.

MR. BELL: Yes; if you wanted to do that at the September meeting, if you had time, Matt Hooper from Sector Charleston is the safety guy that does that, and he is really good and he has done presentations for us. We will be in Charleston so just let me know if you think you want to do that.

MR. BOWEN: Captain, do you think the AIS rule with the 65-foot vessels is in conjunction with the right whale rule that is under – what is it – ten knots 20 miles from the beach?

CAPTAIN GORDON: No, it is completely separate.

MR. HAYMANS: I am the last thing between us and freedom so this will be short. The shrimp season is due to open on Tuesday. Mel's has already opened, as he said, in South Carolina. It is the only thing I've got with regard to a federally managed species. If you hear wailing and gnashing of teeth from Georgia or if you're a commercial fisherman and you're complaining, we are looking at readdressing our license structure and our prices.

The first public meeting out of seven starts on Monday. I can tell you that our non-resident trawl licenses are going to be more in line with my neighboring states. When we look at Texas to Maryland, we are the cheapest state to fish in commercially, recreationally, non-resident or resident, and so we're going to fix that, I hope. If you hear some complaining, that is where that is coming from. That's all my report.

MR. MAHOOD: The next meeting is going to be in beautiful Hilton Head Island. Believe it or not, we could not get a venue in Charleston during our normal meeting week. It has become quite the destination city for people having meetings and different things like that. We were able to secure a location down in Hilton Head. It says the Beach House Resort, Hilton Head Island, but I think there is more to it than that.

We will also get together the next month. In October we will be having our three-day Visioning Workshop II the 13th through the 15th in Charleston. Hopefully, that is when we will really wrap or start wrapping up our visioning. We look forward to that, also. We will have a busy September and October. That's all I have, Mr. Chairman.

MR. HARTIG: Is there any other business to come before the South Atlantic Council? Gregg.

MR. WAUGH: I just wanted at the end here to say thanks to our staff. This has been a particularly challenging meeting to pull together. Deb and Cindy are the invisible ones back at the office and Mike has done a super job. We have inundated him with stuff to send out. That has been very helpful. I don't know if you've noticed, but we're a lot more efficient up here in getting committee reports and stuff. We're not running around with sticks. Kari came up with the idea of using the drop box that has really been helpful.

This may be an easier way for you to have access to stuff as well, so we may be coming back with that. In the regional office, you know Jack has moved up. Rick has stepped and we've worked very closely with Rick. Rick has been sort of the problem man in the interim, so we appreciate all of his help. You see the trip limit analysis; Mike Larkin is like a machine.

Between Nick doing all of his modeling work and Mike doing all of his bag limits and trip limits; that has been a huge help. We look forward to continuing to work with Jenny Lee in PR to work on this new process for dealing with the consultations. We've worked closely with Bonnie. We're going to be on a conference call hopefully next week with Dave Van Voorhees to lay out a timing plan to get the MRIP studies that will parallel the charter boat for a period of time so that we can do that evaluation. Thanks to all of them; and Monica, of course, we work closely with all the time. All that comes together here; there is a lot more people behind the scenes that go into what you get, and I just wanted to thank them.

MR. MAHOOD: He didn't mention Julie who fixes our audio/visual.

MR WAUGH: I'm sorry, I should have done that and now I'm in deep trouble. I will be paying for that a long time.

MR. HARTIG: Is there any other business to come before the South Atlantic Council? Seeing none; the South Atlantic Council Meeting is adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 3:00 o'clock p.m., June 12, 2015.)

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By:
Graham Transcriptions, Inc.
June 18, 2015