SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL SESSION I

Webinar

March 1, 2021

TRANSCRIPT

Council Members

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Attendees and Invited Participants

Rick DeVictor
Anthony DiLernia
Shep Grimes
Dewey Hemilright
Dr. Jack McGovern
Dr. Genny Nesslage
LT Patrick O'Shaughnessy
Monica Smit-Brunello

Additional attendees and invited participants attached.

The Full Council of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened via webinar on Monday, March 1, 2021, and was called to order by Chairman Mel Bell.

MR. BELL: Welcome, everyone, to the March meeting of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. I wish we could all be together, but we will eventually, and recall that, I guess the last time we were together, it was our March meeting last year at Jekyll Island, and so we will get back to that.

Just kind of moving into the first item for today, we're going to try to stick to the published schedule, as much as we can, but keep in mind that sometimes we have to adjust, and I do have one, when we get to Adoption of the Agenda here, and I do have one thing that I would like to add for today, if possible.

With that, let me introduce a few people, real quick, that I see are with us. John Sanchez, from the Gulf Council, is with us, and Tony DiLernia and Dewey Hemilright from the Mid-Atlantic Council, and I was going to introduce Pat O'Shaughnessy from NOAA OLE, but I didn't see him onboard yet, but, anyway, in terms of folks that we're used to actually seeing at the meetings, I just wanted to make sure that we acknowledged their presence here today.

Then the first item that we're going to deal with, and this is Full Council Session I, and so the first item would be Approval of the Agenda, or Adoption of the Agenda. I would like for us to attempt, at the end of the day, if we can get to it, to try to perhaps move the SEDAR closed session from Thursday morning, and we can save ourselves an hour there if we can knock that out this afternoon, and it's simply approval of folks for SEDAR 79, I believe it is, and so hopefully we can do that pretty quickly and we won't have to deal with transitioning on Thursday between closed and open.

That's the only adjustment right now I think I would like to make, and one other thing is we are going to move NOAA OLE's report a little bit earlier. When National Marine Fisheries Service various groups give their reports, we'll have NOAA OLE's report at that time as well, but that won't be, I believe, until Thursday. That's all I have. Are there any other modifications to the agenda? Hearing none, and I can't see hands.

MS. WIEGAND: There are no hands up right now, Mel.

MR. BELL: Okay. Good deal. Then, with no adjustments to the agenda, other than what I have mentioned, and no objections to approval of the agenda, the agenda is adopted. The next item on the agenda, which actually didn't appear, would be approval of the minutes from three different Full Council sessions, and this would be the Full Council meeting that we had in November of 2020 to deal with recreational topics, and these are all in the briefing binder, and then Full Council Session II for December of 2020, and Full Council Session III for December of 2020, and so are there any modifications or corrections needed for those minutes? Hearing none, and if Christina sees none, then those minutes are approved.

The first item on today's agenda would be ABC Control Rule Amendment, and Mike Schmidtke, I believe, is going to walk us through that, and this is a particular topic that I am very grateful to have people like Mike onboard, and our SSC. If we are ready to cue that up, that will be -- All right. Thank you.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just as a brief introduction, or reminder, of what the Comprehensive ABC Control Rule Amendment is seeking to do, this amendment was initiated to modify the ABC Control Rule and to clarify the roles of the SSC and the council in that control rule, as well as to incorporate the National Standard 1 guidance on phase-ins and carryovers. Kind of the goal of what we'll be doing today with this document is going through some of the issues brought up by the IPT and then looking at the action on phase-ins, to have some discussion on what that should look like going into the amendment, as we start drafting that.

Scrolling down now to the timeline, this document has gone through scoping, and the IPT is in the process of developing actions and alternatives. The IPT met once in between the last meeting and this one, and you will see some of the proposed modifications, as well as other new information that the IPT came up with.

Given the really technical nature of this amendment, the realness of webinar fatigue when going through this type of material and some outstanding guidance that we're still waiting on from the SSC on data-limited stocks and carryovers, this will be the first of two meetings when the council will review action language ahead of it being incorporated into the draft amendment.

A slight edit to the proposed timeline today, and we'll only be asking for the council to sign-off on alternatives for Action 4. I will give a bit more information on what's happening with Action 3 later in the discussion, and the SSC is scheduled to discuss outstanding issues for this amendment at their April meeting, after which the IPT will meet and finish drafting the remaining actions and alternatives for council review in June.

The IPT has made some edits and raised some questions outside of Action 4 that I will bring your attention for feedback today. Action 5, which addresses carryover, is waiting on SSC review, but that hasn't been worked on by the IPT since the last council meeting, and so that is -- The language for that is included in the briefing materials, but that was more for the purposes to remind you that we are still addressing carryover in this amendment, but we won't be discussing that issue today. That will come up in June. I guess, before we move into the rest of this, are there any questions on the timeline? I am not hearing any.

Before we get into the IPT's edits and recommendations, Chairman Bell, at the last meeting, kind of raised an issue that it would be helpful to have kind of a review of the ABC Control Rule, what is it doing, and how does it fit into the management process, and so, if you're following along in the briefing document, there is hyperlink there, and I will go ahead and slide down to Appendix 1, where there are a few visuals and some descriptions that can shed some light on this.

The first figure that we're looking at here on the screen, this shows the hierarchy, if you will, of terms that are commonly used in our fishery vernacular. We have the overfishing limit, acceptable biological catch, annual catch limit, and annual catch target. At the bottom of the figure, you can see an equation/inequality describing the relationship of these terms. OFL must be greater than or equal to ABC, which must be greater than or equal to ACL, which must be greater or equal to ACT.

Stock assessments typically include projections or some other information from which an overfishing limit can be derived and recommended by the SSC, and it's fairly self-explanatory, but, if landings exceed the overfishing limit within a given year, the stock is experiencing

overfishing. Based on this overfishing limit, the SSC then goes through a process called the ABC Control Rule, which is the topic of this amendment and today's discussion, to determine an appropriate buffer between the OFL and the ABC, based on the uncertainty of the assessment. As a general rule, more uncertainty requires a greater buffer, in order to prevent overfishing.

After the ABC is derived, using the control rule, the council then uses it to make management decisions concerning an ACL or an ACT. One subtlety, I guess it is, that really comes to the forefront in this amendment is that there are really two components to this assessment uncertainty buffer between OFL and ABC, and I kind of talked through this with John Carmichael, and he really made a pretty good analogy that I hope will be helpful going through it with you all, but I will use this second figure within the appendix to convey this idea.

Of these two components, the first one is the uncertainty of the assessment itself, which can be illustrated by a distribution, similar to this blue bell curve that you see on the screen, and you have an estimate of the OFL, but you have this distribution around it, and the OFL is that midpoint that divides the lower underfishing harvest from greater overfishing harvest, and the assessment's uncertainty would affect the location, along this axis, and so how large of a harvest, and that's what you're looking at here, and the uncertainty of the assessment would affect the location of this and then the width of this distribution.

The second component is the council's risk tolerance for how good of a risk of overfishing is the council willing to accept for a given harvest level, and this can be thought of similar to a significance level or a confidence interval, and many scientific studies determined that results are significant if the chance that your results are due purely to random chance is less than 5 percent, but that 5 percent can be increased or decreased, based on the tolerance of the scientists and the type of study that's being done.

In this case, per Magnuson, the council has the ability to accept no more than 50 percent chance of overfishing, and so, right now, these two components are included as tiers within a control rule, carried out by the SSC and recommended to the council. One of the goals of this amendment is to separate out the characterization of assessment uncertainty, that distribution, as the SSC's responsibility and determination of the risk tolerance, how much risk of overfishing the council is willing to accept, that would be designated as the council's responsibility, and so I will pause, once again, to see if there are any questions on kind of that overview of what we're looking at here.

Not hearing any, I will go ahead and jump back up to our purpose and need. The IPT reviewed the purpose and need statements since the last time the council looked at this, and there were some fairly minor modifications, but just things that we wanted to point out, and so I'll take a second for you all to look at these, and please let me know if there are any questions or concerns with these edits.

MR. BELL: Mike, at this point, do you need us to accept those edits, or how do you want to work that?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: We have quite a few -- I guess, throughout this, and then Actions 1 through 3, we have kind of some minor edits. I would more or less ask that the council, for those actions, please state if you have like a question or concern with those edits that would object to it.

Otherwise -- I mean, we don't need a motion or anything, but we can just take that as guidance that the council is fine with these things being incorporated.

MR. BELL: I see that Kerry has a question.

MS. MARHEFKA: I just had a note on mine that the bolded part at the last part of the need for actions, the part where it says "recent guidance on carryover and phase-in provisions", would it be possible to just be -- I know it was addressed in the paragraph before, but specifically where that recent guidance lies, and does that make sense?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: As far as listing a link to it or making a reference?

MS. MARHEFKA: A more specific reference to it. Was it from like NOAA guidance, or was in the National Standards? Like specifically where the recent guidance came from.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Sure. We can try to make that a bit more specific and pointed to the NOAA guidance.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thank you.

MR. BELL: So maybe just reference that in parentheses or something.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes.

MR. BELL: Okay. The way we'll proceed then is, as we get to these, if no one has any issues or anything that we want to adjust, then we'll just assume that we have concurrence with accepting it as-is.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. Sounds good. The next portion that the IPT looked at and had some comments and recommendations on has to do with the management plans that would be modified by this amendment. The discussion came up among the IPT about whether inclusion of the sargassum and coral FMPs is necessary. Coral Amendment 3 prohibited harvest north of Cape Canaveral, and Ecosystem-Based Amendment 2 removed octocorals in the EEZ off of Florida from the management unit. Thus, there is no allowable harvest of coral in regions managed by the South Atlantic Council.

There also is currently no ABC control rule in the Coral FMP, and including that FMP in this amendment would establish a control rule for a fishery that right now doesn't have any harvest. Sargassum is currently managed with an ACL of 5,000 pounds wet weight, but no removals have occurred since 1997.

The SSC has previously recommended an OFL and ABC of zero and a designation as an ecosystem component species for sargassum, and so, given the lack of harvest in either of these fisheries, the IPT requested that the council consider and provide guidance on whether these FMPs should be included in this amendment. Removing these FMPs would give the benefit of reducing the required language and analyses that likely would not have great impacts on management of these fisheries, and so I will turn it back to you, Mr. Chair, for any guidance on this.

MR. BELL: All right. So then, given the lack of harvest in these two fisheries, and perhaps the desire not to have harvest in these two fisheries, and, for the benefits that Mike explained, does anybody have any compelling reason that we should leave the coral and sargassum management plan in there? Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Mel. I was going to suggest removing them. I support removing them.

MR. BELL: Okay. Is there any objection to removing both of these from the document? I don't see any, and so, Mike, we'll take that as concurrence with that recommendation, or it's basically guidance to go ahead and remove those, and, like you said, we'll save a little effort and space in the analysis and all.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you. Next, we're going to get into the actions discussions now. Before we fully get going with that, I do want to point out that, again, the IPT had those recommended edits, and so, as Chairman Bell said, if there's any concern about these edits that are fairly minor at this stage, and we would potentially be changing the language going forward anyway, based on council guidance, but, if there's any issues with the highlighted language, please raise that when we get to those discussions.

As I mentioned earlier, the council is not considering approval of language in Actions 1 and 2 today, as there are still those discussions to be had at the IPT and SSC levels. With that in mind, I'll give a pretty brief overview of what Actions 1 and 2 are intended to do and describe the IPT's discussion and recommendation concerning those.

Actions 1 and 2 address that two-component reasoning that I described earlier that is used to determine the size of the buffer between OFL and ABC. During the ABC Control Rule review, I noted that, right now, the assessment uncertainty and risk tolerance components both go through the SSC as part of the control rule, and the intent of Action 1 is to separate out the SSC's determination of assessment uncertainty from the council's setting of risk tolerance. Please note, by risk tolerance, I mean that amount of risk of overfishing that the council is willing to accept.

Action 1, Alternative 2, addresses this by essentially developing a whole new control rule that has different terminology and structure and is geared toward evaluating uncertainty based on the type and quality of information used in a stock assessment. Action 1, Alternative 3, addresses this by maintaining a similar structure to the current control rule, but removing the tiers that assess risk tolerance and replacing them with an adjustment based on a council specification of risk tolerance. It's kind of a bit of subtlety there, but it keeps that overall structure.

Action 2 is intended to specify the council's approach for determining that risk tolerance, and so I will scroll down here, and we have these various approaches that are kind of drafted at this stage. However, while the goal in these actions is to separate the SSC's and council's roles out, we do need to acknowledge that these roles need to be complementary in a way to get a final value for ABC, and, as currently presented through these actions, the council could theoretically mix and match the alternatives from Action 1 with any of the alternatives from Action 3.

The problem is that they don't all line up in that way, and so I noted, in italics, in Action 1, Alternative 3, and you can see that here, and this is the same language that is Action 2, Alternative

2, and those two alternatives really only work with each other. You couldn't mix and match Action 1, Alternative 2 with Action 2, Alternative 2, and just the terminology doesn't line up, and the methodology doesn't line up, and, similarly, we have, from Action 1, Alternative 2, that really lines up with Action 2, Alternative 3.

There doesn't seem to be a huge push that I am aware of for Action 2, Alternative 4, in which the council would just be given the -- Kind of that threshold level that risk tolerance cannot exceed 50 percent, but not really a huge amount of guidance one way or the other, and so what the IPT is recommending is that the council allow the IPT the ability to restructure Actions 1 and 2 such that they are a single action that pairs complementary control rules and risk tolerance specification approaches. We would do this with as clear intent as we can of still clarifying this separation of the roles of the council and the SSC, but we wouldn't want to mix and match methodologies that don't go together.

If the council approves combining these actions, Action 2, Alternative 4, which doesn't really have, necessarily, a complementary alternative in Action 1, this would be removed, and so that is the IPT's recommendation on these actions, and I can pause one more here, Mr. Chair, for questions and guidance on combining these.

MR. BELL: All right. First, are there any questions, based on that? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: A quick clarification point. Can you talk to what the actual purpose of the options are under those alternatives? I was getting a little bit confused, because, when I was looking at them, I kind of see what we do for projections, but I wasn't understanding. Are there things that we're supposed to be picking from, relative to Alternative 3? Can you just give a little bit of background on that?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: The options under Action 2, Alternative 3?

DR. BELCHER: I think either one of them. The one that I was kind of looking at specifically was under Action 1, and that was just because, as I was looking at those, the 75 percent of the fishing mortality rate is something that we generally did with the projection advice, the five years of constant landings or individual landings over five years, non-stagnant, and so I just was trying to get a better understanding of what the purpose of the options were under the alternatives.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: We kind of have some potential different options drafted up, if we were to combine these actions. Just to kind of direct the conversation, I would rather the IPT get another look at drafting those options and bringing it back before that specific language gets reviewed, just because it's going to -- It could potentially change substantially if we combine these actions, and I don't really have a whole lot of information to offer on those specific options at this point, because the IPT kind of paused when it hit that point of, well, these two actions really need to have the complementary alternatives combined, and we didn't really move past that point.

MR. BELL: Did that do it for you, Carolyn?

DR. ERRIGO: I was around when these were originally developed, and maybe I can help shed some light. In Action 1, it was supposed to be the -- Originally, it was tried to be structured so that Action 1 was the ABC Control Rule, the portion in which you set the ABC, and then it was

realized that we needed to separate out the council's ability to set the risk tolerance, and so that was put into Action 2, and so, here, what you're looking at are two different options of calculating an ABC, or different ways that you can set an ABC, alternatives to what is currently being done.

One is to use the 75 percent of FMSY as a way of setting a constant ABC, and the other one was another way of setting a constant ABC, and there were just two different options that came out, but, as time went on, we felt that these needed to be fleshed out better, and they didn't really make sense, especially when we realized that we had to incorporate Action 2 into Action 1, and so these are going to probably change.

MR. BELL: Myra, did you have something?

MS. BROUWER: I was going to simply clarify, and I found it a little bit confusing too, and sometimes we have options under alternatives, but, really, they're sort of potential sub-alternatives, and so these are going to get fleshed out as the IPT deliberates some more on how best to write this stuff out. They will, eventually, I think, become sub-alternatives that the council can then discuss about analyzing or not, and so I don't know if that gets at a little bit more clarity, from where Carolyn was coming from.

DR. ERRIGO: They were supposed to be additions to Alternative 2. It was you can also set the ABC using this option, or you can set the ABC using this option as well, so that the council can ask for a constant ABC over five years, which we don't really do very much right now, and so these were supposed to be like additional options for Alternative 2, but it's not really -- It's not really written as clearly as it could be.

MR. BELL: Right, and so, if Carolyn had a couple of questions, and she understands this way better than I, but I kind of thought we were probably at a point where I'm relatively comfortable with allowing the IPT to kind of perform some additional surgery, or rearranging, on this and bring it back to us, which I guess is what is basically listed there under IPT recommendations, and so it sounds like it needs a little bit more -- Like you said, it is rather complex, and so it needs a little bit more rewiring, perhaps, and a slightly different presentation, and that might help us out next time we look at it. Andy, did you want to weigh-in here?

MR. STRELCHECK: A couple of thoughts here. One, I'm supportive of the IPT combining the alternatives, and I think that makes a lot of sense here. I guess I would add a word of caution, and probably something I would be interested in the IPT weighing-in on when we get this back in June, but my concern is kind of going forward with this, especially the sub-options, and potentially being overly prescriptive and eliminating some of the flexibility that the council or the SSC might have with regard to risk tolerance. Certainly we're early on in the process, and we want to see this developed further before weighing-in on that more extensively, but it's something that I think we need to pay close attention to, that we keep some flexibility and aren't overly prescriptive.

MR. BELL: Thanks, Andy. Good point, and welcome. We're glad to have you onboard here. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks, Myra, because that was exactly what I was going to ask next, was that the idea being is this like a two-step iterative process, and we have Alternative 2, and then, within Alternative 2, these are the two options that we may look at, and I'm kind of sharing a little bit of

the concern with Andy on that. If you've only provided two options, what if there's another option that comes up? I am fully in support of it going to the IPT and letting the IPT kind of work with it, to see what all is the better way of verbalizing it, because I really did struggle with what we were trying to work through on that, and so thank you, again, for the clarification.

DR. ERRIGO: If I could respond to that, real fast, I think what was trying to be done here is what you guys are saying, to add flexibility. Like, in addition to what Alternative 2 grants the SSC, using the P* and things like that to come up with a buffer for ABC, and, in addition to that, they also would have the option to use 75 percent of FMSY or to set a constant ABC over the five years. That, I think, was the intent, was to add additional options to increase flexibility, but that's not how it's coming across, and so it obviously needs to be reworded.

MR. BELL: Okay. Well, thanks, Mike. I think the intent would be to allow the IPT to kind of do a little more work on this, and, as Andy said, avoid being overly prescriptive, perhaps, and just bring us something back that we can look at that's a little bit more fleshed out, but I do follow what they're trying to do, in terms of covering contingencies and what are all the possibilities and things, but, as you can see, it's an interesting wiring diagram, and so is there any further questions or discussion on kind of allowing the IPT to work with this a little more? I don't see any hands, and so, Mike, we're fine with you guys kind of working on this a little bit more then, so we would approve -- Again, not being -- It doesn't have to be that exact prescriptive as it is on the document here, but just kind of get back with us after you all have had a chance to work with it some more.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thanks, Mel. Next, we'll be moving down to Action 3, and, for this action, it considers how the proposed ABC Control Rule would be applied to rebuilding stocks, and there's a bit of a modification to the discussion as it was originally outlined in the decision document, and this was just after having some conversations after the briefing book came out on what the intent of this action was.

I had initially interpreted it that it was -- That it was intended to set a different minimum probability for the success for rebuilding plans on these overfished stocks, and, really, the greater intent was that stocks that are overfished and in the midst of a rebuilding plan can adhere to the ABC, as defined by the rebuilding plan rather than using the traditional ABC Control Rule method.

MR. BELL: Mike, did we lose you?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Can you hear me now?

MR. BELL: We've got you now.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I'm sorry. I'm not sure what exactly happened. I'm not sure exactly what point I left on, but hopefully I'll be able to catch folks up as we get to this, but the discussions that we had internally really led to Action 3 can be accomplished without being a separate action as well, and it can be accomplished more or less with a statement within Action 1 that overfished stocks would be able to adhere to the ABC, as defined by their rebuilding plan, and it wouldn't have to go through the traditional ABC Control Rule P* process.

As far as I understand, this isn't as much of a policy change as it is a clarification, and so I guess, if enacting this is not really a point of contention, that we would need to develop alternatives for,

then, like I said, this could be incorporated into Action 1, and this would be another action we could do to help streamline the alternatives being used, with this just being one sentence added to something else.

I guess the request here is, similar to Actions 1 and 2, that the IPT would be able to have a bit more time to work with this Action 3 item and potentially incorporate it into a restructuring of Action 1, similar to the previous items discussed, and so I will pause and turn it back to you, Mr. Chair, to see if there's any guidance or questions about this.

MR. BELL: All right. Any questions about Mike's explanation or the approach to perhaps not have this as a separate action and roll it into Action 1? Any problems with allowing them to do it that way? I don't see any, and so, Mike, just take that as concurrence.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Great. Thank you. Finally, we're coming to an action that the council will be able to have some discussion on the options and review, and we're hopefully going to get you all's guidance on some final language that we can incorporate into the draft amendment as that gets developed. Just as a reminder from the timeline, the draft amendment would be developed for your review, and you all would be looking at that to evaluate for public hearings in December of this year. Action 4, the intent is to have you all get the review of the done today, so we don't have to bring it back up in June, and the IPT can take the guidance given today and just move ahead and incorporate that, to try to save a little bit of time on that June discussion.

In this action, we're looking at the phasing-in of changes to the ABC. As a reminder, when we say phasing-in, what we're talking about is that, if a stock assessment supports a change in the ABC, say from 10,000 pounds down to 9,000 pounds, rather than moving straight from 10,000 in one year to 9,000 in the next, a phase-in would allow that change to take place gradually over a longer timeframe.

National Standard 1 guidance released last year stated that the use of phase-ins is allowed, but it also gave some considerations and requirements for their use. One of the requirements is that phase-ins must be allowed by the fishery management plan, which is why this action is being incorporated into this amendment.

One of the big additions since the last time you all saw this is the incorporation of language that would allow phase-ins in both directions, and so both for ABC decreases and increases. Previously, only phasing-in of decreases was considered, but the SSC and the council gave guidance, last time around, to include some aspect for language about increases. One thing that was brought up, in kind of some discussions earlier today actually, was that some of the phase-in increase language seems to have gotten a little bit too prescriptive, and so we may need some guidance on what can be removed, but some of these threshold levels and requirements that are listed within here are not necessary for increases as much as they are really for decreases.

This action is divided into two sub-actions. Sub-Action 4.1 addresses when phase-in would be allowed. An important distinction, as we go through these, is that, under Alternatives 2 and 3, phase-ins would be allowed, but they would not be required, and so nothing in this language would prevent the council from doing that jump straight to an old ABC to a new ABC, if that's the direction that you all wanted to go, but this would just state the conditions when a phase-in would be an appropriate tool in your management toolbox, so to speak.

Alternative 2 specifies that phase-ins are allowed according to the amount of the change in the ABC. The potential benefit of this phase-in is that this tool would be reserved really for significant changes, and there wouldn't be phase-ins potentially of smaller changes. Options 1 through 3 specify the threshold level for significance, if you will, and so Option 1 would allow phase-ins only when the new ABC is at least 30 percent more or 30 percent less than the old ABC. Option 2 requires at least a 20 percent change, and Option 3 requires at least a 10 percent change.

As I talked about before, we had some discussion, prior to the meeting, that setting a threshold level for phase-in increases is not necessary, as the council is only restricted, under Magnuson, to be below the overfishing limit, and that wouldn't really be an issue if the OFL and ABC are increasing. Thus, if the council would prefer, we could really remove any restrictions or requirements for increases and just have a simple statement recognizing that phase-in of increases is allowed, as specified by the council, and that's a route that we could go with this.

Alternative 3 specifies that phase-ins of ABC decreases are allowed according to the biomass level of the stock. This one, we actually did have the statement that increases would be allowed at any stock level, and so that kind of accomplishes the generality that may not be accomplished in Alternative 2 at this stage, but the biomass levels that are considered under Alternative 3 are Options 1 and 2.

Option 1 would allow phase-in of decreases only for stocks that are not overfished, as indicated by being above the minimum stock size threshold. Option 2 is more conservative, and it only allows phase-in of decreases for a stock if its biomass is greater than the midpoint between the biomass that provides maximum sustainable yield, or BMSY, and the minimum stock size threshold. Sub-Action 4.2 gets into how phase-ins may be applied, but, before we go there, I will pause, so that you all can ask questions and comment, and we can make changes, as necessary, to Sub-Action 4.1.

MR. BELL: All right. Any questions about 4.1 or comments about 4.1 or the concept of maybe even simplifying it, as Mike had mentioned? Thoughts or questions? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Mel. Thanks, Mike. I certainly like Mike's suggestion, in terms of how to simplify it, and I guess, in response to the current alternatives, it seems like Alternative 2, Option 3, is very narrowly focused, and it's not much of a significant change, relative to an existing ABC. If anything, I would want to probably have the council go the other way and give an option that has an even greater difference between the existing ABC and the new ABC that is more than 30 percent.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks for that, Andy, and so something like, instead of 30, 20, 10, it would be 20, 30, 40, or something like that, perhaps.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes.

MR. BELL: Any other comments or suggestions or questions? Anna.

MS. BECKWITH: I also like the idea of simplifying it and making sure that we can not get prescriptive on the ability to increase, if that makes sense.

MR. BELL: Okay. I am a fan of simplification, where appropriate, and so I would certainly support anything we can do to tighten it up or make it a little easier to digest and to operate in. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you. I have a question here pertaining to the amount of uncertainty to be prescribed, and would it be -- Is the uncertainty sectioned off by user groups of uncertainty, once a quota is given, where ACL is given to that particular sector, so to speak, or is it on the uncertainty of the stock assessment and the information used in there? I use blueline tilefish as an instance, where you have two sectors using tilefish, and one of them is accounted for with landings, and the other one through the MRIP process, that has a lot of uncertainty, and so how does that buffer work? Where would it be applied, and when, at what point? Thank you.

MR. BELL: Okay. Mike, do you want to take a shot at that?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Sure. I hope that I'm interpreting it correctly, but where -- The step that we're talking about right here is in simply setting the limit, and that would take into account the uncertainty from the stock assessment, and I think what Dewey is alluding to is some of the uncertainty that comes from the catch estimates, and that's something -- The catch estimates, as that's being regulated in real time, more or less, that's something that is after the setting of the ABC. I don't know that the conversation has come up as far as the uncertainty in anything beyond what's already incorporated into an assessment being part of the discussion in setting of the ABC, but that may be something for the after effect, when you're evaluating the catch relative to an ACL, maybe.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you. That answers, partly, my question. Thank you.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay.

MR. BELL: Thanks, Dewey. Any other questions or comments or suggestions under Sub-Action 4.1? Mike, do you have sufficient guidance to do any tweaking that might need to be done at this point?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and what I have down is to adjust our options to 20, 30, and 40 percent changes and take out kind of that upper bound, so to speak, in just saying that phasing-in increases are allowed, but not putting any requirements on them at this point.

MR. BELL: Okay. Those were the two things that I had as well. All right. Let's move on to Sub-Action 4.2 then.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. Sub-Action 4.2, this addresses how a phase-in may be applied in cases where it is allowed and the council chooses to use it. Under Alternative 2, ABC decreases would be applied according to the specification of Table 4.1, and I will kind of talk through what is down there and why. ABC increases would be applied according to whatever plan the council specifies, and, in similar spirit to the guidance given in the previous example, we can even generalize that and say that increases are allowed, and the council sets the plan and that's it.

There are requirements that decreases must adhere to, and one of these is that, even when phasing-in, a temporary modified ABC may not exceed the new OFL. This requirement is addressed in the phase-in schedules shown in Table 4.1. Options 1 through 3 set the maximum amount of time over which phase-ins are allowed. The NS 1 guidance allows phase-ins up to three years, and, with these options, we have that maximum amount of three years, two years, one year, and I apologize that I messed up the "years" pluralization there, but we have three years, two years, and one year.

The annual specifications for years, with those different timelines, are shown here in Table 4.1. Year-one, for all of these timelines, and so this is the first year that we are in the phase-in period, so to speak, the first year that we're changing from the old ABC, from that year-one, the requirement is that the ABC, the new, modified ABC, may not exceed the overfishing limit, and that's consistent with that NS 1 guidance. Then, depending on the timeline that's specified, there is a stepping-down from there to eventually get to a long-term ABC that is recalculated, based on projections that include that phase-in time period.

Appendix 3 gives a hypothetical example of a phase-in and what the interim years and the end-year could look like, but, really, the general idea is that, when you phase-in the decrease, you are allowing a higher interim ABC in the short-term, but you end up with a lower ABC in the long-term. Conversely, if you're going to phase-in an increase, you allow a lower interim ABC in the short-term, but you end up with a greater ABC in the long-term.

I wasn't planning to go through Appendix 3 at this stage of the amendment, unless there are specific questions, and, if you all would like to hear that a bit more in-depth, I can plan on doing that next time around, and we can incorporate time for that, but are there any questions concerning the language that is here for Sub-Action 4.2?

MR. BELL: All right. Any questions? Does everyone follow where we're going with this, in terms of applying the NS 1 Guidelines that we have now, which this is a good thing, remember, and the idea was to try to have some ability to not shock the system so badly, and so this phase-in approach is a good thing. Any questions or comments? I don't see any, Mike. What do you need from us at this point, just concurrence to continue to work with the document and then come back, like you said, maybe at the next meeting with a little more explanation?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess, at this stage, if there aren't any questions or additional comments from what was provided for Sub-Action 4.1. then the IPT can take those comments, and, if it's okay with the council, we can go ahead and incorporate those into the draft amendment, so we don't have to pick this action up again in June, and the next time that you would see this is in the draft amendment in December of this year, before it goes out for public hearing.

MR. BELL: Okay. Is everyone comfortable with that? Any questions or any suggestions or issues? I don't see any, Mike, and so that sounds like a plan at this point.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Sounds good. Well, that is all that I had. Again, Action 5 on carryovers, that's an item that -- Just a reminder that we're addressing it, but we don't have any requests of the council today concerning that action, and so that's all that the IPT needed for this amendment.

MR. BELL: All right. Great. I appreciate that, and I appreciate you all bearing with my need for a little ABC Control Rule 101, that this is something that is so foundationally important to what we do, but it's not exactly all that simple to understand, and I remember, when we had the scoping for this, I don't think we got -- I don't think we got much input at all, or there were a lot of, probably, blank looks over the webinar, and so, anyway, thanks for all the work on this, Mike and staff. Are there any other comments on this as we wrap it up? I don't see any. Well, thank you. That will allow us to move on to our next agenda item, and that would be we have one exempted fishing permit to review and comment on, and I'm not sure who was doing that.

MS. BROUWER: Mel, I'm going to try to bring it up here, and I think Rick DeVictor is going to cover it.

MR. BELL: Okay. Thank you, Myra.

MR. DEVICTOR: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't have a presentation or anything, and what you have in your briefing materials are Attachment 2a and 2b. 2a is the letter to the council that was sent in January, and there that is. It's on the screen. That's the one that we sent in announcing, or telling you, that we have received an exempted fishing permit request. Then 2b is the information that we received from the applicant.

We have a request that came in, and they want an exempted fishing permit. Last Thursday, we published, in the FR, a notice announcing that we have received this request, and that started a comment period, a fifteen-day comment period, and so comments may be sent in through March 12. That same day, last Thursday, we sent out a Fishery Bulletin, and you probably saw it, and that also announced that we received this.

This is a pretty straightforward EFP request, and it comes from Dr. David Portenoy of Texas A&M University Corpus Christi. He wants to retain a limited number of speckled hind in South Atlantic federal waters. Of course, right now, we prohibit the harvest and possession of speckled hind in or from the South Atlantic EEZ, and so, if granted, this would be valid through August 31, 2022, and it would allow up to eighty speckled hind to be taken during the duration of this EFP, if it is awarded.

What Dr. Portenoy wants to do is get commercial fisherman volunteers to participate in this EFP and to use hook-and-line gear, and he said from depths ranging from seventy feet to 600 feet, and these commercial fishermen would fish normally, just how they would, and they wouldn't necessarily target speckled hind. Then, if they do catch one, they would retain it. They would take a fin clip from the speckled hind, and they would ship that fin clip to Texas A&M for genetic studies. Then the carcasses would be shipped to the NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center, to determine age and growth parameters.

NMFS finds the application warrants further consideration, based upon our review, preliminary review, and so, like I said, we published the notice announcing to the public that we did receive this, and we did the Fishery Bulletin, and now, as we normally do, we take it to you and get your comments and recommendations and what have you. It seems like this would improve the understanding of structure, population structure, genetic diversity, and life history of speckled hind, much needed information for this species, and this could help support further scientific and management decisions for speckled hind in the South Atlantic. I will just leave it at that and see

if there's any questions, see if there's any recommendations for the National Marine Fisheries Service in moving forward with this.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, Rick. Like you said, it did seem a little straightforward to me, but let's see if anybody has any questions. Chester.

MR. BREWER: Thank you, Mel. As you know, I have a special place in my heart for EFPs, and I have been vehemently opposed to the misuse of the process in the past, and this, however, is not a misuse. This is exactly what EFPs are supposed to do, and this is furthering science, and I see no indication that there is any commercial benefit involved in this to the participants, other than maybe they get to keep a speckled hind or two, and so I think that we ought to inform, either in writing or -- I'm not sure of the right way to inform NMFS, but let NMFS know that we are in favor of further exploration and/or granting of this EFP, and I would be happy to do that in the form of a motion, if you would like.

MR. BELL: I'm not sure we need a motion, Chester, but, if we do, I will get back with you. Are there any -- As you all have heard, that has Chester's seal of approval, and I would concur with Chester. I think this is a good use of an EFP, and it's well laid out, and certainly getting your hands on enough of these animals is not that easy to do, from a fishery-independent-type process, and so, if we can get them through fishery-dependent work, that would make sense. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Mel. I thought our procedure was the reason that we reviewed it earlier in the week is so that we can take public comment on it and then make final decisions, or a recommendation decision, when we get to Full Council after we take public comment.

MR. BELL: Thanks, Jessica, for your steel-trap memory. Yes, because we could have done this in the other council session. At this point, let's just have some discussion amongst ourselves, and, if we're comfortable with moving forward with it, we can all state that, and we'll take a little bit of -- We'll see if we get any public comment on it, and then we can actually wrap it up, in terms of moving forward with it, at the last council session, and so any questions about it?

I was a little concerned, Rick, just from the standpoint of the timing, and I felt like -- I'm not sure where they are in their ability to actually lay hands on these things at this point, but the project started in January, and we're already in March, but I guess it just is what it is, in terms of timing. Any other comments or questions about it at this time? Any issues with the council potentially supporting this, and, like Jessica said, we'll see what the public has to say, if they have anything to say. All right. I don't see any hands. Rick, then what we would do is we would kind of wrap this up in the last council session, but I think, from a standpoint right now, based on input, it doesn't seem like we have any objections or any issues with it, and so that's a good sign.

All right, and so I think that would wrap up this item, for right now, and, again, we can finish it off in the last council session, in terms of actual completion, and that would take us to our third agenda item, which would be a presentation by Jessica Stephen, I believe, on the Southeast Regional Electronic Technologies Implementation Plan. Jessica, if you're there, take it away.

DR. STEPHEN: What I wanted to do is talk to you today about the Southeast Regional Electronic Technologies Implementation Plan and go over a little bit about the history and where we are with the current plan.

I'm going to start off with a little bit of history of how these electronic technology plans worked in the past. Back in 2013, it was the initiation of the very first ET plan framework, and, since then, we've been kind of updating it biannually throughout, and so, in 2015, the plans were finalized, and they were submitted in January of that year, and the biannual updates continued through 2017.

The reason they stopped in 2017 is that we started talking with different various sources about new plans and how the structure might need to be changed to make it a little bit more modernized to fit with where we're going within fisheries. In 2019, consultations were had, and they developed a new outline structure for us to use in 2020. Of course, in 2020, with COVID hitting, we got really pretty far off our timeline.

There was a new policy that does talk about the ET plans, and that's available out there on NOAA's site for you to look at, and the intention of changing the structure of the plan from the past was to actually make them comparable between regions, and so, in the past, each region was allowed to figure out how they wanted to design it and what the different sections were within it. Now, we're on one similar outline structure between all of them, and the idea behind it is that you can look within each different region and compare different aspects of electronic technologies within those.

The reviews will be -- The plans will be reviewed annually by different NMFS leadership, and they will be released annually moving forward. As I mentioned, the pandemic did push back our plans, and we're not anticipating to have the plans released within March of 2021. Currently, we are still finalizing our draft status of the document. Once that draft plan has been completed, we will be giving it to the councils, to add any additional suggestions and comments, and, at that point, we'll incorporate those into the next update of that plan, and so what I'm trying to do today is give you a little update on where we are and moving forward.

The idea behind the new plan was to establish the regional vision for electronic reporting and electronic monitoring within each region. The goal was to forecast through to the next five years. Right now, that will actually be through 2024, because we got pushed back, and, looking at what the vision is for developing and also integrating and implementing these various different ET programs. Each plan includes a section developed to regional priorities, the council actions, and then research and development to move forward.

The purpose behind the ET plan will help us prioritize internal and external funding of projects related to electronic technologies, and it would highlight areas where we might have better integration efforts, through coordination and standardization. To give you an example, some of that is the work that we do with ACCSP or to coordinate between GARFO and SERO, with the different fisheries that we manage that spread across regions.

The other purpose would be to identify any challenges we have in moving forward to electronic technologies, the cost of moving forward, and any funding transitional plans, if we had something in a pilot status that had to move to a fully operational status, and then, finally, we'll have sort of a status review of where we are with our ET policies.

For 2020 to 2024, what we're looking at in this region is aligning our electronic technologies with our regional strategic priorities, and we want to make sure that they're going hand-in-hand together. We're also looking to identify and quantify the different costs that it would take to move

forward with electronic technologies, and so I want you to keep in mind that this isn't just the product that the fishermen are working with, but all the infrastructure that goes on behind it, potentially moving to cloud services, so that systems are already up and running, and the staffing required to keep all that infrastructure, and different software. Most of this that we're looking at in our region is on the ER, the electronic reporting, expansion. We don't have a lot of electronic monitoring, which is typically video cameras, going forward right now in our region.

We're also going to look at developing a process to review our electronic reporting progress, looking at where are our lessons learned, where are the areas of cost savings, or where weren't there areas of cost savings that we can adjust moving forward. Another aspect that we're looking at is working on an idea of one-stop reporting with the Greater Atlantic Region and the various states, and this will be working through ACCSP. Both GARFO, SERO, the Northeast Science Center, and the Southeast Science Center went in together to get funding to figure out how to do a one-stop reporting aspect to it.

One-stop reporting would be if there was a vessel that existed and worked under both regions, or councils, the Mid-Atlantic and say the South Atlantic. If they had to submit a report, they could submit one report, and it would go to each of the reporting agencies, as needed, and so they wouldn't have to submit multiple reports. We're working with ACCSP, because we would like to eventually also build into that the information going to the states as well.

The other aspect is the idea of data governance, which is we're going to be forming a plan and a committee for data governance. Data governance is how we manage the data that we collect, so we have clear rules of what can be shared and when it can be shared and if it has to be shared at the confidential or non-confidential level and where we go towards that. We have already started with some training in data governance, folks both in the Science Center and the Regional Office, and we're looking at data workflows and starting to map some of those workflows out.

In particular, with electronic reporting, the areas that the region is working on, and I think everyone is very familiar with the for-hire reporting initiatives that we're going with, and we're going to continue to look at how to streamline that process and improve the process for fishermen, both reporting and the way that we get the data and connectivity to our various partners, as well as the different vendors.

On the commercial side, we're looking at electronic reporting for our commercial fleet. In particular, for the South Atlantic, this may include moving the wreckfish logbooks, which are in a paper format, over to the coastal logbooks and no longer keeping the two separate, and, of course, moving them fully to electronic reporting as we move it to the coastal logbooks.

In the Gulf, we have the shrimp electronic logbook replacement system, and the current system is no longer up-to-date, and it does not really function at all. It's working on an old cellular network, and so we're looking for a replacement for that. Then the other areas we're starting to make progress is modernization of some of our systems. I believe you were briefed a little bit, at a past council meeting, that our permit system is migrating over to a new system. One of the benefits to that new permit system, hopefully, will be that we'll have improved ways to submit applications and check your progress on things.

In addition to that, our catch share system has already migrated to a new system. With it, we were able to add the completion of a loan program module within it, and NOAA Fisheries does allow loans for catch share programs. Previously, we were unable to work with the loan program, because we didn't have a mechanism to track it. We have now built that into the system, and we actually had our first loan completed already for the Gulf IFQ programs. We're also looking at the modernization of the wreckfish ITQ program and kind of continued efforts on further modifying the Gulf projects as well, moving forward.

When it comes to electronic monitoring, which is the video capability, most of the work ongoing is with coordination with Mote Marine Lab. They have a Center for Fisheries Electronic Monitoring Excellence, and they are recognized for the work being done down there. We're working with them, through either NFWF grants or Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program or Cooperative Research, to make sure that where they're exploring in pilot programs with EM can be beneficial for management and future actions taken by the councils.

We're also looking at a rapid sampling technique in the Caribbean, and so, in the Caribbean, the fisheries are fairly different, and one of the techniques that we're hoping to use is to use video imaging and artificial intelligence to identify the different species and size. The fish would be placed on a table, or even a truck bed, and we would have the cameras mounted above them, and the cameras would take snapshots of the information, or a video of it, and we would use AI then to help identify the species. What's nice is that it can be done rapidly, so that the fish don't go bad and can be moved, and we'll gain a significant amount from that on what the catch is for the Caribbean.

Then I just wanted to kind of focus on the last of our kind of outgoing initiatives and where we're at. Currently, we are, again, putting our money mostly towards the for-hire electronic reporting that occurs both in the Gulf and the South Atlantic, modernizing our catch share programs, which would include modernization of the wreckfish program, modernizing the permit system. Ideally, once that is done, it would be legal to submit for permits or transfer permits through the online system, and we can do away with some of the delays that occur through the paper system. We're also making sure that we're going to link electronically to the Science Center and the logbooks for any permits that also have logbook requirements, in order to be renewed.

Again, the commercial logbook reporting, moving forward, as well as the shrimp ELB and the Caribbean sample, and that is all I have today. I would take any questions that you have about the ET plan as a whole, and I will try and answer any questions about individual projects that I can.

MR. BELL: All right. Well, thanks, Jessica. We appreciate you being here, and we appreciate this update. This is some exciting stuff. I know that everyone would certainly appreciate anything we can do to improve efficiencies and avoid duplications, and, you know, we hear from the fishermen, over and over again, about being able to make some improvements like this, and so it's very exciting, the number of things that are going on, and I knew Dewey would probably have something to say. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Given online improvements, it is a big help when you're renewing your permits, and so that's been a good thing, and I do think that there will probably be -- If the simplification of this could work, there will probably be millions of dollars saved, in various ways. One question I had was does -- You made no mention of HMS, the vision and reporting from them,

and I was wondering -- Given that you've had discussion with the Gulf and South Atlantic and New England, and maybe GARFO, I understanding, how about -- How does HMS play into this, because a lot of fish are caught with bottom fish, or HMS species, and so how does that work? When are they going to be included in the simplification and the saving of millions of dollars by this electronic reporting? Thank you.

DR. STEPHEN: Thanks for that question, Dewey, and so we actually are in discussions with HMS. They get a little unusual, because they stem across regions. What we will end up doing is taking all of their initiatives and breaking them up into either the Southeast or the GARFO plans moving forward, and so it will be encompassed within both of those.

As to direct actions, what we're doing, in particular with the for-hire electronic reporting, is we're in discussions with HMS frequently about seeing how we can move forward, again, to reduce duplicative reporting there or to have one system that allows them to answer the required HMS questions as well as the required questions from the South Atlantic or Gulf of Mexico, and so these discussions are ongoing, but it just seems to be a little bit longer of a process right now than we anticipated.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Given that these are ongoing discussions, and sometimes I hear that -- I am used to hearing that a lot, but is there like a timeline of when these discussions are going to come to fruition of actually achieving something, or are we ongoing with continuing discussions? Thank you.

DR. STEPHEN: I would say a little bit of both, and so we're ongoing continuing discussions, but those discussions -- When we find a low-hanging fruit that we can immediately put into practice, we do start to work on that immediately. HMS has reorganized recently, and so we're trying to kind of figure out who now our new counterparts are for the different actions in that, and I anticipate that, once we've kind of identified that, we'll be moving forward together.

One example is with our catch share programs, and we actually contain an HMS catch share program within that, and, when we moved to modernize the IFQ systems, we immediately included HMS and worked to get a lot of their needs done that hadn't been done in the past in that modernization, and so we do work hand-in-hand.

MR. BELL: Thanks, Jessica, and I know -- I understand fully Dewey's concern there, and we've got -- Any place you have seams between HMS and what we're doing, or even between regions, it creates some issues, at times, and, given that our fishermen, our fish, do not pay attention to our regional boundaries sometimes. Being able to operate across regions, across regions or across aspects of an agency, has benefits, and so that was one of the things, when I was looking at this, and I realize it's a Southeast regional plan and efforts, but always, I guess, as we do this, any of the regions need to be sensitive to those boundaries and where fishermen and the species they're after may decide to wander across, or back-and-forth, and so that's always a challenge.

We're not the only entity to deal with this. If you're dealing with the Army Corps of Engineers, or the EPA, or whoever, they're divided into districts and things, and there is differences from region to region and district to district, and so I get that, but it is -- For the folks that are out there prosecuting the fisheries and all, and needing to get the permits and report and do things correctly, we just need to holistically, big picture, try to make that as seamlessly difficult to deal with as

possible, I think, and that's just my opinion, but thanks, Jessica. Any other questions or comments for Jessica on the material that she presented on the plan? All right. I don't see any hands raised, and so thanks, Jessica.

With that, we'll move on to our next item, if we're ready for that, the Kitty Hawk Offshore Wind Project, and I believe Rick Robbins and/or Brian Benito are going to make that presentation, and it's also -- You have a link that as Attachment 4, I believe, and it was also, I think, a late item, perhaps.

MR. ROBBINS: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members. This is Rick Robbins, Fisheries Liaison for Kitty Hawk Offshore Wind, and it's great to be with all of you this afternoon, and I am joined by Brian Benito, the Senior Permitting Manager for the project.

MR. BENITO: Good afternoon.

MR. ROBBINS: I will turn to Brian to introduce the project, and we'll go from there, and I will take it up on the fisheries data after Brian. Thank you.

MR. BENITO: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, council and everybody that's joining us on this webinar. My name is Brian Benito, and I'm the Senior Permitting Manager for the Kitty Hawk Offshore Wind Project. I'm super excited to be back here before you all. It's been about a year since we last gave you all an update.

Unfortunately, this one is under very different terms, but I trust that everybody is getting through the pandemic well and that you're all staying happy and healthy. With that, I'll just get into a real quick project overview and provide you all with a little bit of an update as to where we've come since we last briefed the council on the project and a bit of where we're going to go, and then I'm going to turn it over to Rick, so he can get into really some of the fantastic data that we've been collecting over the last year and analyzing on the project.

This slide here is showing our wind energy area, and it's OCS-A0508. For those of you all that are familiar with the Kitty Hawk project, this wind energy area was procured by Avangrid Renewables back in 2017 from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, through a competitive bid process.

Since then, we've been surveying the wind energy area with various HRG, and so high-resolution geophysical and geotechnical vessels. This has been allowing us to collect that necessary data to put forward in our construction operations plan.

We've also conducted a benthic sampling campaign as well, but we've gone and strategically taken benthic samples off of the wind energy area, as well as the export cable corridor, and so this slide here is representative of our wind development area, and the wind development area is highlighted in that light-pink area in the northwest corner there, as well as our export cable corridor, which is outlined in the purple there, and it's about a sixty-three-kilometer corridor with a proposed landfall in Virginia Beach, Virginia. This wind energy area, for reference, in case you all can't see the scale, it's approximately twenty-seven miles of Corolla, North Carolina.

What we've put forth in our construction operations plan to BOEM is a project design envelope, and the project design envelope, or PDE, allows us to categorize and assess a range of impacts associated with the development of the wind development area. As you folks are probably well aware, the development phase, the permitting phase, of these projects is multiyear, and this approach allows us to get through the National Environmental Policy Act, or the NEPA, process in an efficient manner to accommodate for the change, the rapid change actually, of technology associated with offshore wind farm development, and so, within our PDE, with reference to the size of the turbines that we're looking at, we've put forth a fourteen-megawatt turbine and a twenty-megawatt turbine.

What this really is representative of is not the megawattage, but the size and dimensions of those turbines, which is laid out in this slide here, and so this represents the minimum and the maximum footprint associated with those wind turbine generators, or WTGs.

As I mentioned, the project design envelope, this slide here, is an executive summary of what is put forth in our construction operations plan, and I should note that the Kitty Hawk Offshore Wind Project submitted its construction operations plan to BOEM on December 11 of last year, and so, currently, BOEM is undergoing a sufficiency and completeness review of our PDE, as well as all the other assessments that went into that construction operations plan.

For the benefit of the council and the public at-large listening in today, this is the envelope that we put forth, and so what you can see here is our water depths are up to thirty-eight meters, and our lease area is about 50,000 hectares, or 122,000 acres, and what we're talking and more focusing on in, as I showed in that previous slide, is our wind development area, and so this represents about 50,000 acres of development within that wider lease area. Our estimated capacity delivered to the grid, or our point of interconnection, is 800 megawatts, and, as I showed in the previous slide, that has a WTG capacity of up to twenty megawatts.

Number of turbines, and so at the smaller megawatt size, the fourteen-megawatt turbine, we would have up to sixty turbines out there, and we're currently still evaluating what kind of foundation type we would like to construct, but we've put into our construction operations plan a variety, to represent most of the commercially-available foundations that are out there, and, obviously, monopiles being our preferred, but we haven't been able to reduce our envelope at this point, until we can get a better look at some of that geophysical and geotechnical data that we're anticipating will come to us shortly.

Offshore substation, or electrical service platform, it will represent one of those locations in the WDA, and, as I mentioned, our offshore export cable corridor is about sixteen nautical miles, and those will be two co-located cables that will buried in the seafloor, and so this will be buried export cable corridors of up to 275,000 volts.

All of those turbines, up to the twenty turbines, will all, obviously, be connected, and they will all be gathered at that offshore electrical surface platform via an inter-array cable, and those are sixty-six KV, each one of those inter-array cables, and they will go to the ESP, where they will be stepped up to the 275 and sent to shore via those two buried co-located sub-sea cables. I mentioned the landfall at Virginia Beach, Virginia. At this point, Rick is going to kind of take you all through some of the data that we've been reviewing and analyzing and put forward in our packet. Thank you. I will be available for questions after.

MR. ROBBINS: Thanks again, Mr. Chair. It's really good to be with you all today, and we've got a lot of data that I will run through, and I would just like to say, right upfront, how fortunate we've been and how grateful we are right now for the data that have come out of the regional science centers and out of the regional offices, and also out of the State of North Carolina and the State of Virginia. North Carolina DMF has had some state datasets have been really helpful for us to understand the contextual history of the fisheries in the area, and I think you'll see some of that here today.

When we think about discrete areas in the ocean like this, from a data standpoint, we tend to want to dive right into them and get the data out of that area, and, in order to develop a solid contextual understanding of the fisheries that have occurred in that area and in the broader region, it's important to have that additional layer of data that would have a wider focal reference point, and, as we've gone through this, we look at data at those higher levels, and then more detailed data that might come out of the site itself, and we're always looking across these datasets, with an eye towards some of the uncertainty in the spatial data, and that's something that informs our understanding as well, but we're guided too by our interactions with the commercial fishing industry, in particular, and we're very fortunate to have Dewey as the fisheries representative for the project. He's been extremely helpful in identifying some of the captains that have worked in there, and he and I talk about the project on a frequent basis, as we work to understand it.

This is a slide -- This is a thirty-thousand-foot look. This is a market data layer, and it's VTR heat mapping, and so you see the project area, and I think this just reinforces our appreciation for the way that the Kitty Hawk project area was selected and sited, through the joint state and federal taskforce. From a fisheries standpoint, it's very well sited.

It's inside of a lot of the more intensive offshore trawl fisheries that continue to occur today and that have occurred historically out there seaward of the project area, and it's also seaward of some of the more intensive inshore fisheries, and it was subject to historical trawl fishing in there, and there's some modern history of drop-netting in there, and a little bit of drop-potting, that we'll talk about as we go through this, but this is a 2011 to 2015 look at bottom trawl activity. As you can see, it's in an area where there's not a lot of intensive trawl fishing in this modern chapter of history.

This is a similar look at gillnet data, and you see a couple of fisheries in play, at least. You see, up around Virginia Beach, in the area of the export cable, that is the predominant fleet coming out of Rudee Inlet, and also out of Lynnhaven, fishing, in recent history, primarily for spiny dogfish. They are fishing anchor gillnets, usually within about fifteen miles of the inlet, on a seasonal basis, in the fourth quarter and first quarter, from about Thanksgiving until April for spiny dogs.

Then you see, southeast of the project area, you can see some of those gillnet fisheries that operate out there in twenty, thirty, forty, fifty fathoms, all the way out to and over the edge, and those are seasonal fisheries for croaker and bluefish and other gillnet fisheries, and, also, more recently, ribbonfish or Atlantic cutlassfish. You see more effort southeast of the area, where it's primarily concentrated.

This is a look at the squid fishery, and you see it pretty tightly delineated. This is much more detailed data, from a spatial standpoint, and this is a VMS heat map, and so these are the vessel

monitoring system data that are coming up off the transponders on the boats that are required to have them in the squid fishery, and that data is collected in this data portal layer.

You see the effort east of the area, in fifty to a hundred fathoms, and most of that is for ilex, and they will fish loligo a little bit inside of that, and then you look up towards Norfolk Canyon and see areas that are fished more intensively for squid up there as well, but, again, you see the relationship of that fishery to the project area, and occasionally there will be a transit through there, by one of those boats that might return to Hampton or head back up into New Jersey or into the northeast.

This is a data presentation that we use typically when we're interacting with the commercial fleet, and this has the LORAN overlay on it, and, while LORAN hasn't been active for a long time, most members are aware that the commercial fleet continues to orient and communicate based on LORAN positions, and so this helps people get oriented when they are working to understand the location of the site.

We've also got a lot of the better-known wrecks called out, and most of those are slightly seaward of the area, and those are areas where people fish for black sea bass, or they might float-net for bluefish, on a seasonal basis. You also see the two Navy towers called out in the local vernacular there, just below the project area, the 38-Tower and the 70-Tower, and those are references to bearings from the Oregon Inlet sea buoy.

In order to get started, when we sought to understand the area, we started by talking to fishermen, and, again, we worked to identify a lot of the top captains that have fished with each of these gear types in the area, and so identify and interview trawl boat captains and some of the drop-netters that fish in there, the anchored gillnetters that fish in the corridor area that are based out of Virginia Beach, and the conch potters that pass through the corridor area in the wintertime, late winter, typically, as the water gets colder.

There is some conch dredge boats that work out of Rudee, and out of Lynnhaven, and they typically work just north of the corridor area, and up through and around Cape Henry, and we engaged with them as well and understand their fishing practices. There is an experimental shrimp trawl fishery in Virginia waters, and that's what these boats are, and that's what they're doing in this photograph, and that's a relatively new fishery. It's about four years old now, and it has expanded this year to eight boats, but they do fish in the corridor area, and they fish little sixteen-foot -- It's almost like a trinet, and it's got a couple of fisheye excluders in it, and they've had a successful start as an experimental fishery. We also interviewed the drop-pot fishery, and there's a drop-potter that fishes in that broader area, and then hook-and-line fishermen that fish commercially for black sea bass in the broader area.

This is looking directly at the VTR data, and it took a while to get to the point of having this, but this was one reason that I was excited to be able to present this to you today, and we finally have the VTR catch history out of the project area, and so this is actually out of the lease area, and out of the corridor. The corridor is presented in blue, and the lease area is in red, and this is cumulative data from 2008 through 2019, and you see, in the blue, the predominant catch of spiny dogfish, followed by Atlantic croakers, and the dogfish fishery is the predominant fishery there in the corridor.

Moving on to the red, the data presented in red, you see the lease area catch, and that's predominantly, in that timeframe, summer flounder, and followed by some croaker, and some evidence of black sea bass, coming out of the area, but these catches of spiny dogfish over that timeframe are about half-a-million pounds, and about 145,000 pounds of summer flounder, cumulatively over that time period.

This is a comparison of the VTRs and a modeled estimate that GARFO did with the Northeast Science Center, in working to understand the spatial uncertainty in the data, and it's helpful in that regard, because, any time we have VTR data, you have inherent data limitations, because, considering the spatial dynamics of the fishing operations, a person might go on a trip and fish over a twenty-mile range, but just enters one datapoint on the VTR, and so it always has some limitations, but, when we look at the actual VTRs for the area, and we can't see this every year by species, because of the data confidentiality requirements, but you can see there was a peak in 2010.

Most of that catch in red is -- That's all out of the lease area, and most of that was summer flounder. You can see that, in the last four years, there haven't been any VTRs out of the area. Looking at the line in blue, that's the modeled catch, taking into account the spatial uncertainty in the data. It's higher, which is not a surprise, but about half of that catch is modeled to be ilex squid, and that's a little bit of a caveat, because ilex occurs seaward of the area, in fifty to a hundred fathoms, but that's understandable, because of the methodology used to account for the spatial uncertainty, but it's helpful to have both of these for that additional context.

Similarly, when we look at the VTR data out of the corridor, these numbers are a little bit higher, and most of the catch in the product area does come out of the cable corridor area, and most of it is spiny dogfish in this timeframe, which is 2008 through 2019, and these track along pretty closely, with the exception of the one year when the actual VTRs were higher than the model, but most of these catches are spiny dogfish.

This is a look at that spiny dogfish fishery, specifically in Virginia, and most of these catches -- These are state-wide landings, and they are federal landings data, and most of these catches are out of Virginia Beach, and you can just see the history of the fishery. Back in the 1990s, I was active in the processing side of it, and we expanded the fishery very rapidly, and then it went into a stock rebuilding plan, beginning in 2000. The fishery was effectively closed for Mid-Atlantic boats in that timeframe, because they have a 600-pound trip limit, and boats weren't able to operate at that level.

Gradually, the fishery recovered, and quotas increased, and the state got some quota transfers in recent years, and so they have had a robust fishery here in the last few years, but that is the top fishery in the corridor area in modern history.

This is another fishery that's been very important, and it's a bread-and-butter fishery for that dayboat gillnet fleet out of both Rudee Inlet and also out of Oregon Inlet, and so the North Carolina fleet worked on these fish, and then the trawl boat fleets out of both Hampton and out of Wanchese, and other ports in North Carolina, worked on these, but you can see how big this fishery was and how important it was. These are Atlantic croaker, and landings were over fourteen million pounds for North Carolina in the early 2000s, and this is almost thirty years of data.

Then Virginia was up there with high levels of landings as well. Croakers tend to go through multidecadal oscillations, as you see in this longer-term trend, and landings have dropped to a very low level. That fishery out of Rudee is almost inactive at this point, and the drop-net fleet out of North Carolina still works on these fish, but landings have been low in recent years.

This is a look at another important fishery for that dayboat fleet out of North Carolina, the bluefish fishery, and the drop-netters catch them with sink nets and float nets, and some of that occurs in the project area, or seaward of that, and this fishery has gone through major changes over the last thirty years, with a significant declining trend in catch.

This is another layer of data that has been really informative for us, and so this is out of North Carolina DMF's portside sampling program, and this is looking at gillnet catches, and, in that sampling data, you get a couple of datapoints that don't show up in the trip tickets, and that includes catch depth, or reported depth of catch, and, also, a more specific waterbody designation, and these data are not resolved to the specific area of the project area, but they still provide an important contextual understanding, because this looks at waterbodies that are potentially east, or northeast, of the inlet, and some of them could be southeast, but it still gives us a good feel for the fishery and some of the trends in that. You see the modal depth of catch increasing some over time.

You also see the fall run of fish that is there shallower than twenty meters, and that was a fall run of fish that tended to stay close to the beach, and that has largely dried up since about 2005, and there was a lot of intensity in this fishery in the early 2000s, and the modal depth of catch has changed some. The project area depths are highlighted in that blue-shaded area, and you see some drop-net catches coming out of that project area depth, and you see where the drop-netters are working seaward of that also, in thirty, forty, fifty fathoms. The depths are in meters, and so you can just divide by two for fathom references, but this shows us a lot about what's happened in that fishery over the course of the last thirty years.

These data are not presented by depth. These are presented by weight, and so these are individual trawl trips in excess of a thousand pounds of landings of summer flounder, and these also come out of the North Carolina DMF program. These are also the waterbodies east and northeast of Oregon Inlet that would be potentially off of North Carolina, and so, if a trip were reported out of the Hudson Canyon, it's not here, and this lets us look at those trips off of North Carolina, and you see, I think pretty powerfully in this data, how strong of a trend there has been in the last thirty years in the characteristics of that fishery.

Part of this, fishermen have been quick to point out a couple of things in trying to interpret this trend, and one is that the TED line has been a difference in this fishery. That was implemented in 1992. There are seasonal exemptions to it from Oregon Inlet up to Cape Charles, but, basically, if you're fishing south of Cape Charles, outside of that window, then you have to pull a turtle excluder device, and that's been an incentive to fish north of there, but, more significantly, the fishery operates well north of there now, with maximum catch rates and efficiency, and so those boats tend to fish north of those lines, but you can see, I think pretty clearly, how this trend of -- The last significant catches in there with trawl were about 2010, and that holds together with some of the other data that we've looked at.

This is a look at four different fisheries in this chart, and we've already talked about the gold and blue bars, which are croaker and bluefish, and so I'll just call your attention to the red line first,

which corresponds to the Y-axis on the right, topping out at about 750,000 pounds a year, and these are annual landings of monkfish, and you can see a significant bit of history here.

In the early 1990s, there was a group of boats from Massachusetts and New Hampshire that came down and started fishing for spiny dogfish, and, back then, the dogfish and the monkfish were largely driven by European business, and that fishery expanded very quickly. Those same boats, in the spring, would start monk fishing, and you can see how quickly they drove up the catches of monkfish. Some of the local boats started participating in the fishery as well, and then, there in the early 2000s, you see a resurgence in the fishery, and part of that was driven by a market in the Korean market for the whole fish.

Then there were changes in the regulations on large-mesh gillnets that really cranked down the amount of effort in the fishery, and, since then, economic conditions have also been a challenge, but, if you look at the green line, you see a positive emergence in the cutlassfish fishery, and that's become an important commercial fishery for the drop-net fleet out of North Carolina, and those are usually caught at about twenty to twenty-five fathoms. More of that effort will be down towards like the 102-Tower, a little bit east-southeast of the inlet, but some of that extends up to and seaward of the project area as well.

This is a look at the observer data out of the NEFOP program, and the nice thing about this, with respect to spatial resolution, is this is going to be high accuracy and highly-specific data, and so the observers record the tow-end, or the set-end, in latitude and longitude, on every set, and this is out of the lease area, and so this is about twenty-six years of data, and it's almost all trawl trips, and the most recent of those was in 2012. There are a few drop-net trips in there, and those show up more recently, which actually mirrors some of the changes in the fishery. Those are between 2017 and 2020.

Most of these were boats targeting summer flounder, and it's no surprise that the predominant catch there is summer flounder, a little bit of bluefish, a little bit of monkfish, a little bit of croaker. It's pretty much what you would expect to see coming out of that area on trawl boat catch.

This is the same data, but for the cable corridor, and keep in mind that most of the fishing in there is with gillnets, and so, not surprisingly, over that same time period, 90 percent of the data is from gillnet trips, and there are more of them, and there are about 133 trips, quite a few sets, and these boats were targeting spiny dogfish and Atlantic croaker, and so you see that spiny dogfish is a preponderance of catch.

You see croaker, and that has changed in recent history, and there's been some decline there in the last handful of years out of Virginia Beach, and so that's been deemphasized, but you see some of the historical fishing for striped bass and a little bit of that historical smooth dogfish fishery in there.

This is the NEAMAP data, and so looking over to some of the fisheries-independent data for the site, and, generally, this is done in the fall and spring, and it's a mix of what you would expect to see shuffling in and out of the Chesapeake Bay, and so Atlantic croaker and spot and skate and weakfish and roundhead and then a variety of smaller fish that make up the rest of the catch. What is conspicuously absent, perhaps, here is spiny dogfish, but that is explained by timing. It generally comes through just after Halloween, and so before the spiny dogs have taken up residence, and it

comes in after they have left, and so they don't really show up here, despite their commercial significance, and they're operating at the sixty-foot contour, and so they're right there around the three-mile line.

This is the bottom trawl survey data from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, and so this is the Bigelow, and the Albatross before that, and this is going back to the mid-1960s, and, over that period of time to the present, they made about fifty-five tows in there, and they do spring and fall survey work, and you just get a glimpse of what you would expect to see, I think, and Atlantic croaker show up as the top catch in the fall survey, and there is not a lot of anything really that shows up in the survey, and this is cumulative data over fifty years.

You see -- In the spring survey, you see spiny dogs, and then you've got to go down to the bottom of the list to see some of the things that have been significant in a modern sense with summer flounder and monkfish. Historically, there were -- Thirty years ago, they caught Atlantic mackerel in there, and, up to the Horseshoe and inside that, that was a commercially significant fishery, but the dynamics in that fishery have changed a lot.

One of the things that we want to know as we look across all this data and all these different sources of information are how they hold together, and, if they do, it gives us a sense that the understanding is being informed and reinforced by all these different data sources, and that's what we're seeing in a pretty strong way across all these things, and so, looking at the oral histories and the NEFOP observer data, the VTR data, the GARFO model analysis, and the State of North Carolina's dockside sampling program, we see the core species that make up the commercial fishery out there showing up in all of those, and so the croaker and the black sea bass and the bluefish and summer flounder. Cutlassfish show up in all of these, with the single exception of the NEFOP data, but that's explained by the fact that, if you recall, those were just a few observed trips in there, and some of them were targeting bluefish and some of them were targeting croaker, and they weren't targeting cutlassfish. Then the other outlier in the ilex squid that I already brought out in the GARFO model.

In terms of feedback, one of the first questions we usually get from fishermen, whether they're commercial or recreational, is about access and whether or not they're going to be able to go into the area and fish in the area. The answer is yes, and we address that through our FAQs for the project, but we've been very clear in our communication that, yes, fishing commercially and recreationally will be allowed in the area.

One of the important pieces of feedback we got was related to the trawl tow directionality. When I started talking to the trawl boat captains that fish in there, and I asked them how they towed the area, they would say north to south, but then, when you really talked a little bit more, they say they tow the bottom, referring to some of the sloughs that are fairly subtle sloughs that are in there, and, when you look at that bathymetry and talk a little bit more, north-south turns into north-northeast and south-southwest, and it pretty much lines up, looking at chart plotter data that they had, with the LORAN-C2 lines, which run off to the north-northeast. That just follows that overall hydrography and bathymetry in the area.

One of the other areas that comes up is -- Or one of the other areas of discussion has been about cable burial, and, obviously, fishermen are interested to know that the cables will stay buried, and that's going to be informed by a cable burial risk assessment, and so, this year, it will be the third

season of survey campaigns, and, as that's going on, they will be looking at seabed mobility, and so they will be testing how much the seabed has changed since the last work was done, and that will help inform that risk assessment.

This is an indicative draft layout of the project, and so, if you will look at the orientation, it's laid out in that north-northeast and south-southwest pattern that I was referencing, and, just looking in the southeastern part of the development area, you see the turbines lined up exactly on that bottom bathymetry, and that's what I was referencing, in talking about that trawl tow directionality, and so this is an instance where sort of that fine-scale information, coming directly from the fishermen, can help inform how we might manage or avoid or minimize some of the potential impacts in the area and how to really best accommodate some of that historical fishing.

The drop-netting in there, when they set, the set directions are more variable, depending on the mark that they're working on and the school of fish that they're working on, but this is an indicative layout that we're excited to be able to show and talk to fishermen about.

In terms of next steps, we're focused, at this point, on socializing some of this fisheries data that I have shown you today, the project details and the illustrated layout with the commercial fleet and the recreational fishermen, and we're also continuing to collect any specific input on fishing history that fishermen want to share about the area, and I'm available for fisheries briefings, if any individual fishermen want to receive those, and I was in North Carolina last week and briefing commercial fishermen and dealers on the project and running through all this data, but we've got quite a bit more than we had last time we got together, and so it's been a pleasure to be able to show this to you today.

The website is up here, and fishermen can go to that and get real-time weather information and sea state information off the weather buoy that's in the area. Our fisheries FAQs are there, and, whenever we have survey operations ongoing, we have fisheries notices that are posted there, but I'm always glad to talk to any fishermen that have questions about the project area or want to talk through the details, and so, with that, Mr. Chairman, I would be glad to take any questions.

MR. BELL: All right. Well, thank you, Rick and Brian, and I appreciate the presentation. It's interesting what's going on up the road there. Any questions for either Rick or Brian about their presentation? I don't see hands here, and so, if someone has got eyes on hands, holler.

MS. WIEGAND: I don't see any hands up right now, Mel.

MR. BELL: Okay. I think your comment about the Virginia white shrimp trawl fishery -- I think, when Pat Geer moved up there, the shrimp must have followed him or something, and so I keep accusing Pat of stealing our shrimp. That is interesting, and it seems like you did find a really good spot up there to avoid existing fisheries, and that's essential in site selection for things, that you had a pretty good site like that, and so, if there are no questions for Rick or Brian, then what I would like to do -- That finishes the four items that we had on the agenda for Council Session I.

Remember that I was going to try to see if we could get a couple of other things in today, since we seem to be moving along at a pretty good clip, and so what I want to do is take a ten-minute break, and so, if we could be back at 2:36, and what we will do is go ahead and transition into Law

Enforcement, which will be starting a little early, and I believe we have Brian and Scott with us, and so that should work.

What we'll do is we will adjourn the Council Session I and go to the break, and then we'll do Law Enforcement, and then we'll reconvene Council Session I and we'll catch a couple of other things at that time, and we'll end up closing the meeting in closed session today, or closing today's session in closed, and so I'll see you guys back in ten minutes. Thank you.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. BELL: Welcome back, everyone. This will be a reconvening of Full Council Session I, and what I wanted to do was just take advantage of the time we have here, since we're running a little ahead of schedule, and I guess the council agenda, like nature, abhors a vacuum, and so what we'll do right off is Chip is going to clue us in a little bit -- As I mentioned, if you look ahead to the Snapper Grouper Committee agenda, and the overview, there's a couple of links.

When we get to the snowy grouper stock assessment, there's a little link that says "click here", and so this will be an explanation of what happens when you click here at that point, and also on greater amberjack, and there's the same type of link, and so Chip is going to just kind of give us an introduction to that. If we have any questions, great.

Then, after that, we will adjourn the open session, and we will need to transition over to closed. To do that, you will need to access the link -- There's a separate link for those that need to be on the closed session that Kelly provided to us on the 16th of February. We'll take a little break after Chip, and we'll transition over to closed, and we'll finish up the day in closed session. All right. That's the plan. Chip, take it away, whenever you're ready.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you very much, and thank you for the opportunity to present this tool to you guys this afternoon. What we were trying to do, as staff, is provide you a wealth of information, and this comes from Science Center staff working with us, as well as our own staff, putting a lot of this information together and really consolidating things that could help you kind of figure out where things might be or where things were in the past, some of the information that you've been given by the fishermen, and also just kind of look at some basic life history for each of the species.

Most of these are going to have four different tabs, and some of the species that you guys manage we have not done a fishery performance report for, and so they might not have that third tab in there. If that is the case, that will just be left out, and then you only have the three tabs, but, if you begin to look at this, we have some background information on exactly what we're trying to accomplish with the tool, and that's in the first paragraph, and then, if you look at the next series of bullets, it just describes basically how to use this tool and what these different tabs will have, and then the bottom describes all the different graphs that are provided in here.

I'm not going to go through all the different graphs, and it's a bit dense. It's a lot of information that's being provided to you at once, but this link is live, and so you guys can go back to it whenever you're looking for information or you forgot maybe a bit, and you want to look back at it, and this will be available to you.

One thing that I do want to -- A couple of things that I want to point out is the information that's provided here is not going to be the most up-to-date information, and so don't be using this to make management decisions. Just kind of use it as a guide for where the fishery might be and to get some background descriptions. All of the most recent information is going to be included in the amendment, and that's what you guys should be using when you're trying to make management measures or management changes.

The other thing that I want to point out is think of this as like developing a casserole, and not necessarily a cake, because this is really a tool for you guys, and what I want it to do is make it taste good, or make it seem good, for you guys, and it's really a tool for you guys to consider as you manage several different species, which can be extremely complex, and we can't expect everybody to know everything on all the species, and so what we're trying to provide you is little snippets for each different species.

On the second tab, what we have is the history of management, and so we have the history of management here that I have provided for greater amberjack, and so you can scroll through, and, in the first column, you will see the fishery management plan or the amendment number. In the second one, you're going to see the effective date. In the third column, you're going to see the proposed and final rule. The fourth column has all the major actions that were accomplished, and then we also have the affected species, and sometimes it's going to list all species, and sometimes it's going to list the target species.

I tried to narrow these down just to the ones that were of species of interest, and you can see that it's ten pages, and so, reading through, I probably missed one or two here or there, but it's going to get better over time, and we're going to make sure that it's going to be more appropriate for you guys, but this is a start, and, if there's any questions about it, please raise your hand. It is a ton of information, and, for this one, I do want to thank Mike Schmidtke for putting this together. We've also done a similar thing for king mackerel, and Christina Wiegand put that one together, and so you will see the tool for king mackerel as well as you're going through that committee.

Skipping over to the fishery performance report, this is from April of 2018, and this is the last time the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel talked about greater amberjack, and so, if you had some questions about what the fishermen were seeing at that time, you can go back and look at what they discussed, and so we feel that this is a really good tool to just get really good information on what the fishermen are describing, what they're seeing out there on the water, because, quite often, this can be almost foreseeing what could be happening in the fishery in the future.

Then the fourth tab is all of the graphs that I have mentioned before, and so, for each of these, on the left side, you'll see assessment output, combined data for both sectors, commercial sector, recreational sector, and then life history data, and, as you're clicking on the different radio buttons over here, you should see this picture change, and that's indicating that you did go to a different page, and so, on the assessment output page, we provide the FMSY and the annual fishing mortality rate, based on the most recent stock assessment, and we also provide spawning stock biomass, and then a Kobe plot, and what that Kobe plot is meaning is it's these four different -- It's basically four different quadrants.

Over here, you have the sustainable fishing, and then you can have one that is overfished and not overfishing, and that's in yellow, and you can have not overfished and overfishing not occurring,

and then, in red up here, you're going to have overfished and overfishing occurring, and this plot is based on the information that is provided in the stock assessment output.

We provide recruits over time, and we also provide recruits by biomass, and then, finally, we provide information on the different indices that were considered in the stock assessment. These indices are scaled and standardized, and so just be careful when you're looking at these, and then, over time, things could change in an index, and so they are going to vary as information is updated. If there is any questions on the assessment side, or if there's additional pieces from the stock assessment output that you guys would like to see for species like greater amberjack, king mackerel, or snowy grouper, please let me know.

MR. BELL: Any questions at this point for Chip? I don't see any hands.

DR. COLLIER: Okay, and so we'll go over to combined data for both sectors, and you can see how slow it is. It's not the most responsive, but it does get there eventually, and so the first plot that we provide here is the percent of the ACL harvested by year and by sector, and we also provide the allocation, and that's going to be in the plot, and that's going to be done for each species individually, and the reason that we're actually providing the percent of the ACL, especially right now, is the historical ACL for greater amberjack was monitored through the FES system, or the CHTS, the MRIP-CHTS, and those numbers changed the recreational data quite a bit, and comparing the current catch to the ACL -- It can be a little bit confusing, and so what we wanted to do is actually do it based on how effective management was and compare it to the landings at the time with the ACL at the time, and that's why it's the percent here.

The next piece down is comparing the commercial and recreational catches, and so what we do is we have landings from 2000 to 2019 for this species, and, for the most part, that's what we've been trying to do, is start around 2000 and go through 2019. If there is an additional time period that you guys would like to have, please let me know, and we'll try to add that data in there.

The next plot below that is going to be the seasonal catch, and, when I'm talking seasonal catch, because I'm combining commercial and recreational, what I do is break the commercial catch up into waves, similar to what the recreational catch would be, and so that's what you're seeing provided here, is wave-level catch for commercial and recreational fisheries, and you can see it from 2000 all the way up to 2019. The next plot is looking at the state-level landings, and this is combined for recreational and commercial, and those are the three graphs, or four graphs, that we had for the combined data. Any questions or additional information that you guys would like to see on those?

MR. BELL: Any questions? Not yet.

DR. COLLIER: All right. I will go over to the commercial data. Here is the commercial data. It's annual landings and releases, and the commercial data is usually recorded in pounds of fish, and so we have to break up the plots that have the landings and releases. Releases are always in numbers of fish, and these are -- The releases are coming from the last stock assessment, and so they're not going to be the most up-to-date piece of information, but we did want to be able to provide that information to you as you consider management going forward.

The next graph underneath that is -- Once again, it's the wave-level landings for commercial catches from 2000 to 2019, and so that's twenty years of data right there. Skipping down to the next graph is state-level landings. For the commercial data, we have to lump Georgia with Florida, in order to avoid confidentiality issues, and so that's going to be done in the recreational fishery as well. That way, everything is consistent as I am setting up these databases.

The next piece of information we're providing is the length distribution, and this comes from the TIP data they provided to us for these different species, and you can see this is an unweighted number of fish, and what I mean by that is these are just raw TIP numbers that are coming -- It's a raw number of fish being measured, and it's not weighted based on the catch on a trip or anything like that, and so this is just raw data, unexpanded, and you can see the size distribution based on the sampling.

The next plot below that is the pounds landed by pound category, and what we're looking at is about a hundred-pound bin of catch, and you can see that it goes up to 1,200 pounds for greater amberjack, and we provide this just for the last ten years. We can extend it beyond that, but we just wanted to -- Due to limited space, we went from 2010 to 2020, and this is for pounds of fish.

The next one below is you're actually looking at the number of trips, and so this is the number of trips that landed a certain poundage of fish. As you can expect with a lower number of pounds, you have a greater number of trips, but it doesn't always equate to a greater pounds of fish, and so, if you're only catching two pounds on a trip, which isn't likely for greater amberjack, but this is just for an example, you're not going to have -- It takes a lot of trips to equal something that has 500 pounds landed on a trip. Any questions on the commercial data?

MR. BELL: I don't see any.

DR. COLLIER: All right, and so recreational data is very similar to the commercial data, except the recreational data is usually recorded in numbers of fish, and so you can directly compare the number of fish landed with the releases, and then you can look at seasonal landings, like we did with the commercial, state landings, size distribution, and, for the size distribution, this is just for private and charter, and so we can look at the lengths caught in those fisheries. We are working with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, in order to get the length distribution from the charter boat fishery as well, and so, in future versions, that's going to be added into this.

Then we have landings per angler of greater amberjack, and this is expanded landings, and so it would be the total number of greater amberjack that are harvested, based on different bag limits, or different catch per angler. These catch per angler, or landings per angler, are broken up into half-fish categories for everything greater than one, and I will jump right into the life history.

This life history is similar to what you guys get in the fishery performance report tab, and it's actually the exact same information, unless it's changed in the stock assessment, and so we have the length-at-age plot, and, for this one, I actually added some confidence intervals meant to approximate what is coming out of the stock assessment. We have the length-weight relationship, the proportion of female mature, and a new piece of information that we have not included in the fishery performance report is the proportion female. For greater amberjack, it's 50/50 throughout the assessment, but, for other species, it does change substantially.

That is all I had for you, if there's any questions or any suggestions to make this better. There's a couple of things that aren't in there right now that we are looking to put in there in the near future, which is the economic and social data. We're going to be working on getting that incorporated and then trying to take some information that was provided to you through the Ecospecies consideration and trying to add that into this as well, and so that will be another tab added under this radio button.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, Chip. That's very useful. I've got a quick question, and then others may. So, right now, we've got the two links in our briefing materials and all, but is the concept here then that you would have these developed for at least significant fisheries, or species, and the links to this information would be kept live somewhere on the website and would be updated continuously, so we could use them and anybody could use them as we go through the year, and is that the concept? It's really a cool thing, and everybody that was involved in the development of it, I appreciate. Is that sort of the big picture for this?

DR. COLLIER: The intent is to provide this to you guys when something like a stock assessment comes to you or you're beginning to initiate an amendment, and so what we want to do is provide you the background information, but, if you would like us to update this on an annual basis or -- I think it would be a pretty heavy lift to do it on an annual basis, but maybe biannual, just for consideration as you're looking into different management measures or thinking about things that need to get done, and this might provide some information to you.

MR. BELL: Got you. I wasn't trying to -- Obviously, it's a lot of work, and keeping it fresh would be a lot of work as well, and so that certainly makes sense around assessment time or whatever, but I really appreciate all you guys have put into this, or everybody, and are there any questions for Chip or suggestions of things that you might like to see added or changed? You're a real quiet bunch here today. Anna.

MS. BECKWITH: Not any suggestions, but just I think this is great, and, if I would have had this as a new council member, I think it would have been really cool, and I would have looked at it a lot, and so I hope that my -- Whoever takes my place will make good use of this, because that's great information in one spot. You come in, and it's like a fire hose of species that you know about, and species that you don't know about, and this is a great tool. Thank you, guys.

MR. BELL: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I haven't looked over this yet, but is there anything in these fishery descriptions, whether it be history of fisheries or fishery performance or graphs, that show an area where these fish are caught at? I know the South Atlantic is a big area, but some of these species aren't caught in abundance in the whole South Atlantic region, and I was wondering -- I have never seen none of that stuff, even at stock assessments or anything like that, to give somebody a visual, to help them understand not only the performance or history of management but the location, and not to give somebody's favorite fishing location, but just in general somewhere and a lot better than what I've seen in the past probably fifteen years. Thank you.

DR. COLLIER: So, Dewey, what I have developed in the past has been kind of an animated tool, based on reporting grids, and we could potentially do that, and we'll have to look out for confidentiality issues, but we can make it animated through time, and, that way, you could see

exactly where the fishery is operating. I am trying to think about exactly what would be needed, but we could definitely do that. It leads to a very slow app, but we could definitely get that in there, or maybe put in a link to a separate one, because it, in all likelihood, would be so slow.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: How about something like heat maps? I have seen them in other regions or something, where they do heat maps, because, that way, it gives somebody a better understanding of -- There might be a species that's only caught in any quantity in about four different places in the whole South Atlantic, and I'm just curious, and I think it would help people understand and add to the different things that you've done here, and that might be a good thing, and like a heat map, so to speak, and, of course, we don't want to divulge any confidential information, but I'm sure that there is a way to show the data without knowing where so-and-so sat at, because it's -- I understand that. Thank you.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks for that, Dewey. Anyone else have any questions or suggestions for Chip, in terms of further development or things we might want to add? Okay. So, well, the idea here was that it's a little explanation of what happens when you click here, as we kind of prepare for Snapper Grouper, when we get to the discussion of those species that we'll be dealing with there. If there are no further questions --

DR. COLLIER: There is one in the question box, where it's asking if this database is available to the public, and this tool is available to the public. Not all of the information would be available to the public, and not all the background information, but whatever is in this tool is available, and so they should be able to look through it. It is provided in the briefing book, under the agendas, and then the overview, and so you should be able to find it there. I do want to point out, for Christina, that we do have one for king mackerel, and so that species is included in this as well, and so we did not look over that species either.

MR. BELL: Okay. Thanks, Chip. That's what I was referring to in the -- When you're in the briefing materials, and you go to the agenda, and particularly the overview for Snapper Grouper, you will see, in two areas, where there's, in all caps, a "click here", and that's how you would access this, and so certainly this is all available to the public through that mechanism, but, again, the idea is that this wouldn't necessarily live someplace year-round and be updated constantly, and it would be something what we would have access to around decision-making times or around assessment times or whatever, and it's very useful, and so thanks to everybody that was involved in this.

If there is no further questions, that was the last bit of open session meeting that I had planned on, and what we were hoping to do is shift to a closed session. Now, John Carmichael sent around an email at 3:43 to council members with -- If you haven't already registered for the council session, which was not supposed to be until the 4th, you would need to do that, and then -- This is a question that I have, John or Kelly. Typically, we would get like a reminder on the 4th, or the night before, and it would say click here to get on the webinar, but, since that's set up for the 4th, is that going to happen, or do we just click on that link again, or how is this supposed to actually work, someone from the technical side?

MR. CARMICHAEL: For those who can find their original confirmation of the registration, it would have given you a link. If you have that, you can just go to that and call it up. If you have some trouble finding that -- If I recall, if you click on that registration, it will tell you that you're

already registered once you enter your email address, if you enter it the same. It will say, hey, you're already registered for that, and it should let you go ahead and click on the joint webinar in progress, and so we're going to get that started up, and it will take a few minutes, probably, to close this out and get everyone over there.

MR. BELL: Okay. Do you think you need fifteen minutes, John? Does that work?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I would think so. Kelly, are you still here, or did you pop over there already?

MR. KLASNICK: I'm still on here. That's fine, Mel. It will only take a minute to shut this one down and fire that one up.

MR. BELL: Okay. Does ten minutes work then?

MR. KLASNICK: Yes, sir.

MR. BELL: Okay. All right, folks, and so we will go ahead and adjourn the open session of Full Council I, and we will shift over, those of us who are in the closed session, and we will dispatch that one item in closed session, and hopefully, if this all works, we will save ourselves an hour come Thursday morning, and so that's the plan, and I will see those of you in the closed session in ten minutes and everybody else tomorrow morning. We will start up at 8:30 with the Habitat and Ecosystem Committee, and staff will be live start at 8:00, if anybody wants to check sound and that sort of thing, and so thank you very much for everything today, and we'll see you back tomorrow or in ten minutes.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on March 1, 2021.)

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Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
April 28, 2021

SAFMC March Council Meeting Attendee Report: (3/01/21 - 3/05/21)

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663-361-235	03/01/2021 11:55 AM EST

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Woodward	00Spud
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brewer	00chester
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