

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

GOLDEN CRAB ADVISORY PANEL MEETING

**Reefhouse Resort & Marina
Key Largo, Florida**

June 30, 2022

Transcript

Advisory Panel Members

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Council Members

Chester Brewer
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Attendees and Invited Participants

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Ed Glazier
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The Golden Crab Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Reefhouse Resort & Marina, Key Largo, Florida, on June 30, 2022, and was called to order by Ms. Christina Wiegand.

MS. WIEGAND: Good morning, everyone. We're going to go ahead and get started. The Chair was unable to make it, and we don't have a Vice Chair for this AP, and so apologies that you all are stuck with me trying to run this meeting, but, first things first, and Approval of the Agenda. We've just got one item on here for you guys, and that's putting together a fishery performance report for golden crab, and we'll walk through what that is when we get to it, but is there anything else that anyone would like to talk about for golden crab today?

All right. Seeing nothing, next up would be public comment. If there's anyone in the room would like to make public comment, just let us know. If there is anyone online that would like to make public comment, all you've got to do is hit that hand-raise button, and it's the button that looks a little bit like a turkey. Seeing none, I'm going to turn it over to Jessica McCawley, who is Vice Chair of the Golden Crab Committee, for a few remarks before we get rolling.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Christina. In case you guys are wondering why are we meeting, why are we meeting the Golden Crab AP, so now the council has decided to meet the APs at least once a year, and so this will help ensure that the council has the most up-to-date information. If something is happening with the fishery, then you guys can tell us about it, if you have other concerns, but we think that -- Some of the AP members have mentioned, and not necessarily for this AP, but others, that they get on an AP, and then it doesn't meet for two or three years, and then it might be time for them to get off the AP, and the AP never met, and so the council is kind of changing the way they do their procedures for the fishery.

One of the things that I think you guys are going to talk about today is the fishery performance report, and so these are being done for a number of the fisheries that the council manages, and this is based on your experience and what you're seeing out there, and it will be captured in a document. Council members do reference this, when we talk about management actions, and it will be online, and, that way, if people have questions, then we can direct them to that fishery performance report, and so it's kind of your observations of what you're seeing on the water.

Then, at the most recent council meeting, the council made the decision to restructure how the AP operates, and so, beginning on July 1, and so beginning on Friday, all individuals who own a golden crab permit will be invited to participate in meetings regarding the fishery, and so I just want to point that out there, and Chester and I are here to hear what you guys say, and we can try to answer any questions that you have, but, for the most part, we're here to hear information and get information from you guys. Thanks, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Jessica, and so we'll jump right into the fishery performance report. There was a website linked, and the website linked just provides you guys a little bit of background on the golden crab fishery, and not that you all aren't intensely familiar with everything that's been going on with it in the last few years, but it just briefly goes over some life history, and it moves forward, and, if you look at that Figure 1, you can see that males tend to grow larger than females, males getting up to about a max of six inches, versus five, or five-and-a-half, for females.

We've got the landings trends over the last few years. As you can see, you guys have been well below that two-million-pound ACL, and then sort of the overall value of the fishery, and individual sort of price per pound ends up being confidential, but you can see that spike in 2015, before going back to stable, back out to about where it had been in previous years, by 2020.

There is also a link to the golden crab management areas in there, if we need to reference them for any part of our discussion today, and so, with that, I will pull up the list of fishery performance report questions, and, like Jessica already detailed, the purpose of these fishery performance reports is really meant to be sort of a check-in with fishermen, with the understanding that, you know, the scientific and landings data we have is great, but, as fishermen, you guys are out there on the water, or you're working with fishermen regularly, and so you know, better than anyone, what's happening on the water and what's going on in this fishery, and the information you have could really provide a lot of added value to the scientific and landings data that we have.

We've got just a series of questions that we'll go over with you today, and you guys can sort of discuss, and, like Jessica said, we'll record it and put together a document that just summarizes your thoughts about what is going on on the water, and so first up is just sort of this question, to really just sort of get us started with the discussion, and so what substantial changes have you guys seen in the golden crab fishery over the last ten years or so, and what do you think is sort of driving any of those changes that you're seeing, whether those be, you know, socioeconomic changes or biological changes or whatever, just sort of your overarching thoughts on the fishery, before we start diving into some of these specific categories.

MR. RAU: My name is Howard Rau, and I'm an ex-golden crab fisherman. What I see in the fishery, and I have seen that spike in 2015, and that was great, and you can see a downward trend in the numbers, when you go for two or three years, and that had some to do with COVID, on my part, and I was unable to get a captain, but, in the last year, or two years, the crabs are coming back, and I'm seeing a lot of small crabs, and I'm releasing these crabs, and the fishery seems to be looking -- It seems to be looking pretty darned good. This is only in the middle zone, and Nuno would have to comment on the northern zone, and I know he's been doing it a lot longer, or I should say more consistently.

I do feel that the Horizon had a lot to do with the lack of production there for a while, because of, I believe, a lot of the -- This is conjecture, but I kind of feel that the females -- That's kind of where we get our crab, over here on the east coast, out of the Gulf, and I do believe that that had an impact on the fishery, for us, where you see that downtrend after 2015.

MR. ALMEIDA: Nuno Almeida, northern zone, golden crab. I agree with Howard. Before COVID -- I mean, we're still talking like -- We still fished all the way to 2020, until we got hit with the market had to be closed down, and there wasn't any flights to export the product, and very little could get sold in the domestic market, but, you know, this data that you all have, you're just doing it based on landings, if I'm not mistaken, but, in 2015, we had more boats in play, and so, you know, if the data is collected throughout the whole fishery, and there is only, you know, a little more than half of the vessels that were doing it at the time, and you had vessels doing it part-time, and so I don't disagree with Howard.

I think the fishery is plentiful, and I think it's healthy. In the last couple of years, I saw where the shed went for a long time. Normally, we would have seen it earlier, but I have seen it go like

throughout the whole winter, and there was just constantly shedders, which, you know, it was good, because, again, now it's plentiful, and so I think it actually made it healthier, and I don't know if anything was collected when there was a vessel in the Gulf also, and I don't think that was being reported, but, you know, there was information that was brought to me where they were keeping all the females.

Every female they caught, which would be traps full, they would keep, and I think Howard could probably give better information, as far as the travel path of these crabs. I think, and I'm pretty sure that these things swim around from the Gulf, and come around with the current, and that might -- That may be just a breeding ground out there for them, in the Gulf, and you had a boat that was just catching them all up, where we don't being in not one female crab, ever. I think that's it.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and I did want to note that we do have Theresa online, and, if you would like to speak up, please feel free to just unmute and jump into the conversation.

MS. COPPA: One of the things that I have seen over the years, and one of the biggest complaints while we were fishing -- Most of the fishermen know that my husband passed away, and we sold the permit, but what I have seen is the foreign entities were complaining about the tariffs and how, with that price that we were getting, back in 2015, that it wasn't as doable, and so, yes, we have seen the drop-off, and we've seen the problems with distribution, and the main thing is to keep the product alive to get it delivered somewhere, and so, with all this, we've managed to survive the industry, but, there again, we have to research better markets, and I'm willing to help with that, if anybody contacts me, and I'm glad to see everybody here at the meeting.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Thank you, guys, and so we'll move on to some of these more specific questions, and so, next up, we've got the fishing behavior and catch level category, which you guys touched on a little bit a second ago, but talking about are you seeing any effort shifts to or from golden crab? Are you seeing more people interested in participating in this fishery? Are you seeing any changes in techniques or how you all are targeting these crabs, and is there anything you do to actively avoid -- I know there's a lot of coral areas out there, but to avoid impacts to that deepwater coral or other habitat, and then, of course, do you ever experience any bycatch in your golden crab traps?

MR. ALMEIDA: In 1988, off of Miami, we caught a three-and-a-half-pound New England lobster in one of our golden crab traps, and that is documented in the Department of Science in Washington, D.C. That's the only thing we ever caught in our traps. A couple of little dogfish, and what else, Howard?

MR. RAU: Isopods.

MR. ALMEIDA: Isopods, and that's about it, and, of course, a couple of shells, a couple of pieces of rock, but that's nothing, but that lobster was cool.

MR. RAU: The one question of do you actively avoid fishing for golden crab, we definitely stay away from any hardbottom. I mean, you lose your gear if you get into that, and so there's no -- It's a mess.

MS. WIEGAND: What about interest in the fishery? Do you see -- I know there's only a few of you left fishing, but have you seen anyone who has been really interested in getting in and learning how to sort of prosecute this fishery? I know it's a fairly technical fishery.

MR. RAU: Yes, and I've just sold my operation to the Deep Sea Fisheries, and, anyway, they have enough permits to fish from North Carolina to the Tortugas, and the captain, Kelly Madden, he's been -- He used to do this fishery when we first started, back in 1998, or 1997, and so he's very experienced with it, and he's fished all over the world, and so he sees a good opportunity, and I think they're going to do a good job prosecuting this fishery, and I hear that they're only going to take Number 1, which I think is a wonderful -- Number 1 crab is a crab that is over a pound-and-a-half, and so that will do wonderful for the resource, and, of course, they're bigger money, and so that's the interest.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Well, we can scroll on down to sort of the next set of questions, and so these get into sort of moving away from the biological aspect and talking a bit more about those social and economic influences that can change a fishery, and so have you guys seen price and demand for golden crab change?

Are you seeing increased demand, or less demand, for a specific size of golden crab? I know a lot of what you guys sell is international, but has there been any interest for more of a domestic market? Are changes in infrastructure, docks, marinas, fish houses, that are getting harder to find, and sort of the lack of crew availability that we've heard about from a number of fishermen, and are those affecting opportunities for golden crab? Then sort of how have these communities been able to adapt to changes?

I know you guys fish in incredibly deep water, but do you see any conflicts between you all and any other fisheries that are prosecuted out in those deep waters, and then, of course, you talked already a little bit about the impact from COVID-19, but did you see any impacts resulting from hurricanes, like Irma?

MR. RAU: I will comment on a couple of those. Docks and marinas, that's kind of what put me out of business. I could not find a place to fish in the Lauderdale area, and so I was put out of business. Crew was terrible during the COVID time. There's just not a place to dock for a deep-draft vessel, and you can't really run a fishing operation in all these areas from -- I guess you have to go up to -- Maybe in Fort Pierce you might be able to, and down in the Keys you would be able to. Nuno, how is the price? You would be more -- You could talk more about that, because you've been consistently fishing.

MR. ALMEIDA: Well, the price, right now, is an all-time high, across-the-board with everything, because there's a shortage in quotas out west, and, you know, so, when all of those prices went up, because of the king crab and dungeness and what have you -- Those are all live markets as well, but, when they can't get as many, or as much, of them species, it brought the price of our crab up as well.

You know, I handle all of my own product, the logistics and the trucking and everything, and so, you know, my price is all figured in, where it's got to go 1,200 miles up the road to New York, to different facilities, where it goes into live wells and then exported, but the majority of it, especially now, it's all being sold in the domestic market, because China is still closed down, which was

good, I mean, because we like to have it here in the U.S. We don't want to make it so that it's an item that strictly just goes to export.

Even when it does get exported, I would say maybe 20 or 30 percent will still get sold in the domestic market, because of some of the crabs just not being healthy enough, and they can just tell, you know, if they're missing a digit or just not looking like it can make a thirty-hour flight.

As far as the dockage, depending on where you go, and I agree that I think south Florida has been really difficult. I started in West Palm, where you cannot find dockage, or even the amenities, for a commercial boat, but I agree, and I think Howard is right, and Fort Pierce is still pretty commercial friendly over there, and there's a decent amount of boats in the fleet there. I think we're pretty liked up there, where we're at, because it offsets them a little bit, when they have nothing going on with the shrimpers, and so we run everything through the dock, and so they all - - You know, everybody makes a piece, through the fish house, and it all works. Hurricane Irma didn't really affects us too much, I don't think, and we already spoke about the COVID-19.

Conflicts, I mean, we don't have any conflicts with any other fishery, but we do have a lot of, like Howard mentioned, a lot of gnarly bottom, where we lose -- Occasionally lose gear and lose our grapple, and also have to avoid a lot of cable that's out there too, fiberoptic cable, and, of course, we stay very far away from the coral, very far away from that, but everything is in the domestic market today.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Thank you, guys. We'll move on to the next set of questions, which is about management measures. Right now, the council isn't considering any changes to management measures for golden crab, but we always like to check-in with you guys and see if there are new management measures that you feel like the council should be considering. Are the current zones that are in place still appropriate? Is that two-million-pound annual catch limit still appropriate? Are the current closed areas still providing adequate protection to coral, or is there a need to sort of reevaluate and modify those areas?

MR. ALMEIDA: I think the zones -- In my opinion, they could stay the way they are, and the quota also should at least stay to where it's at. Again, I mentioned earlier that we had more boats in the fishery, and we have the late Tony Coppa, that is no longer fishing, and, also, another vessel that I had sold, but, if these permits go back into play, and the fishery stays as it is, we're going to need -- I think we need to leave the quota to where it's at, no less. Thank you.

MR. RAU: I think the management measures are good, and I believe the current zones are a good thing. The annual catch limit is appropriate for now, but I think it could be revisited down the road, and I do believe the current areas -- The corals are protected, and I think that there are areas out there that we should try -- Maybe try to open up some areas, some new areas, that don't have the coral, because there are some places that I will ride across, and I will see mud bottom for a long time, and I think this should definitely be revisited down the road.

MR. ALMEIDA: I agree with Howard, for sure. We would love to revisit the closed areas and see about opening them up, to where we know there isn't any coral.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Cruising on to the next set of questions, now we'll talk a bit more about some of that habitat, and, again, you guys have already touched on a little bit of this earlier,

in talking about the abundance of golden crab still being good and seeing some of those smaller crab, but have you seen any shifts in when or where the crab are available? Are you seeing them move, you know, further north or further south? Are you seeing a different size of golden crab than you used to ten years ago, and are you noticing any sort of unique effects of environmental conditions on golden crab?

MR. RAU: I touched on that in the beginning, about the abundance, and how we saw that it had gone down, but it seems like now it's coming back, and it seems to be getting very healthy. I guess when are the golden crab available, and has this changed, and, as far as I'm concerned, no. They start hard in January, and they can run to July, hard. Depth, the only reason I say that we have moved out a lot deeper, and the catches have been better, but I can't really -- I can't really comment, because I never fished that deep before, and so, I mean, how was it back in the day, in 2015, because I was never out that deep.

MS. WIEGAND: I am actually going to -- I am checking my email, from people who are listening online, and I'm going to jump back up to the social and economic questions and ask -- So, when you're selling crab domestically, where are you selling those crabs? I guess, for many reasons, some of them personal, is where can we get some golden crabs, if we wanted to buy them domestically?

MR. RAU: I don't know, and, I mean, Two Bills Seafood, you could probably buy some retail there, and there's a place up in Canaveral that you can buy them too, but that's all I know, locally.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so up to like New York City and up north is where you're sending some of that product now?

MR. RAU: And over to the east.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and I guess, just sort of last, but not least, is there anything else that you think is important for the council to know about golden crab, any research you think that should be done to support the needs of the golden crab fishermen, and I guess I will look to Chester and Jessica, as the council members in the room, if there's anything else you want to know from these fishermen, while we've got them here, or I will also add, if there's any sort of history of the golden crab fishery that you think is important for us to know, sort of moving forward.

MR. NIELSEN: I want to say, for the past twenty-five years, the golden crab fishery has been healthy and sustainable, and it's going to go into the future with very little problems that we've had in this fishery, and I really would like to see this fishery go on with very little interruption and with this council being very good to the guys and allow them to fish, and do not take away any bottom. You need to give us back bottom, like Howard and Nuno had mentioned earlier.

Remember that these crabs -- They go down the slope when the water gets warm, and we never really chased them down that slope. It was too deep, and it was too dangerous, and we always waited for that water to cool off, and the crabs came back up. That could be another reason why there was a little bit of a drop-off, is because we've always found that them crabs went deeper when the water got too hot, and, also, the current started to scream, also, and so we kind of took a couple of months off during the summer, because it was just crazy, crazy current out there, and it's just very, very dangerous, no matter what you do on a golden crab boat. Thank you.

MS. ALMEIDA: Thank you, David, for that. In the past ten years, I think our strategies have gotten a lot better, and, you know, just experience, and, like David said, the current is so brutal, and having to go deeper in the wintertime makes it very, very challenging. Bathymetrics are always so unpredictable, and I think -- In fact, I know the fishery, if it even looked like it got better over the years, it's because we've just gotten a little better at it. Thanks.

I mean that, again, per vessel and not the data that you guys are collecting for the whole fishery. If you guys take and look at the reported landings per vessel, I think it would be a better information, especially when, again, there were boats that were doing it only half-season, or what have you, or smaller boats that couldn't put in the full weather.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Anything else you guys want to talk about, to make sure the council understands? I guess this is your opportunity to talk directly to the council members and make sure any needs or concerns you guys have are addressed, but this is all we had on the agenda for today, and so --

MR. BREWER: I was just going to say that the need to reevaluate the closed areas is pretty much overarching. We are hearing that from a lot of the different fisheries and the people who prosecute them. When -- I agree with you. We have actually built-in, to some of these closed areas, spawning areas in particular, rules and regulations that, if they're not demonstrated to be working, they get sunsetted, and there's a time period.

Whether we'll ever follow that time period, I don't know, and I don't know where the money would come from to do the reevaluations of these different closed areas, because it's a pretty -- I mean, if you look at a map, there is some pretty significant closed areas, off particularly the east coast of Florida. Anyway, we hear you, and the other take-away that I had from this is don't mess around with this fishery too much, because, right now, it's going along pretty good, and just don't mess with it too much.

MR. RAU: I think one way we could do this is to start mapping -- Have the fishing vessels map the bottom, because they run -- For years and years and years, they will be running over this, and, if they put the right machines on it, and you guys would know, better than I would, and, that way, you would have that information.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Well, if there's no other business, I can open it up, one last time, for public comment. If there's anyone in the room or online who would like to say anything else on the record, just go ahead and raise your hand.

MR. MADDEN: My name is Kelly Madden, and I'm old, but new, to the system here, and one of the comments I have is about the Gulf fishery, and a lot of people believe that the crab are coming from the Gulf, and you have people fishing in the Gulf that are not supposed to be, and that's not being enforced, and I want to know why that's not being enforced.

People that are illegally fishing, and it's known, and I have talked to several people that know about this, and they just simply don't care. That's what they said, and so that is my comment, that the breeding grounds are in the Gulf, and a lot of people believe that, and, if that's true, then you

need to regulate that, and you don't need to let people be fishing over there. That's not right. That's all I have to say.

MR. ALMEIDA: Kelly, I would like to know how long ago was this --

MR. MADDEN: Two-and-a-half years.

MR. ALMEIDA: So I don't know if that's still happening.

MR. MADDEN: The point is, if it does happen again --

MR. ALMEIDA: Well, I think they got shut down. I believe they got shut down.

MR. MADDEN: No, they didn't get shut down. That's not true.

MR. ALMEIDA: They didn't?

MR. MADDEN: No.

MR. ALMEIDA: Okay, because I made reference to this earlier, and I don't know if you were here.

MR. MADDEN: Well, I went to look to buy the boat, and it was the Little Brothers that was doing it. The Little Brothers was the name of the boat, and I don't know the name of the gentleman that owns it. It was a shrimper, like a seventy-seven-footer.

MR. ALMEIDA: Is that Sam?

MR. RAU: It's either Sam or John. It's probably Sam.

MR. MADDEN: Anyway, I think that that should be at least addressed. That's all.

MR. RAU: Kelly, how long ago was this?

MR. MADDEN: They told me the boat was tied in Bayou La Batre two-and-a-half years ago, and they were fishing out of Tarpon Springs, is where the boat was actually coming in and out of.

MR. RAU: That's correct. I know it was in Tarpon Springs, but I don't know -- Is it doing this now?

MR. MADDEN: No, and it's completely tied up. I wouldn't even -- If you gave me the boat, I wouldn't take it. It's that destroyed, but, also, in addition to that, it looks to me like they were catching and processing onboard, in addition to fishing illegally, and so I just think that that should be on the radar for the enforcement people, because it affects us.

MR. ALMEIDA: Well, apparently, there was not a permit needed, and I've heard this over several years, over and over again, that there was no permit needed to fish in the Gulf.

MR. MADDEN: Right.

MR. ALMEIDA: But what they do need is a trap license or permit.

MR. MADDEN: Right, because, technically, the way I've read it, is you can take stone crab or lobster pots out there and fish, if you wanted to.

MR. ALMEIDA: Right.

MR. MADDEN: You just can't use a golden crab pot.

MR. ALMEIDA: You know what gets me, is because I did try it, several years ago, and I was there for maybe a month, and, yes, it just did not work. There was traps full of female, which I heard was what he was doing, bringing in a boatload of female.

MR. MADDEN: Everything, yes.

MR. ALMEIDA: When I tried it, that's all we were catching, and the males were really small. We were there for a total of maybe a month and decided to come back.

MR. MADDEN: The same general area?

MR. ALMEIDA: I was out of Fort Myers, Fort Myers Beach, but, yes, and, I mean, again, I have now three permits, and I don't agree -- Where you all closed all this bottom here for coral, and I can tell you there's a lot more coral over there in the Gulf than we see here on the east coast, and so, you know, not only being there illegally, and you've got a boat that's destroying all that bottom with the coral in it, and so all of the coral committees want to do something about that, and, I mean, they can go over to the Gulf and protect that coral there.

MR. NIELSEN: Does anybody know how deep they were fishing over there? I had heard that the males start at about 2,000 feet, and that females are shallower, but after 2,000 feet is where the males lived, and does anybody -- That was back in the Little Giant days, wasn't it? Also, Whipple, with his study, but he was shallow though.

MR. MADDEN: When I did it, and I fished out of the Dry Tortugas. I fished in Fort Pierce, and I couldn't make it work, and so I went to the Dry Tortugas, and, yes, shallower was females, and deeper was males, absolutely, but I don't know about around the corner and up into the Gulf, but, right there, yes, for sure.

AP MEMBER: Another thing that I was curious about was that Deep Horizon oil spill and what it did to them crabs and the things that are on that bottom, and I really wish we knew about that. I don't think it's ever going to come out, but --

MR. MADDEN: I think you have a group now that's in the western Gulf, because of where that happened, and it's in the bend right there, right, and so you have this, Florida, and you have this, and, when that happened, they all migrated that way, to get away from it. Typically, they come down and around, but they had to get out of there, and so they went that way. That's my personal opinion.

MR. ALMEIDA: I bumped into a research guy on one of the boats, and he said that there was a glob of oil down there ten miles long and five miles wide or so, and it was down a thousand feet, and, of course, nobody will ever know it, and nobody will ever see it.

MR. MADDEN: They called my dad out of retirement to run that thing, to run the BP spill, to oversee the whole stupid thing. I can't tell you how much dispersant they put out there, okay, and they were changing crews on a weekly basis, because the guys were getting sick, on the boat, from the dispersant, which is basically soap, and they just covered it all up. They did a fifteen-square-mile survey, which is nothing, and called it good.

MR. RAU: I kind of heard that there was a chemical in that dispersant that actually attracted the male crab, and I don't know whether that's true, but I heard that from some research that was done, that it actually attracted the male crab to that dispersant, which killed the crab. It killed the crab eventually.

One question is whether the males are out or inshore -- What I have read is that -- What I have seen or read, but it's different in the Gulf, in the bight, and like in Azores and Africa, and I never really got to get the time, and so whether that changed, but sometimes the males would be out deep, and, like up north, the research showed that the males were in shallower, and the females were out deep. In the Gulf, it was different, and, like in the Azores, it was different too, and so I have a feeling that it might have been the seasonal run that made that change.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I see that Myra Brouwer, who is our Deputy Director for Management, has her hand up, and I think she wants to address some of the coral areas that you guys were speaking about, and so go ahead, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Hi. Thank you, and good morning, everybody. It's nice to hear some familiar voices, Howard and Nuno, and I wish I was there in-person to say hello, but, yes, I just wanted to -- I heard some of the comments about the enforcement issues, and I continue to staff the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel, and so I'm taking notes, and hopefully I can bring back some clarity to the issue, and so, if you guys have any other enforcement questions, or concerns, please go ahead and let me know, and let Christina know, and we'll try to get information on those things.

Then, regarding the coral areas, you know, the areas that were designated as golden crab access areas is, I'm assuming, what you guys are talking about, and those are very deep, obviously, and they don't have a sunset provision, and so, if those are the areas that you guys are saying that need to be reevaluated, then we would have to do what was done at the time that those were put into place, which was get sort of the footprint of where the fishery is operating, right, and some of you provided a lot of information to the council back then, when those areas first got put into place, and so I just wanted to clarify that that was in fact what you guys were discussing. Thank you.

MR. RAU: Myra, could you explain that once more?

MS. BROUWER: About the access areas?

MR. RAU: Yes, and how you can address that.

MS. BROUWER: Right, and so those areas, if you recall, are adjacent, or sometime within, the areas that have been designated as the coral habitat areas of particular concern, and the way we put those together, and we established the boundaries, was we went to you guys, and we said, okay, where are you fishing, and you, and some of the other folks that were fishing at the time, provided coordinates, so that we could then draw, on a map, the footprint of where your fishery was happening.

If that has changed, if you guys are fishing in different areas, or the distribution, or the crabs are moving, as I've heard, then we would have to go through that same process, because these areas were not put in place with a sunset provision, which basically means that, after a certain number of years, they go away, and so these were established as pretty much permanent closed areas, and so does that help?

MR. RAU: Yes, but I've kind of got a different concept. When we did it, we were pretty much told where we were going to fish. I mean, yes, there was some input back and forth, but there were a lot of areas that we did try to get, and they didn't have the science, and so they used the best available information to set up these areas.

MR. ALMEIDA: Hi, Myra, and, yes, I'm with Howard on that. I think it was more of them telling us where they were going to allow us to fish, and they basically just gave us a piece, rather than, you know, trying to get more data, or use a lot of the historic fishing, which we know there was fishermen, at the time, way up there in that northern zone, and it didn't even matter. They just closed it right off. So, I mean, anything you can do to help us revisit this, and try and get them to, you know, allow us to open it up some, that would be very helpful.

MS. BROUWER: Well, obviously, it will be where the council can put this on their priority, and they have actually a whole bunch of stuff on their plate, but I just wanted to clarify, and you are correct that those areas -- It was kind of striking a balance, right, between where we knew, at the time, the corals were and where the golden crab fishery was happening, and so we went through this lengthy process, where we brought together the golden crab fishery, and also the deepwater coral scientists and the advisory panels, and then that's how those areas were created.

Yes, I agree that it's going to be -- You know, it's going to take some time, I guess, and there has been more information that's been put together, or, you know, mapping, new mapping, and habitat characterization since we did this back in -- I guess it was in 2009, and I can't even remember, but, yes. Thanks.

MR. ALMEIDA: Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Well, before we wrap things up, is there anything else that you guys would like to talk about, while we're here?

MR. ALMEIDA: My question is what are we going to do about this AP panel? Is it going to just remain the same, the way we are, the members, or is this -- Are we going to be revoting for a new Chair, or --

MS. WIEGAND: So the intent, and Jessica can also speak to this, but the intent is to have this sort of begin to operate in a similar way that we currently operate the wreckfish shareholders, where,

instead of being a formal AP, where you guys would submit, you know, your applications, and the council would sort of pick and choose who was going to be on the AP, and, instead of doing things that way, it would just be a standing body, where you were invited to a meeting if you currently held a permit, and there wouldn't be that typical sort of appointment process that we go through for our other APs.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and are you guys okay with that, that everybody that is in the fishery is on here?

MR. ALMEIDA: So is it an official -- Is it an official advisory panel, or is it just --

MS. WIEGAND: It functions that way.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, it functions that way, and I guess I would also ask -- So we're meeting you guys this time because the council changed the procedure, so that they're wanting to meet these APs every year, but I guess I would put the question back to you guys, and do you feel like you need to meet every year, or do you only want us to bring you guys back when there is something on the table? Do you see what I'm saying? I don't want to bring you guys together if you think it's unnecessary, and so I would put that back to you guys as well. Do you want to keep meeting every year?

MR. ALMEIDA: I don't feel the need to meet unless there is something going on, where something needs to be addressed, or any kind of change, but I do feel that we need to be -- To have an official -- Whether it's an advisory panel or something, so that we don't lose our ground here.

MR. RAU: So, if you're not a permit holder, you would not be on the advisory panel, and is that correct?

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's how it would be, and are you guys okay with that, or do you want it done differently?

MR. RAU: I would personally like to see -- I'm out of the permits now, and I sold all my permits, and so I would still like to keep an eye on the fishery.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So then maybe a mix of both?

MR. RAU: Sure, and I think David Nielsen would also like to be, because he's one of the founders of the fishery, and I think, you know, we would like to stay on and take a look at it and try to keep it going.

MR. ALMEIDA: I agree with that. I mean, these guys have a lot more information and history that will only help us, and so I agree. I mean, with the exception of, of course, the ex-golden crab fishermen, and we should allow them to still be on.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I'm also thinking that -- So, if you guys aren't going to meet every year, I'm wondering if -- So the council has term limits for the APs now, and so, if you all aren't meeting every year, then some of you guys could end up meeting the term limits without ever

coming together for a meeting, and so I'm wondering if maybe golden crab -- If the term limits are suspended, or something like that, for this particular AP.

MS. WIEGAND: I was going to say that my understanding, and I know that Myra is still on the line, and so, please, Myra, correct me if I'm wrong, that we do have term limits, but we only count a year if there was a meeting that year, and so, if there was no meeting, then that wouldn't count towards the term limit.

MS. BROUWER: Yes, and that's been my understanding. I am not looking at the policy right now, to see if it's spelled out that way, but that is correct, Christina.

MR. NIELSEN: I very much would like to stay on this panel, and I think, between me and Howard and this guy over here, you're talking about almost over a hundred years of experience, or maybe a little less, and we are the last. We are the last of the original six, me and Howard, and --

MR. MADDEN: (Mr. Madden's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. NIELSEN: I don't have records going back that far, Kelly, but I do have records that go back a long way. Yes. Do I want to stay? Yes. Until the day I die, yes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks. I appreciate that. That was helpful.

MR. ANDERSON: I'm Dustin Anderson, with Deep Sea Foods. Kelly and I did the acquisition with Howard, and so we have seven permits, and one of the things that I think, at least with our experience, collectively, out of the Bering Sea king crab fishing and dungeness crab fishing, and that's what we do, is specialize in crab, all over the world, and I believe it's dangerous if the council doesn't meet annually, especially as new people start to enter into this, and then, if we get into a deal where it's just the permit holders, it stagnates, you know, what's new into the market, and it eliminates other people, other founders, that have been involved in this fishery, and I think it would do this fishery an injustice if we didn't diversify enough, and, once a year, I think it's appropriate, so that people can get a good gauge, and not just the fishermen, but people that are on the council, with what's really happening.

MS. WIEGAND: Theresa, I see you've got your hand up. Go right on ahead.

MS. COPPA: I'm Theresa Coppa, and, basically, I have helped the other fishermen be represented here at the meetings, and, if at all possible, I would like to stay on the advisory panel, or at least be able to be invited to the meetings. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: I think -- I'm looking at Jessica, and she's nodding her head, and I think that's something the council can talk about, and we can find a way to make sure that there are some sort of historical fishermen seats that are retained on this AP.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so I heard two things, also, and some folks are saying don't meet every year, and some folks are saying we should meet every year, and what do you all think?

MR. RAU: I think we should meet once a year.

MS. COPPA: I second it.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Anything else we want to talk about today? We've got plenty of time.

MR. ANDERSON: I will jump back in here, and so a couple of things that we have always keyed on, at least on the other coast, is the opportunity for help with marketing. A lot of time, ASMI, the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute, and then, of course, the Marine Stewardship Council, and you get the opportunity to get marketing money and funds to help push and to grow what has become just an outstanding marketing concept over in Alaska. Here, there is no real agency to help and push out for golden crab, as an example.

I'm just curious, and what can the council provide to us in that form? There is seafood shows, and there's one coming into Miami here in September, and I'm involved with -- As a Native American, I'm involved with the American Indian Foods, and we travel all over the world to these seafood shows, to push our products worldwide, and it just seems, to me, that there's really no setup, or dialogue, to help, in terms of marketing for like Florida golden crab, or what have you, and I just thought I would ask that question to the members of the council, to see what's available there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and it's a great question. I don't know, and it could be that maybe the money comes through NMFS, or some other source, and maybe the council can help find other sources of funds to do things like that, and I appreciate you bringing it up, and so I think it's something that we could look into, but I will look to Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: I am not sure if, like from a council-specific standpoint, how much the council itself can do. There are grants out there, and, in particular, I'm thinking of NMFS' Saltonstall-Kennedy grant has a specific section focused on promotion, development, and marketing, where they will -- You have to go through a grant process, and those who are awarded the grant will get money to sort of work on whatever promotion and marketing project has been designed within the grant.

The council cannot partner with fishermen to do that, because we're not allowed to receive any of those funds, but the focus is heavily on fishermen, and so fishing companies and groups can apply for that money, and we can certainly provide you information, when the next round of funding -- When the research proposals are asked for.

MR ALMEIDA: Isn't the Sea Grant program -- Is that all done now, the Florida Sea Grant program, and weren't they the ones that started a lot of the marketing of the seafood here in the state?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Some, and they also -- I was thinking about Fresh From Florida, which is the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and I was trying to wrack my brain, and do you remember if Dax ever promoted golden crab as Fresh From Florida? Do you remember?

MR. ALMEIDA: No, and I remember Frank Lawler trying to help us with the -- Where was at? He was in the Florida Extension something.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's Sea Grant.

MR. ALMEIDA: Yes, Sea Grant.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I could talk to them. I could talk to both Dax and Sea Grant, and see if that's something that they want to take on.

MR. ALMEIDA: I think that's the way you should go, Dustin. I don't know if you've been down that road with them.

MR. MADDEN: The only road that -- I have talked to Florida Agriculture, and this was years ago, and not recently, but Florida Agriculture will help you with your boxing expense, like your packaging, if you will put their little label on there, right, and so they will give you money to help with just the packaging part of it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That was helpful, but maybe also Sea Grant, and Sea Grant can receive funds to do things like that, and so, yes, I can look into that for you guys.

MS. MADDOX: My main question is, I mean, I'm not hearing a lot -- So I'm a distributor, and I have a little restaurant and a little raw bar, a little fish market, that we're opening, and we can't get our hands on any golden crab. Dustin is saying that we want to distribute it, and we want to market it, and we want to be fresh from Florida, and we happen to not air freight any fish. Everything is coming in on existing shipping routes, and so we're trying very hard to get our hands on some, and I'm hearing, from the OG guys, from you gods of crab, that the only place to buy it is from Two Bills or from Canaveral, and I just don't know where to get it. I'm in Pompano Beach, and so that's my question.

I don't know enough about it to ask the right questions, I think, and I'm just trying to get a sense of how we can distribute of how we can distribute it, and, until today, until Nuno just said that, I didn't know that there was any domestic distribution, and I thought it all was going to China, and so I guess that's a lot of questions in one question.

MR. ANDERSON: Well, in terms of moving forward, for our business model, is we have consistently shipped overseas, non-stop, just because of the dollar. I mean, we get paid more for live crab to ship it, and we've shipped crab all over the place. Moving into this market, especially with the conditions that have changed, due to the pandemic, I think a lot of people would be remiss if we didn't really focus on the domestic market.

A lot of what Nuno has done has been -- Is he has stayed in -- I've talked to Nuno, and, gosh, what's it been, Nuno, and has it been two years now, kind of off and on again, about our thoughts and input, as we strategize to penetrate the market, and that is that, if we can put together a domestic way to infiltrate restaurants, cruise lines, get our product to market, but there just has never been a real cook market, to speak of, right, because there's a lot of difficulties, and a lot of expenses, that come with processing, and that's just how it is, and so, for us as fishermen, we want to make sure that we can get, you know, the highest yield and less expense, and that's always been the focus, but I think there's a transition, because of what has happened with the Asian market, so that we can move live crab to a domestic market that realizes that, if they get it at that price point, and it's a good quality crab, that they too can cook and recover that at a real good price point, like yourself, to get it back out to customers.

So we want to focus our data on quality of crab, and not quantity, right, and we do want to go after a Number 1 crab, an average two-pound crab, is what we're -- That's what we've been involved with for twenty-five years, dungeness crab, king crab, and Tanner crab, and, I mean, we've done a lot of that, and so, if we can focus that in there and realize and get help from the council, from NOAA, from other people, to help market it, I really see -- It's a great-tasting crab. I mean, it's a really good crab, and it's just people don't understand that it's not going to change red.

It's not going to change color, and they have overcooked it for years, right, and they've got all these issues and problems with it, but, once you get it in front of people, and they can taste that crab, and that it's a sustainable, traceable fishery like this, I know it's going to go, but it's just a question of time, and I think we will have domestic opportunities. We will want to sell and retail it out to people, as well as wholesale, and that will be our focus over the next two years.

MR. MADDEN: I just wanted to get how this works, and so you've got crab council members, and then you have AP, and you guys are AP, and you guys are AP, or is that how that works? I don't know how it works.

MS. WIEGAND: The council has a Golden Crab Committee, and there are -- I forget exactly who all the council members are on that committee, because we haven't met it in a while, but there are a number, and Jessica McCawley is the Vice Chair of that committee, which is why she's here at this meeting today, and then we have the advisory panel members, and Howard and Nuno and Dave are the advisory panel members, and the council will meet them to get information on a specific topic or just to go through one of these fishery performance reports. Then you've got Nick and I, and Nick and I are just South Atlantic Council staff here to help sort of facilitate the meeting.

MR. MADDEN: Is that part of NOAA?

MS. WIEGAND: The South Atlantic Council is, I guess, quasi-governmental, and how it works is that the fishery management councils were established by the Magnuson-Stevens Act, which is federal law, and so what the council does is, you know, puts together what will eventually amount to sort of a package of regulations and recommends those to the National Marine Fisheries Service, and then the National Marine Fisheries Service is the body that actually implements and then enforces federal law. Is that helpful?

MR. MADDEN: Yes, and I knew that already, but I just wanted to make sure that what I was thinking is correct, and it is.

MS. MADDOX: I am just wondering if any of you guys would consider throwing someone in on a sustainability end, and that goes to your point, Dustin, that it helps to build the brand, and there's a ton of like a shift toward sustainability, with trash fish movements, and we're selling jack crevalle in sushi, and like there's a lot of that going on, especially in south Florida, and so, if you guys would be willing to work that in somewhere, I think -- I think it's just completely new, and I don't know, and, as what I know of the old, but that's all I've got. I'm Jamie Maddox. Thanks.

MR. ANDERSON: To highlight on a topic earlier, you know, we just bought Howard's operation, and I've lived in Florida for thirty-two years, and I'm from Sarasota, okay, and I cannot find a

dock space. They want \$3,500 to tie up at the Port of Everglades for a day, and I've got to have a pilot bring my boat in. It's a sixty-eight-foot boat, and where do you -- A pilot? That's ridiculous. There is no space for commercial fishermen left.

On my side, you have Fort Myers, Cortez, and St. Pete, and that's it. There is nowhere else to take fish over there, and they have condoed it up everywhere. I fished out of Key West down there, and it used to be Stock Island was all fishing. Now it's a little bit of fishing, and, again, yachts and condos. They're just phasing us out, and there is no help with that. Like the port could help with that, right, and they have docks they don't use, guaranteed, and no one uses those docks, and you could let little guys come in there and use them, but it's a big governmental problem.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, I agree. It's definitely a problem. I don't know what the council can do about it, other than advocate for you guys, but, yes, we think it's a problem, too.

MR. ANDERSON: The problem is actually tourists like to see that stuff, and that's the problem, right? San Francisco has their commercial docks downtown, and so does San Diego, and they bring busloads of people in to come down and watch those guys offload fish, busloads of them, but, here, we don't want that. When I call around and say, hey, have you got dock space, they're like, yes, yes, you bet, and what have you got going on, and I'm like, I'm a commercial fisherman. Click. I mean, they don't even talk to me. They just hang up instantly. It's hard, that part of it.

MS. WIEGAND: I will say -- I mean, Jessica is right. From the council standpoint, there's not much that we can do, aside from advocating for you guys, but one of the reasons we include, in sort of the fishery performance reports that we just went over, our questions about infrastructure is, one, so that we can get a sense of the struggles that you guys are going through with infrastructure, to use that when we advocate, but, also, sort of to get back to your point, the role that commercial fishing plays in tourism, and the council has talked a bit about this recently, the idea that a lot of imagery of commercial fishing vessels and historic boats are used to encourage tourism to different places and sort of the value of commercial fishing dockage in that respect as well.

All right. I am not seeing anyone else jump up wanting to say anything, and so, if there's nothing else to sort of talk about, I just want to thank all of you guys for coming out and participating in this meeting, and I know it was a short meeting, and you had to travel to get to it, but I know I speak for myself and the council members, that we really, really appreciate you guys taking the time to provide us input on what's going on in this fishery, whether that be changes are needed or whether that be, you know, leave it as-is, and so we appreciate the time you guys are spending to provide that information, and, with that, we can adjourn.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on June 30, 2022.)

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Certified By _____ Date _____

Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
September 1, 2022

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(To replace Brad Whipple 6/21)

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Golden Crab Advisory

Attendee Report: Panel Meeting

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Yes	Coppa	Theresa
Yes	Crosson	Scott
Yes	Glazier	Ed
Yes	Gore	Karla
Yes	Helies	Frank
Yes	Mehta	Nikhil
Yes	Murphey	Trish
Yes	collier	chip
Yes	thomas	01suz