**SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

**JOINT HABITAT & ECOSYSTEM AND SHRIMP COMMITTEE**

**North Charleston Marriott**
**North Charleston, South Carolina**
**September 18, 2025**

**Joint Habitat and Shrimp Committee**

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**Attendees and Invited Participants**

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Chris Schieble
Sonny Gwin
Dr. Clay Porch
Kristen Foss
Rick DeVictor
Kathy Knowlton
Dr. Walter Bubley
DeLaney Farrell

**Observers and Participants**

Other observers and participants attached.

The Joint Habitat & Ecosystem and Shrimp Committees of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the North Charleston Marriott, North Charleston, South Carolina, on Thursday, September 18, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Trish Murphey.

MS. MURPHEY: Our next committee is the Joint Habitat & Ecosystem and Shrimp Committee, to meet and discuss -- The big thing is Coral Amendment 11 and Shrimp Amendment 12. We've also got a couple things to do, I guess some housekeeping for Habitat & Ecosystem, and so are we ready to just jump right into it? I think we're ready just to jump right into it, and so --

MS. HOWINGTON: Let Stacie get up here.

MS. MURPHEY: There is Stacie.

MS. HOWINGTON: Give her some time.

MS. MURPHEY: I think the Habitat Committee is a joint of the -- Is the whole council, and so I think everyone is here, and everyone is back on duty here. All right, and let's go ahead and get an approval of the agenda. Is everybody good with the agenda, or have any objections to the agenda as written? All right, and so we'll call that approved, and the same question for the minutes? Any substantial changes or edits to the minutes? Okay. Hearing none, any objections to the minutes? All right, and we'll consider the minutes approved, and so I think next is we'll hear from Stacie Crowe, the AP Chair for the Habitat & Ecosystem Advisory Panel, and so take it away, Stacie.

MS. CROWE: Thank you, and thanks for having me. I'm happy to be here to provide you with a report of what the Habitat & Ecosystem Advisory Panel group talked about at our last meeting in July, and so I do just want to point out, quickly, that this panel has always operated on a spring and fall schedule, and, this year, we transitioned to a summer and winter schedule, and so our meeting, prior to our July meeting, was in October of 2024, and we covered a lot of ground at that meeting, because there was a long stretch of time between meetings, and that is somewhat reflected on the wordiness of our slides, and so please bear with me as I cover all this material.

Okay, and so we started off by hearing from a panel workgroup that is looking into integrating the revised food webs and connectivity policy information into EFH designations, and so this workgroup had already identified the top ten prey for each FMP during their food web policy update, and they were asking the panel for assistance in determining how to integrate that information into the EFH definition of the user's guide.

After a lot of discussion, it was decided that the best path forward was to identify five species to use as test cases, and, for each species, the group would review literature, identify the prey for that species, the prey habitat, identify the habitat used by predator, and if it's different from the current definition, and then write up a draft prey dependency paragraph modeled after the Gulf's EFH, and continue with developing best practices for the other species after those test species are complete.

For AP action on this topic, the AP approved this proposed working plan, and they identified the five species to use as test cases. Those will be gray triggerfish, red snapper, dolphinfish, golden crab, and gag grouper, and we did have one new panel member join the workgroup, and that is Erin Spencer.

Next, we heard from another workgroup that has been working on revising the alterations to riverine, estuarine, and nearshore flow policy, and so this workgroup came about because, a while back, we had a presentation from the Indian River Lagoon Council. In their presentation, they expressed some concerns about alterations to flow in the area that were causing estuary impacts.

You can see this figure on the right is an example of those type of impacts. This is Brevard County, and you can see these earthen causeways that are limiting flow to the region, and causing impacts in the estuary, and so this workgroup has met three times so far in 2025.

They are working on basic edits and additions to the policy, and the plan is to clean up the draft policy in 2025 and provide a draft to the AP, as well as state water quality representatives, and so, after a lot of discussions about what types of alterations should be included in the policy, the group recommends including inter-basin transfers of water, rediversion of water, stormwater outfalls, stormwater collection and flows from new and existing developments, municipal wastewater discharge, thermal discharge from windfarms, and then salinity impacts from shallow-water dredging.

Then, additionally, when the workgroup was first formed, there were a few types of alterations to flow that were identified as region-wide threats, and those sections of the policy are being worked on, and that includes tide gates, irrigation, and stormwater conveyances.

Next, we had a discussion on space industry activity and potential impacts from those activities to habitat and fisheries, and this was a discussion amongst the group. Two years ago, we had SpaceX come and give a presentation to the AP. They talked about the type of activities that are ongoing in Florida specifically. After that presentation, the panel had a discussion and decided that there was some concern about potential impacts from space debris, launches, and the growth of the space industry and impacts from that on the surrounding region.

Staff reviewed the presentations, looked at some comment letters that had been written by government agencies on projects related to space activities, and also had sent a FOIA request to gather some more information about these activities and what type of data is available to look at and assess the impacts.

Unfortunately, they were largely unsuccessful in gathering any data, and so what the panel did, at our last meeting, was had a little brainstorming session of ways that we might be able to gather some of this data and fully assess the impact, and so you can see, from the columns on the right, which I am not going to read to you, those ideas ranged everything from personal contacts that might have access to some data from space activities, to university systems that might have students that are doing research projects related to this, to state and federal agencies and NGOs that may have done research of their own, or written comment letters on projects in the area, and might be able to provide us with some of that data.

Then, to continue on that topic, as it was discussed amongst panel members, it was highlighted that the propellants used during launches are gelatinous, and, even if a launch fails, that propellant still has to be detonated, which in theory causes the pollutants to be spread everywhere and enter the ground and the surrounding water bodies, and so the AP also wants to look into the number of failed launches that are going on and what or how large the detonation zone is.

AP members recommended adding maps, emphasizing the economic impacts, the potential impact for recreational fishermen who don't receive the notice to mariners, and look at the large environmental impacts represented in some of the comment letters.

For AP action on space industry activities, the AP recommends that the council approve the gathering of data and the creation of a working group to analyze that data related to the frequency of launches, the hazard zones, and space debris, and what those impacts might look like on surrounding habitats and local fisheries. This might lead to the development of a policy on space development activities in the South Atlantic region, and the panel recommends that, if a policy is appropriate, then the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the Gulf and Caribbean Councils become involved.

MS. HOWINGTON: Just Gulf Council. My bad.

MS. CROWE: Okay, and so that was the end of day one. Day two, we started out with an update from Anne Deaton. Anne is with National Marine Fisheries Habitat Conservation Division, and she was providing us an update on the projects that their staff are seeing that require EFH consultations, and so, if you look at the table to the right of the screen, you'll see that, over the last few years, the number of consultations has been fairly consistent.

Anne pointed out that, in 2024, the largest number of projects they saw were docks and piers, and that's represented in the blue. She did note that, although those are usually small projects, that, by the number of dock and pier projects they're seeing, the cumulative impact is quite large, and then they also saw a lot of requests for mining consultations, in red, and shoreline stabilization and dredging projects, represented by the green and purple. Anne also noted that she saw an increase in living shorelines projects for 2024 as well.

Then, kind of following up on that, our next presentation was from Jenny Davis, who is with NCCOS, and she gave a presentation on the beneficial use of dredge material projects. If you look down on the far right of the slide, you'll see that, over the last twenty years or so, the Army Corps has beneficially reused about 40 percent of dredge material for projects such as beach nourishment, in-water placement, nearshore placement, and upland, such as like dike creation, and then wetland, which would represent marsh restoration, and the Army Corps does have a goal of using 70 percent of dredge material for beneficial use projects by the year 2030, and so these types of projects are increasing in number.

Some types of beneficial use projects, like beach nourishment, have been well studied. There are a lot of best management practices out there that are utilized, and the impacts from that are well known, and usually minimized to the greatest extent possible. There are other types of beneficial use projects, like thin layer placement, that we don't know a lot about, and that is where the problems begin, and so these problems have a lot of parameters involved that nobody fully understands, and so, for example, thin layer placement on a marsh, and how do you contain the material? Where should the projects occur? What types of impacts would placement have on existing fauna at the location? How deep should the material be? What type of sediment should the material be? All of these types of questions that are unanswered.

There are a few efforts ongoing that may provide answers to some of those questions. Manomet is an Army-Corps-funded project that was looking at thin layer placement in order to create

wildlife habitat, and then there's a large-scale effort to provide a spatially-comprehensive map that identifies locations where thin layer placement may be appropriate to combat sea level rise, and so the reason why we had asked Jenny to come and give this presentation to the group is because, in October, when HCD staff gave their review of EFH consultations, one thing that they noticed was that they were seeing a lot more beneficial use projects, and they didn't feel like they had adequate information to provide consultation.

Since the October meeting, staff worked on gathering some sources, and available reports, and any data they could find. One in particular that stood out, that would probably be very helpful to HCD staff, is the North Carolina Coastal Habitat Protection Update on thin layer placement, and Charlie Deaton is going to make sure that Anne receives that publication so she can utilize that.

One conversation that kept coming up amongst panel members is that a lot of people tend to use the terms “beneficial use” and “thin layer placement” interchangeably, and so the panel wanted to make sure that folks understand that beneficial use includes a lot of types of use of materials, such as beach nourishment, dike creation, and thin layer placement. They want to make sure that those two terms are not used interchangeably. For follow-up AP action, staff are going to reach out to Jocelyn and Xaymara, and they are NMFS HCD staff, to give a presentation on the Port Everglades project to the AP, and then also reach out to Manomet about giving a presentation on their project.

Okay, and so, next, we switched gears and had a presentation from Brian Hooker, from BOEM, and he was talking about the Central Virginia Offshore Wind project. He gave us an update on that project and talked to us about some fish mortality that's happening during construction, and so they have found that, when they are utilizing a bubble curtain to minimize noise impacts, it appears to be causing barotrauma and death to some fish species.

It seems to particularly be croaker, and panel members, and I believe it was panel members, figured that this might be attributed to them having a swim bladder and the ability to generate noise. The level of concern here is minimal, since it's only happening when the bubble curtain is deployed, and it appears to be somewhat seasonal.

Laura Busch, who is a panel member with the U.S. Navy, commented that they have a pile driving study ongoing, and that study will be published in the spring of next year. Hopefully some of the results from that will be able to provide some answers to the fish mortality related to this construction, and so the AP recommended to Brian that BOEM investigate male versus female differences in croaker deaths, and try to identify ways to scare the fish away before using the bubble curtain, to try to minimize some of those impacts.

Okay, and so telecommunication subsea fiber cables, and this is another presentation that we had last fall, and this was a discussion amongst panel members, and so, in October, we had representatives from AECOM come and give a presentation on subsea fiber cables, the methods that they use to lay these cables, and how they select a site, how they put the cables on the seafloor, the materials they use, how they minimize impacts, and then their decommissioning process. If you look at the upper-right, and it's kind of crude, but, in a nutshell, they have a large vessel that drags the cable, and the cable is in the red, and they've got a plow that follows along behind and buries the cable.

The AP discussion on this was more so related to the thought that the windfarms often have cables as well, and there is not a lot of information about the potential impacts from cables, concrete mattresses, et cetera utilized during windfarm construction. The AP, for this topic, recommends that staff take a look at the energy policy, that was recently updated, and look at some of the best management practices that consultants like AECOM are using to minimize impacts and make sure that those are incorporated in the document.

Next, we heard from Lara Klibansky, and she gave a summary of the council's resilient fisheries projects, and so there were four projects that were funded. Project Number 3 was of interest to the panel. The goal of that project is to update the spatial distributions and habitat associations for species under the Snapper Grouper, Dolphin Wahoo, and Coastal Migratory Pelagics FMPs, and so, after a lot of discussion here, the AP recommended adding a review of Project 3 to the workplan, and then also adding the analysis of smaller sized fish trends, and the changes in populations and growth ranges to the research and monitoring list.

This is Lara's timelines and next steps for those projects. Number 3, again. is the one the AP was interested in. You can see work on that is already underway throughout the next two years. It will require some AP input, and then hopefully that will be completed in 2027, and there will be a presentation to the council.

Next, we heard from Matthew McPherson. He is from NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and he was reviewing the Changing Ecosystems and Fisheries Initiative, or CEFI, projects, and the status of those projects.

MS. HOWINGTON: We've already talked about this before, and so -- We talked a little bit about them already.

MS. CROWE: Okay, and so I won't dwell on this then. You know that he has lost his staff, and he's lost his funding. He's doing the best that he can with the projects we have listed here on the slides. Some of them will continue a little slower than they were intended, and some have been discontinued. These projects are already in their research and monitoring document.

Next, we talked about the next EFH five-year review coming up in 2029, and so the AP's plan for the five-year review first is to update the life history by FMP, like I talked about in the first slide. Next is to integrate the findings from Lara's resilient fisheries Project Number 3, to try to get some additional abundance data, and then use identified important habitats from the life history and food web updates, and try to update the EFH definitions to at least a Level 2, which is reflected on that graphic on the right.

For AP action here, the first step is to work on updating the life history information. Matt Kenworthy is going to try to update the information in the user guide for the Shrimp FMP. Cameron Luck, who is new to the panel, is going to update spiny lobster, and then panel members recommended reaching out to the Golden Crab and Spiny Lobster APs to help update some of the others, and any data that we get from data providers will be created and forwarded to the panel for approval.

Then, continuing with our plan for the EFH five-year review, last time I provided an update, I talked about the AP requesting an integrated ecosystem assessment, and so, last October, the

HEAP requested that the Fisheries Science Center conduct this IEA for the South Atlantic region, because we don't have one. In March, the Fisheries Science Center replied back and asked that the panel clarify what the goals and objectives of the IEA would be.

Staff took a look at how other regions that already have an IEA have done this, and how it was integrated into management, and so next steps are that staff will request presentations for the Northeast and Gulf councils on what their process was for creating indicators, objectives, and outputs for the IEA, and then the panel also recommends reaching out to Chris Kelble, who is with the IEA office, to get additional information.

As part of the habitat blueprint, this advisory panel was restructured and tasked with updating the webpage, and so we had a discussion about how to best add partner links to the website, and the panel approved moving forward with alphabetical links that are separated by sector, and then the next task was to update the FAQ question list.

Panel members decided that the goal of the FAQ question list should be to take a person who does not know anything about habitat through sort of a linear EFH crash course by asking questions such as what is the definition of habitat versus ecosystem, and what is EFH, what does EFH do, what habitats are EFH, and then how is the council involved in this process. Next steps for this task, the AP recommends adding a list of common acronyms on the website, providing links to other websites, and showing ways for the public to follow-up and get additional information.

So, as I mentioned in the beginning, our panel transitioned to a different meeting schedule, and so we are summer and winter now, and so our next meeting will be in the winter. The AP approved two four-hour webinars happening at the end of January, and then, in addition to the winter and summer meeting, panel members discussed that they would like to start having some informal habitat webinars throughout the year to provide additional information, and so staff are looking into this. Hopefully the first subject will be a presentation, a virtual presentation, on the Port Everglades deepening project, and hopefully it will happen sometime this fall.

This is the HEAP work plan. It covers the next two years, and most of the activities on here are topics that I have covered today. You can also see we'll be focusing on the EFH five-year review. The topics in green are topics such as space and the IEA that may or may not proceed, and so it's just kind of a space holder for those right now.

Then, last, but not least, we had one piece of other business. Panel member Wilson Laney told the AP about a Reef Keepers documentary. It focuses on three scientists' efforts to conserve and restore corals in south Florida. They are currently trying to produce this documentary, looking for funding, and they're hoping that it will be available early next year, and then we would like to see the council schedule a seminar for 2026, and that is it for my update. Thank you, and I would be happy to try to answer any questions.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Stacie. Does anybody have any questions for Stacie? Okay.

MS. HOWINGTON: The workplan, I'm going to add to the potential timing and task for Full Council in my committee report for that, and maybe space workgroup. We still need to try and gather data to analyze before we form a workgroup, but I would like you guys just to approve me

moving forward with at least looking into it, and exploring, but I would appreciate a motion to approve that workplan.

Because that table is big, I did put the bullet points in your agenda and overview for the Habitat & Ecosystem AP, so you can just look at the bullet points real fast, and then I would appreciate approval of those agenda items for the January 2026 HEAP meeting.

MS. MURPHEY: Would anybody like to discuss the workplan or make a motion to approve the workplan? Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: **I move that we approve the workplan.**

MS. MURPHEY: I have a second from Kerry. Any discussion? **Any objection?** All right. Thank you. Just to add just a smidge on the space workgroup, and I don't know if it's a big -- On one hand, it's probably not a big priority for the council, but the Habitat AP really spent a lot of time discussing it, and it does sound like it's liftable, and so I just kind of want to let you guys know that I think they would like to move forward with that, but just to give you some more to think about, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I'm supportive of that workgroup, and, if that workgroup is not going to be made up just of these AP members, I think we have some folks on FWC staff. I have some regional biologists, right in that area, that I would love to add to that workgroup, if possible, but I don't know what the thoughts are on what the makeup will be, what all they will do, what the timing is, but I do have a regional biologist that's been heavily engaged in this.

MS. MURPHEY: That would be great. Kathleen.

MS. HOWINGTON: So right now, again, because we have that FOIA that just never got a response, other than they're on it for about two years now, and so we don't have that base data that we need to be able to inform the workgroup, and so, right now, the step is go out and contact all those people that my AP recommended, gather information, and then, yes, I think that getting Florida representatives, as well as this is probably going to start impacting other councils, and so let's start South Atlantic, but then, after that, maybe we move out, outside of us, but that's years in the future. Right now we're just looking.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Any other questions or comments for the Habitat & Ecosystem AP? All right. Seeing none, we'll go ahead and move into the discussion of Coral Amendment 11 and Shrimp Amendment 12, and I think that's both Kathleen and Allie, and thank you very much, Stacie. Go ahead.

MS. HOWINGTON: Okay, guys, and so I am going to give you a little bit of background, just to remind everyone where we are, and then we're going to actually jump from this decision document to the public comment summary document. We'll review that first, and then we'll come back to the decision document to discuss the amendment and the development, and then there are a few questions, at the end, that we would love for you guys to get on the record in detail, and I'm going to be taking lots and lots of notes during that time.

So, first things first, we've got the background, and so, to remind everyone, in 2021, the council submitted Coral Amendment 10. The amendment proposed a shrimp fishery access area, but was ultimately disapproved. Among the reasons for disapproval was because it did not include an adequate analysis to ensure that the proposed action would minimize adverse effects to EFH and minimize bycatch. We'll return to those later.

In 2023, you guys made a motion to resubmit the amendment and incorporate updated info, and then, in June 2025, you selected your Preferred Alternative 2 and approved the amendment for public hearings. Now, these public hearings were conducted in 2025, and so let's hop on over to that public comment summary, and so this is the summary of public comments for Amendment 11 and Amendment 12 from these public hearings.

There were two public hearings that were held in August of 2025. One was via webinar, with Trish Murphy as our council representative. We had thirty-four attendees and ten comments, and then the in-person hearing was held in St. Augustine, on August 7, with Jessica McCawley and Carolyn Belcher, and that had fifteen attendees and ten comments.

On top of that, we also had a recorded webinar that Allie did, which was awesome, that people were able to watch, and then do public comment via our website, and so, via the online form, we received 125 comments, and then, on top of that, we received an additional twenty-one comments that were just sent via email or via attachments. We did extend our public comment period by one additional week. This was actually in response to the public comment saying there's not enough time, and so we were able to get that extension and make certain that people could get their comments in before the cutoff.

Now, one caveat, before I go over the total numbers, is 3,098 of these signatures were in support of Alternative 1, and they were originally submitted for Coral 10. They do count as comments, because they were submitted as a new comment, that those letters with all those signatures were just attached on top of that new comment, and so they do count. Of these, we then received a total of 3,268 comments. 3,236 were in support of Alternative 1, no action, and thirty-two were in support of Alternatives 2 or 3, and so a quick summary of these.

For the comments supporting Alternative 1, no action, this included recreational fishermen, environmental groups, scientists, concerned citizens. This is most of where the other -- Of people coming in saying that I live here and please protect the coral came from. They mostly focused on damage to biodiversity, or ecological damage, as well as the limited economic benefit.

For ecological harm, they mostly highlighted the trawling damage, and then, of course, sedimentation damage that could occur from trawling, and the risks that occur with that with the currents, and they were concerned about bycatch, despite the fact that the shrimpers have TEDs and BRDs.

They also highlighted the history of damage and the past use of the area by the shrimp fishery, and then there was a bit of skepticism that opening up this area would actually meet the purpose and need of the amendment, because part of that is meeting the optimum yield of the shrimp industry. The commenters were concerned that opening this up wouldn't help the shrimpers meet that goal, and then it was suggested that maybe, if monitoring for a year, if getting, you know, cameras on the backs of trawls, and measuring how far those plumes go, would be able to help, you know,

alleviate some of these concerns. There were a lot of people who are really enthused with let's go out, and let's study a little bit more, and then, yes, if you can prove that sediment doesn't make it to the coral, okay.

Then, for the comments supporting Alternatives 2 and 3, this mostly came from our rock shrimp fishermen, our processors, and trade groups. They highlighted the historical fishing grounds and the fact that there's no coral present in the NOAA mapping from 2025 or 2022 visual surveys. They discussed the fact that shrimpers have a buffer, that they don't like going near coral, because it hurts their gear, and they discussed the VMS monitoring that ensures their compliance. They also discussed their TEDs and BRDs, and that they have that to try and decrease bycatch.

Then they highlighted their economic need and the support for Executive Order 14276, and they discussed the fact that, while this area is variable, when the shrimp move, when this area is valuable, that is a year that they really need the ability to shrimp in this area, because, otherwise, they might not be able to meet what they've been in other years.

Then, of course, they also mentioned other threats to coral, because it's not just the shrimpers. They wanted to talk about Lake Okeechobee, which is something we've talked about at the Habitat AP, and space industry impacts, and debris, and so all of that got highlighted.

If you want to continue, we do have a transcript of all of these comments that were in-person or via webinar, and then, if you want to go read the ones that were submitted via email, that is in your briefing book, and they have been PDF'd, and, if you want to go see the online comments, the 126, those are linked as well, and so you have access to all the comments, if you wish to look at them.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thanks. Does anybody have any questions about the public comments so far? Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Hi, Kathleen. The links that you just talked about for council members to see all the comments, and all those sorts of things, where do you find those?

MS. HOWINGTON: So the PDFs are on the briefing book, and they're on the online briefing book as well, and then, for the public comment forum, the one that has the 126, that should still be underneath the meeting page, as well as -- I'm trying to remember where else we put it. It's on the amendment page as well, and so you should be able to go to both of those and link that page, and, if you can't find it, I will work with Nick, and we'll put it somewhere more prominent.

MS. MURPHEY: Anything else? All right. I guess we'll jump back to the decision document.

MS. HOWINGTON: All right, and so, for the amendment development timeline, we have conducted our public hearings. We have now also reviewed our public hearing comments, and so look at that. We've knocked that out. Now we're going to review that draft amendment. Like I said, we've got a few things we want to highlight, a few things we want to get you guys on the record for.

The gameplan right now is to review the final draft amendment and consider for approval for formal review in December of this year, and then submit the amendment early in 2026, and so that's the gameplan.

Some draft amendment highlights, and these are just things that have changed since June of 2025, the VMS information will be integrated into Chapter 3. I have received it. I am conducting some ongoing analysis. When it is integrated, it will be split into two groups, pre-closure, and so that's pre Coral Amendment 8, and post-closure, and it will be limited to just the shrimpers who are trawling, and so not the guys who are transiting, and not the guys who are sitting still, you know, putting their nets up, and it will also be aggregated to three, and so that's highlighting some of the difficulty I'm having making this into a map that looks pretty, but it will be integrated. I promise.

Then Chapter 3, the social and economic information, is expected to be integrated before December of 2025, and so you all be seeing that then as well, as well as the updates for the other chapters, once we receive that.

Then sediment and current information have been integrated into Chapter 4. This includes descriptions of current direction, sediment bottom type, and an additional figure. Now this analysis is ongoing, and I'm going to highlight what the ongoing analysis is later on in the decision document. Then Chapter 4, the economic and social section, has been updated to include ping rate analysis. This was something that we highlighted during the June meeting, and then the IPT had a discussion of. We will also be discussing that further down in the document, and so don't worry, guys. If you have questions, we will get to them.

Possible impacts of space activities have been integrated into Chapter 6. Just because of the proposed 244 launches by the most recent -- Or not most recent, because there's been one every two months recently. The June EIS that this South Atlantic Council commented on, that will lead to a great number of closures, and it will also lead to a great number of hazard zones, and failed launches, and so that needed to be integrated into Chapter 6.

Then, finally, we have our bycatch practicability analysis. This is in the appendix of our draft amendments. This is based on observer coverage from 2018 to 2022. The majority of the species in the bycatch are not managed by South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. The bycatch totaled 20,476 kilograms, and included ten fish, four invertebrates, one shark. The most observed bycatch species were inshore lizardfish, but, for council-managed species, it was black sea bass, and then we also saw brown shrimp and pink shrimp. Ultimately, this data is limited, because the observers are not 100 percent coverage, but the BRDs and TEDs that are required to be utilized help minimize bycatch, and so this is the information we have, and we're very happy that it's been able to be integrated.

MS. MURPHEY: Any questions so far? All right. Keep going.

MS. HOWINGTON: All right, and so now we have our purpose and needs statements. These are the purpose and needs statements approved in June of 2025, and good news. We haven't changed anything, and so I just put this on here for committee action. Please confirm you all are still good with this purpose and need statement.

MS. MURPHEY: I have Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, and so I'm good with this. I was just going to ask if we wanted to add any language about this meeting, the Executive Order 13921, and like so do we want to add

anything about that, like it would reduce burdens on domestic fishing and increase production? I'll just throw it out there for the group.

MS. MURPHEY: That's a good question. Thoughts from people? I am -- Okay. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have a problem with that, and it was brought forward in public comment, and so I don't have a problem with that at all. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Anybody else? I saw heads shaking, but let me turn it over to -- Let me turn over, back over, to Kathleen, but, right now, it looks like people are in agreement.

MS. IBERLE: This is not to like preclude you from incorporating language into the purpose and need regarding the EO, but I will note that there is language throughout the amendment that details how the alternative does contribute to that, and so I just wanted you to -- Okay, and I just wanted to make it known that there is information on the EO within the document, but it is up to you guys.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I think it's fine if it's throughout the document. I think, when we actually get to rulemaking, we want to emphasize that as well as part of our rulemaking.

MS. MURPHEY: So just a question. Should we then incorporate that language, or just -- I just know I saw some people shaking their heads. I know it's been commented that it's throughout, but I'll go -- Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I think, because it's throughout the amendment, I would probably say no. I think, if you start incorporating it here, you would want to start incorporating executive orders throughout all of your purpose and need statements.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Andy. That makes sense too, and it looks like everybody is good either way, and so we'll just go as-is.

MS. HOWINGTON: Okay. Then I am taking that as a confirmation of this purpose and need is good to go, and then we have our proposed actions and alternatives. Now, you see there is language highlighted in here. I'm going to preface this. This is just clarifying language. In June of this year, when we were having a discussion, when a former council member gave public comments that we had lost square mileage, I triple. quadruple, pentuple checked the lat and long. They are the same lat and long that we submitted for Coral 10 that the Habitat, Shrimp, and Law Enforcement Advisory Panels looked at, and so that confused me.

I actually had to do a little bit of an exploration, and it turns out, when you're using ArcGIS, depending on what measuring scale and what projection you use, you can change the square mileage a lot, and so I believe she was actually measuring the earth as if it was flat, and using a Mercator projection, and that is not considered best practices, and so I have added some clarifying language in here, with the approval of the IPT -- I've moved it from kilometers, or square miles, because Coral 10 jumped back and forth, and everything is nautical miles from now on if it comes out of my office.

For nautical miles squared, Preferred Alternative two is 14.10. If the latitude and longitude are projected using a geodesic measurement, which means the Earth is round, and that the projection is WGS-1984 projection, which is generally what a lot of people in ArcGIS use, is the majority of NOAA maps, and it is very easy to go find, and so, if anyone wants to, they can take my lat and long, put it in ArcGIS, and replicate exactly where this number came from, and so there's the story of why this is in here. Sorry.

MS. MURPHEY: So the bottom line is, when you're out there in your vessel, you're in the same area. The corners are the same when you're out there.

MS. HOWINGTON: That's the bottom line. The lat and long are the exact same. That has not changed. It is just, when you put it in a program, you now have descriptions on how, when you click "measure", the settings you need to put in to get the exact same measurement I did, and the only reason why it's included in here is, if we remove that sentence, then they're just the same alternative. They look identical, and so we have to have some kind of differentiating measurement in there, and I didn't want to just put an approximate measurement, and so --

MS. MURPHEY: It looks like we have a draft motion to approve the modifications. Would someone like to make that motion? Go ahead, Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: **Madam Chair, I would like to make the motion to approve the modifications to Preferred Alternative 2 and Alternative 3.**

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Charlie, and I've got Dewey seconding. Any discussion? **Any objection? Motion approved.**

MS. HOWINGTON: Again, sorry. That was a fun little rabbit hole I got to go down for a couple of days to figure out why that was doing that. All right, and so then we, of course, have our visualization. Again, the lat and long are identical. This matches the maps that were produced before. They have not changed, and that's why I put that in there.

Now we're going to get to discussion, and so, before we move on, I just want to preface this. This discussion section is big. We're going to be going over a lot of information, and then, at the end, we have some questions that we would like to get you guys on the record for, and so please just be patient with us while we go through each section, and when we review all of it, and then, when we get to the questions, I'll actually come back to these sections, so, that way, you can have the relevant bullet points while we're discussing, but then, that way, you have all the information, and then you can see what we're going to be talking about. With that, I'm going to ping Allie to talk about VMS communication rate.

MS. IBERLE: So, in June, I attempted to describe the ping rate situation, and I don't think I did a very great job, and so I'm going to try to kind of go back over it, one more time, and then incorporate, you know, what we learned, or didn't learn, from the public hearings, and so, if we're really simplifying the OHAPC in our minds, and we're thinking about a rectangle in which the shrimpers can have to have their nets stowed while they transit over the area, everywhere outside of that rectangle, the VMS communication rate, or ping rate, is once per hour. That's just the blanketed requirement for the rock shrimp fishery.

As soon as they enter that rectangle, that fenced area, they're transiting, which means they have to stow their gear, and then, to kind of prove that they're transiting, for lack of better terms, that VMS communication rate has to increase from one ping per hour to one ping per five minutes. I said that really not confidently, and so one ping per hour to one ping per five minutes, and that ensures that the vessel is maintaining the transit speed, and so, essentially the VMS -- The increased VMS communication provides that resolution to ensure that vessels are maintaining that transit speed.

Now, if we're thinking about adding in a shrimp fishery access area, and so you have that rectangle that you're thinking of that is the OHAPC, and you're adding another rectangle inside that is the shrimp fishery access area, and so, within that area, shrimp vessels can shrimp, and so they're not maintaining that transit speed.

However, since we were not modifying the VMS communication rate, while vessels are legally shrimping within that area, if the shrimp fishery access area is established, they must maintain that increased ping rate, and so, while they're shrimping, they would need to ping once every five minutes, and so, when you're looking at the math, the time math on that, it goes from one ping per hour to -- I just looked at the slide, and now I already forget. One per five minutes.

When you multiply it out -- Essentially, they're paying for increased VMS communications, and so, when we've looked into the VMS programs, it's like a cell phone plan. You're paying for minutes essentially, and so, if they have to ping more while shrimping, since they're going slower in that area, they're not maintaining five knots, and then that may exceed the VMS plan that they currently have.

They might need to pay more per ping, or buy like a higher plan, for, again, lack of a better term. We included this information during public hearings on both the webinar and the in-person, and we didn't receive any feedback from the shrimpers that this would be a barrier to them using the area, and so it was one of the things that we were concerned about.

We kind of brought it up in June, but it didn't seem as though this would be an issue for the fishermen, and so, before I hand it back over, is there any questions on the ping rate? Are you still good with maintaining the ping rate? The one last thing I'll mention, before I kind of hop off this topic, is that one of the things was that it could be seen as kind of a tradeoff, where law enforcement will have increased resolution on vessels using the shrimp fishery access area, and so, again, that increased ping rate, you're essentially seeing more detail on that track as the VMS is pinging more frequently, and so it's giving law enforcement more resolution while vessels are using the area.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you. I'll do Monica first, and then I'll do Dewey, and then Jessica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Allie, thank you, and so just another way to look at it, if I'm accurate, is that, no matter where the shrimp vessel is in the Oculina HAPC, their ping rate would be once every five minutes?

MS. IBERLE: (Ms. Iberle's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Okay. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Dewey. Okay. Dewey is good. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Just making sure, sticking with that, that there's no increased burden, you know, cost and burden to fishermen, because I know it costs more, the more frequent the pings are, et cetera, but we're -- We're staying the same, and so there's no cost, and is that right, to the fishermen?

MS. IBERLE: So, essentially, it's -- We're not doing anything, and so, when they're moving across that area now, they already have to have that higher ping rate. I think the issue -- The change is that, when they're in that area, and they're going slow, pulling a trawl, they're still having to maintain that higher ping rate, and so there could be an increased cost from the change in vessel speed, because, previously, you're just trucking it as, you know, you're -- The vessel is moving across quickly, but we didn't hear from the shrimp fishermen that this will be a barrier.

MS. MURPHEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I feel like I understand it very clearly, and, based on, one, we didn't hear from them, and, two, the tradeoff is -- Are they paying more for the VMS? Yes. Are they getting economic access to an area they didn't have before? Yes. Are they going to pay a little more for it, but, especially since it didn't seem to concern them, I'm not concerned about it. I think that it's fine.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Thank you. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't know that I would say it didn't concern them. I'm looking at Carolyn, and it came up at the workshop, and it seemed like people -- The fishermen were asking, and noting, that there would be an increased cost, and am I wrong about that?

DR. BELCHER: There was a lot of discussion too about whether or not there were some other things besides VMS that would be better. There was questions about that as well, and so I just don't remember the cost per se coming up. I just thought they were asking for clarification of the pings.

MS. MURPHEY: Well, I think that, if it gives more detail on the tracks they are fishing, I think that may be useful too, and if, so far, it's not been a big deal, then I would just -- Let's keep moving on.

MS. HOWINGTON: All right. Then so moving on. So then the next highlights are public comments highlighted concerns over sedimentation from trawling and the impacts on coral health, and so I have now done -- Read so many sedimentation papers, and here's just a highlight, and just a summary, of kind of the things that you need to keep in mind before we get to the sedimentation question that we're going to need to discuss, and so first off is what are the current currents like in this area, and one of the best current papers out there is actually Reed 2006.

This was actually presented to the Habitat AP by Dr. John Reed, and the quote here -- The way that he described it, after putting out current meters for an extended period of time and measuring, is that seldom does the water mass extend to the bottom, and the reefs are often inundated with turbid bottom nepheloid layer, which basically means that the water is basically stagnant, and so

that really, really strong north-south current that we've been talking about actually stops at around the sixty-meter mark.

Now the reef -- The sediment around the reef is described as mud, and so that's like a silt and clay, and then the closest coral pinnacles to the shrimp fishery access area are 0.2 to 0.8 nautical miles away, and so there is a distance, and there is -- There can be some east to west current movement. This occurs, and, again, this is from the multiple papers that I've read, and this occurs typically whenever there's an upwelling, which most likely is going to happen during the summer months.

I cannot believe this is a sentence I'm going to say, and I then use ChatGPT, because I do not have the ability to read the last ten years of National Weather Service and Surfline Reports, and I had to use them to scan it for any mention of upwellings. From this analysis, there were four mentions of upwellings between the years of 2014 to 2024.

Now, there is potential that I've missed something, and that's why I keep saying analysis is going to be ongoing. I tried to do a temperature analysis, but then I was excluding winter months. It was a whole thing, and so, if anyone has any suggestions, please tell me.

Now, sediment is known to damage coral, and it can travel, depending on how the current strength and direction is, and so, if it is that nepheloid layer, it's most likely not going to be traveling a long distance, but, if it is a big upwelling that is happening when the shrimpers are trawling, then plumes can be suspended in the water column for up to multiple days, and they can go hundreds of meters, and sometimes further, but it just all depends on that current strength. Like I said, I'll return to this section after we finish going through everything.

I am highlighting the bycatch practicability analysis, because that was in the letter as a highlight. It has been integrated in. Unfortunately, that data is extremely limited, just due to low observer coverage. I'm just repeating it, in case anyone has any criticisms. We did our best, and we are using the best available data that we have, and then, finally, the last thing that I'm going to be asking you questions of is the Coral and Shrimp FMP goals and objectives.

When Coral Amendment 10 was disapproved, one of the big highlights in the letter was the goals and objectives of the Coral FMP, specifically in regard to EFH, and so I would love if we could get the council on the record discussing the shrimp goals and objectives that you see here, as well as the coral goals and objectives, and how this amendment, Coral Amendment 11/Shrimp Amendment 12, is meeting these goals and objectives together.

We have actually asked you to do this prior, and we got public comment, with some of their logic, and we got your feedback on how we could best meet these, and, when we get down to this question, I have pulled those two conversations for you to be able to refer to, of this is how we tried to meet these goals and objectives, and so, before I move on to questions, does anyone have any -- Does anyone have any questions or comments on those three sections, and then we'll move on to the questions and the getting you guys on the record part.

MS. MURPHEY: Any questions? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: So, Kathleen, thank you for this. This is really helpful, and I think it addresses some of the concerns we've been hearing about sedimentation. One question, I guess,

I've been thinking about is this area was trawled extensively prior to when we closed it. Are there any papers with indication with regard to sedimentation on corals, you know, physical observations, kind of prior to the closure, because, to me, that would be an indication of whether it's trawling or something else related to perturbations in the environment, right, that sedimentation is occurring in that area, and yet the corals have done well, and survived, but I'm just curious if you've come across anything like that.

MS. HOWINGTON: There is not a paper that compares pre-closure and post-closure coral health, which would ultimately be how we would get to that, of is there sediment that's causing these problems, versus not. There's plenty of public comments about the subject, specifically about there was no damage before the closure that was caused by us, or that's a quote from a shrimper actually, and then, on the coral side, they're more likely to comment on, well, the shrimpers' trawls damaged coral, and that's why there's no coral in the area, and so, unfortunately, that's the anecdotal information we have, and they disagree with each other.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other questions, or thoughts? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I'm not sure I would say they disagree with each other. I think they may just have opposite points of view. I might phrase it that way.

MS. HOWINGTON: I apologize. Yes, sir.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. So, Kathleen, thank you very much for going through all of this in detail, and I understand that it is a lot of information for you to read and go through, and so, just taking anecdotally what you've been able to provide thus far, upwelling events, four in the last eleven years, and so, typically, an upwelling event can last thirty-ish days. We're talking about over 4,000 days, and potentially four thirty-ish, plus or minus, days of an upwelling event that would take that sediment movement and push it east to west. Am I making --

MS. HOWINGTON: (Ms. Howington's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MS. DUKES: Okay. The only other thing I would suggest is maybe reaching out to the SERFS folks here in South Carolina. You're getting really close to, you know, where we set the southern jurisdiction of our traps, and, when we do put those traps down, we are doing depth and temperature sensors, and so looking at that temperature change could also help you to validate those upwelling events, because, even if they're not there, typically, an upwelling event will go further up the coast, and, if it's not documented in that area, you may be able to document it further north and still be able to extrapolate that back, to validate what you're already finding in those papers.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other questions? So I have a question. Since you say, you know, the lower bottom part of the reefs is inundated with turbid bottom nepheloid layer, the fact that "turbid" is in there kind of infers sediment anyway, and so it seems sounds like it may have sediment going on, regardless if anybody is there in those lower levels, and so I just -- I don't know, and that caught my eye when I read this earlier.

It's like, well, it's already has sediment, and there was something else I was going to say. I don't remember now, but, anyway, that I just found that interesting, that there may be a turbidity issue, sedimentation issue, anyway, or maybe I shouldn't say issue, but environment. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: To that point, I remember, and, obviously, this was still going on when I was on the council the first time, and so it's been going on a long time, but this turbidity, and I remember some of the rock shrimp fishermen that were fishing south, and they were getting a slime and stuff in their nets, and that made it very difficult to pull, because it was just bogging the nets down, and it was probably some kind of algae or something.

Was it associated with nutrient-rich water coming out of Lake Okeechobee, and getting offshore? Who knows, but that turbidity could also be increased algae, or something that, again, if you get a lot of algae on some corals, you've got a problem, but the shrimpers obviously don't have anything to do with that, but there's -- There are things that happen that are beyond all of our control.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks, Charlie. I had another -- Was it Andy? Go ahead, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I just want to go briefly back to the VMS ping rate. I'm trying to confirm, and you may not have an answer for this meeting with law enforcement, but I don't think the fisherman actually bears the cost of an increased ping rate within the shrimp fishing access area. I think that's something that law enforcement has to adjust, and then we, the Fisheries Service, pay the cost, but I want to confirm that. There's no automatic geofence, from what I understand, that would change their ping rate as soon as they cross boundaries, but I'll let you know that, and get back to you.

The other, I think, important aspect of that increased ping rate, right, is, if you're trawling for an hour, the distance between two points, you don't really know where that vessel may have operated between those two points, and so, the more frequent the points, we, obviously, can then determine the path of the vessel, where it's operating in relation to this shrimp fishing access area.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. Any other comments before we -- Clay.

DR. PORCH: Yes, and I just wanted to clarify that turbidity comment, because, as Charlie pointed out, a lot of times it can just mean there's some algae in the water, and it can mean that there's suspended organics in the water. It doesn't necessarily mean, and, in this case, almost certainly, since it's a nepheloid, it doesn't mean that the sediment is all stirred up all the time, and so it's not quite the same thing as if a net went through and stirred up the sediment.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Clay. Anything else before we move to go through the objectives for both plans? All right. Let's go ahead and hit objectives.

MS. HOWINGTON: Actually, I do have -- We have the questions for the other sections, but I think we've actually hit on a good chunk of them, and so the first question, and I think we've already highlighted it, but does the council still want to retain the transit VMS communication rate in the shrimp fishery access area? Yes or no, pretty please, on the record.

MS. MURPHEY: It sounds like everyone was yes. I see heads nodding.

MS. HOWINGTON: So then, also on the record, please discuss how EFH is still protected within the OHAPC if trawling is allowed in the shrimp fishery access area, and how the adverse effect of fishing is minimized by selecting Preferred Alternative 2, and so this is one of the things that we're taking that letter, and we're taking those reasons for the rejection of Coral 10, and I would love to have you guys, on the record say, with the knowledge of the sediment that we just discussed, how picking that Preferred Alternative 2 minimizes the effects and how EFH is still protected, please.

MS. MURPHEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I don't claim to have expertise in a lot of things, but I know a little bit about shrimping, and I spent fifteen years running a shrimp boat. Part of it was rock shrimping off of Florida, and not off Oculina. We generally worked the thirty-fathom ledge, but I spent a lot of time on the water, pulling nets, and watching sediment trails behind my nets. A lot of my work was in Georgia, and so you could actually see it, or you could see the boats around you, how far the sediment trails were behind those boats.

Again, it's muddy sand we're dragging on, and so I just -- They dissipated pretty fast, and we were in some much faster currents than one knot. Generally, it probably averaged two, and at times maybe even three, but I spent a lot of time, and there's probably not very many people that I would say is more environmentally minded than I am, because I understand that you have to have water quality to produce stuff, whether it be clams, like I grow, or have healthy fish, and healthy ecosystems, for wildlife.

You have to protect your water quality, and so I get it, but I just -- I don't see how this is really going to affect the corals. I think it's more what-ifs than actual we see sediment sitting on corals. There's just no science that I see that says that, and so I'm satisfied that the sedimentation is not the issue that a lot of people seem to think it is, or that they were told that it was, and go from there.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Charlie. I'll get Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Just to add to what Charlie was saying, I would add that Preferred Alternative 2 has a buffer in it between the fishing area and the known coral peaks, which should minimize any effects of sedimentation. You know, if there is some, and Charlie talked a lot about, you know, the size, and the amount kind of behind the vessel, but I believe that Preferred Alternative 2 is minimizing that, because there's a buffer there.

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

MR. HULL: I would agree with what both Charlie and Jessica said, and those are important, and, you know, we've done our due diligence here, and have looked at this from every angle, and so we've chosen this to be the course of action, and have given it thorough consideration.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jimmy. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I'll just go back to the idea of the sedimentation with the upwelling events. There just doesn't seem to be any evidence, in a couple of isolated upwelling events, where you're going to get that east-to-west movement that would justify not moving

forward with our Preferred Alternative 2 It just -- Sedimentation isn't going to likely be an issue, especially with the additional buffer that's imposed as well.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Amy. Anybody else? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm also in support of remaining with our preferred, and maybe you can add in there, in case it's not obvious, Kathleen, you know, the VMS, especially at the increased ping rate, provides an extra layer of protection on top of the buffer. This is a very well-regulated group of boats, and if they -- You know, I don't believe they'll step a foot out of line, because I also understand how the fishery operates, and they don't want to be on top of any habitat either, and so, as far as getting close to the coral, it's just not going to happen, because of VMS and because of how the fishery operates.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other comments? I can try to summarize. What I heard was it's mostly a north-south current. Whenever you do get an east-west, it's during an upwelling, which is rare. We do have the buffer that's in place, and I'll just add the ping rate, I think, is something important. I think we'll be able to -- You know, that gives us even more information on where these guys are fishing, and then just to add that, you know, we do have a couple studies that say there's no coral in that area that we're discussing, and so I don't know if there's -- Did I capture everything? I see heads shaking. Okay. Have you got it, guys?

MS. HOWINGTON: All right, and so now for a little bit longer of a conversation. Again, I'm sorry, but we've got to get you on the record for this. We need to discuss the Coral and Shrimp FMP goals and objectives and how establishing this shrimp fishery access area supports that, and so, just to remind you, we've actually asked you this twice before.

In June 2025, when the public came and supported Preferred Alternative 2, they had the logic of the increased distance for coral pinnacles under Alternative 2, that you've already mentioned. The shrimpers' practice of not trawling along the edge of the boundary, and giving a safety boundary, should decrease damage to EFH. The technology has improved, and so they are actually better at being able to track where they are, and maintain that straight line, and then they -- That also should help limit direct or indirect impacts, and then, additionally, the EO.

Then, also, in June of 2024, we actually asked you about these goals and objectives. Specifically, we asked what changes do we need to make to be able to meet them, and so we did go through, and we actually highlighted some of the things that we haven't been able to do from that list. We have not determined a required buffer width. Again, this goes back to there isn't one. It all depends on the current strength, and where the water is moving. For me to be able to tell you, oh, well, it's always going to be this buffer, I would need the current to never change speed. I don't think that's ever going to happen, and so, unfortunately, I can't determine a safety buffer.

We have identified the requirements that the rock shrimp fishery is on. We have highlighted the quarter-mile safety buffer. You all also requested that we use some illustrations from Laurilee. We have discussed that, and the IPT is not 100 percent comfortable with that, but, if you all insist, we will go back to them, and then we have started to review if there have been any fisheries violations. We've already started that process, and so we will actually integrate -- If there are any fisheries violations that are on the record, we'll integrate that into the amendment for December, and so we'll return to you there.

We have got the bycatch practicability analysis. We've highlighted the TEDs and the BRDs. You all said investigate historical bycatch levels. We went back to 2018, and I don't know. Is that historic? That's normal best practices, and so I think we've done it. I hope you all are okay with that. If you want us to go back further, let us know, and then we've looked at that trawling concerns, and potential damage, and so we've done a lot of what you requested.

Then, just keeping all of the information that I just threw at you in mind, I'm scrolling back up. Please discuss the shrimp goals and objectives, and how we are meeting those, and then please discuss the coral goals and objectives, and how we are meeting those.

MS. MURPHEY: So anybody want to provide some comment on the Shrimp FMP goals and objectives here? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, I guess I'll put it this way. If you want the rock shrimp industry to be more profitable, you let them drag where the rock shrimp are, instead of where you want them to be, and rock shrimp are just like fish, and pretty much everything else. They're not where you want them to be. They're where they want to be, and, again, I shrimp fished for many years, and there's a lot of difference in moving a quarter of a mile east and west.

Those shrimp run in streaks, often, and not always, but often, and, when they get in those narrow streaks, and they get thick in those narrow streaks, that's where you need to work to be productive, and these guys have said they don't plan on being there all the time. They're just going to be there when they need to be, and when the rock shrimp are there, and so it’s -- I don't see it being heavily exploited, and so let them work. I don't see where they're going to be doing any damage, and let them work, and let them try to make that money, and let them be productive, which, again, it follows our EOs. Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: Any other comments? Amy, and then Jessica.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Charlie. I really appreciate you reminding everyone that, just because this shrimp fishery access area is going to be open, it does not automatically mean effort. It gives them the opportunity to go in there, if the shrimp are there, but it doesn't make them go in there, and I appreciate you reminding us of that, and, ultimately, we're here to make sure that we sustain that rock shrimp fishery, from an industry level, from an infrastructural level, and this is giving them an opportunity to be able to continue to fish, and maybe even get their OY.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Amy. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I don't know if you were going through the Coral FMP goals and objectives one-by-one, but I have some notes under almost all of those, and so, like the minimizing adverse human impacts on coral and coral reefs and live hardbottom habitat, underneath that one, I believe that where we've already talked about that we're creating a buffer between fishing and known coral peaks. There's a very limited number of people in the fishery, a limited number of participants, and there's a number of strict requirements, VMS, et cetera. Then, as you heard from Charlie, just because that area is open doesn't mean, it that everybody' is going in there every single year.

The designating coral habitat areas of particular concern to protect coral and live bottom habitat, on that one, I think creating the shrimp fishery access area will continue to maintain strong protections in the most sensitive habitats, while balancing fishery access to less sensitive areas.

On the one about increase public awareness of the importance and sensitivity of coral and coral reefs, so I think that you could pair this reopening with outreach, emphasizing that shrimping is only allowed in carefully defined areas, and this could also be an opportunity to highlight why most oculina habitat remains closed, and so I think that you could kind of pair these two things together and then provide a coordinated management regime for conservation of coral and coral reefs.

Reopening this area demonstrates adaptive science-based management, because we had, you know, some -- The R/V Nancy Foster went out, in April of 2025, to do some surveys, and that this is balancing conservation with historical fishing access, and strengthening partnerships between scientists, managers, and the shrimp industry, and so just trying to add some there.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jessica. I think that's very helpful. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I was just going to continue on with Jessica's comment about the fact that, you know, this was done as a joint plan, and so it was optimizing, again, between the two different FMPs.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Carolyn. Anyone else? Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and I'll build upon that just a little bit more. The rock shrimp fishery relies on the coral. It's their habitat, and so the last thing a fisherman wants to do is to go in there and destroy a habitat that's actually going to be for the actual item they're trying to find, and so it's interesting, but I think that the biggest thing is, going back to the draft document, in Appendix F and Appendix G, it's the two surveys for the mapping, as well as the visual survey, one the mapping done just most recently in 2025 and then the visual survey done in 2022 by NOAA Fisheries, and both of these results indicate no large areas of coral mounds are visible. There's no evidence of coral. There's no -- There was no live, dead oculina rubble observed in or in the immediate adjacent areas to the shrimp fishing access area. There's not any coral there.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Amy. Clay.

DR. PORCH: I just wanted to moderate that a little bit. I mean, the NOS survey was two-meter resolution, and so you're only going to see huge corals that are, you know, hundreds of years old. You wouldn't see the small stuff. Certainly our survey didn't cover very much area, and so, I mean, we can fairly say we haven't seen, you know, large mounds of corals, but we can't really fairly say that we have, you know, clear evidence that there aren't small colonies, but we haven't seen them, and that's true.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Clay. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: To Clay's point, if there were large mounds of coral, those shrimpers would have known it a long time ago, and, speaking of damage, you know, that we get reports of, I would suspect that was probably from the calico scallop industry, where they were pulling dredges that

could actually drag over coral, and in coral, and not really hurt anything, hurt their gear. You absolutely cannot drag shrimp gear in that kind of stuff. You destroy it. You don't want to get anywhere around it, and it doesn't matter if it's Oculina or you're down in Tortugas, and you do not want to get around coral.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Charlie. Amy, did you have a question?

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Clay, I was just curious though, and the visual survey, with the fourteen dives, it did indicate no rubble, and so, when you said, you know, large scale, could you give a perspective of how large you would be talking? I was just curious.

DR. PORCH: I think they covered a really tiny fraction of the total zone in the visual survey. That's what I was getting at, and so we can't really say we visually observed the entire area. It's just a tiny fraction, and, the NOS survey, they just didn't have the resolution to even be able to see real small heads, and so if the area -- I guess the point people have made is, if the area once did have big colonies, and then they were destroyed by, you know, dredgers, or what have you, they wouldn't be built up that quickly, that big again. It would just be little colonies, and the surveys just can't see them.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Anything else? Go ahead.

MS. HOWINGTON: All right, and so I've been able to get a lot of those comments, and put them underneath the goals and objectives where I think they apply. The only one that I would love it if you guys could comment on, because, again, I'm being a stickler about this, for the Coral FMP goals and objectives, optimize the benefits generated from the coral resource, while conserving the coral and coral reefs, and so other than picking Preferred Alternative 2 increases the buffer. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: By focusing effort in previously-impacted areas, the fishery is able to generate value from the broader coral ecosystem, while maintaining protection of sensitive areas, and this -- I would also add that, you know, you heard a little bit more from Clay that you're also, you know, allowing limited access strictly to areas that were shown, from what we can see from mapping and surveys, to have no living coral remaining.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Jessica, and so do you have everything? Would you like to summarize what was said, because I didn't write all that down. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I'm -- Kathleen, please let us know what more you might need from us, but I think we need to remember that there's still a huge area that is still absolutely being protected for the coral. A lot of the area is unchanged, and we're not allowing fishing there, and so the coral will still continue to grow and function there.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Amy.

MS. HOWINGTON: All right, and so one more question before I read this, and, yes, I can summarize this really fast. This is actually to Charlie, because it's something that I meant to ask. Shrimp, when it gets real cold in the winter, where do they go? Do they prefer the warmer waters, or do they stay where it is, or do they prefer colder waters?

MR. PHILLIPS: I guess it would depend on the shrimp.

MS. HOWINGTON: Rock shrimp. Sorry. Specifically to rock shrimp.

MR. PHILLIPS: Rock shrimp, I really don't know. I can't tell you. I know, white shrimp, they get offshore in December, and they start heading south, where the weather suits. Rock shrimp, I don't know. They may migrate in and out, but I can't tell you that.

MS. HOWINGTON: My reasoning for asking, and so I'll continue to look into this, is that, if rock shrimp try to avoid colder waters, then, when there is an upwelling, when that east-west current would occur, they would probably avoid the colder areas, and go closer to shore or go further south, but I need -- That is nothing short of a theory. That is all that is. I need to do research to figure out if that's true or not.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Clay.

DR. PORCH: I think your strongest argument is that there is a buffer that you're including, because it's not just upwelling. There are mesoscale eddies in the region. That's a pretty active area. You know, you're not that far from the Gulf Stream. You get spin-off eddies, and I wouldn't hang our hat that there's no east-west flow. I think the biggest point that you have is that you have built in a buffer.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: One other thing, and this might be a little bit of stating the obvious, but your action language specifically states the permit that is allowed to utilize the area, and so, again, the area is not being open to all types of fishing activity, and so I don't know if that's something that you would like to discuss, but the permit is very specific to just the rock shrimp fishery, and so, again, limiting who is going to be using this area. I don't know if that's something that you think provides additional benefit, is that you're being very prescriptive as to who is going to be in this area. That might be too much of stating the obvious, but I figured I would mention it.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, and so I would like to go ahead and see if we can wrap this up, and then we'll be back on time. Do you want to run through, just briefly, and make sure we've captured everything that meets the goals and objectives, and then I think we have a motion, a draft motion, here.

MS. HOWINGTON: We do. All right, and so here's what I have. Underneath minimizing impacts to the rock shrimp fishery on coral, coral reefs, and live hardbottom in the South Atlantic region, fishermen will minimize damage, because they rely on coral for a healthy fishery. If there are large sets of coral, shrimpers would avoid it, and the permit is just for the rock shrimp fishery, and so use is limited.

To ensure that sufficient effort remains active to sustain the rock shrimp fishery and infrastructure, for the rock shrimp fishery to be profitable, they need access to where the rock shrimp are located. This will only be when the rock shrimp moves to the area. This does apply to the executive order,

and the ability to access the shrimp fishery access area gives opportunity. It does not mean that daily effort will be there.

Then, for optimizing the benefits generated from a coral resource, we are focusing effort in previously-impacted areas, and fishery is able to maintain value, while also protecting coral. We will be protecting coral while -- Sorry, and that's just a reword. This is not cleaned up yet.

Then, for minimizing adverse human impacts, we are creating a buffer between fishing and known coral peaks. The fishery is limited, highly regulated, and effort will be variable. There is no evidence of coral in this area, or in the immediate adjacent areas, to a two-meter resolution. For designating coral habitat areas of particular concern, creating the shrimp fishery access area will continue to maintain protection on the most sensitive areas, while balancing the need to be able to access a historical fishery area.

For increasing public awareness, we could potentially pair opening this with outreach on the area, of why this specific area is open and why the rest of the area is protected, and then, for providing a coordinated management regime, reopening this demonstrates adaptive science-based management. It balances conservation with historical fishery areas, and it strengthens trust between science and fishermen. That was a lot to type. Did I miss anything?

MS. MURPHEY: That's what I want to check. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I don't think we've missed anything. I just wanted to say, one, thank you to Kathleen. We talked about this on our pre-brief, in terms of building a better record, and I think this is excellent, in terms of the conversation we've had around the table. This focuses on a number of things that, obviously, we pointed out for disapproval of the prior amendment, and the staff can further build in, obviously, to this amendment.

While I have the mic, two things. I'm going to walk back my comments about VMS, and so my apologies, and so there is geofencing when you have a specific ping requirement that's in the regulations, and so that would be the case for rock shrimp, but there are differences, depending on the region and area, and so my apologies there.

Then one thing I will add, and I need to look more carefully at the amendment, is, if you scroll up to the comments about shrimp fishermen having a quarter-mile buffer, I've heard that many times. I've heard it from individual fishermen. I think we need to be careful not making a blanket statement that it applies to all shrimp fishermen, but it's certainly a practice that at least some of our fishermen have indicated that they abide by, and so just clarifying that in the amendment.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you, Andy. Did you want -- Go ahead, Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I agree with many of the things Andy said. I think we have a much better record, and I appreciate the discussion around the table. One thing that I think it might be helpful to reiterate, and I think you've talked about this once before, at another meeting, but, you know, the act says you establish advisory panels, and you ask them to convene when you think it's necessary and appropriate, and I noticed that, in some of the comments, there were members, perhaps members of the Coral AP, who were sensitive to the issue that the Coral AP wasn't convened to review this particular amendment, and I believe -- So I would appreciate some

discussion on the record for that. I'm assuming it's because the action and alternatives are virtually the same as what was in Coral Amendment 10, and that was extensively discussed at the Coral AP, but perhaps you could just discuss that a little bit on the record, so we can determine if my assumption is accurate or not.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Thank you. I'll let -- Jessica, do you want to speak to it?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I agree with what Monica said. Since it is basically identical in the previous amendment, which went back and forth to multiple APs, I feel like we had already gathered that input that was needed on setting that area.

MS. MURPHEY: That was actually my understanding as well, and so I don't know if Kathleen needs anything more to say, but that was also my understanding, that they basically had already gone through this.

MS. HOWINGTON: Yes, and that was March of last year. We brought to you guys the option to bring it to the APs. You all decided you had already heard from them on this subject. I have been in touch with the Coral AP. They are aware that that's the reason why they have not been reconvened.

They have been emailing me, and they actually emailed me a summary of how they feel, based on their Coral 10 comments, which was very helpful, and I'm probably going to give it to the IPT and ask if I can integrate it, because that's a good shortcut for me, but the Coral AP has -- You did not request it, and unprompted given a summary of what they said on the record, which is great, and I'm glad that they feel, you know, like they've been involved.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Thank you, Kathleen. So we're almost out of time, or at least coming to the end of our time, and so I think we've got a draft motion. Would someone like to make this motion? Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: **I move that we approve the action in Coral Amendment 11/Shrimp Amendment 12 for consideration of final approval in December 2025.**

MS. MURPHEY: Do I have a second? Dewey. Okay, I'm going to give it -- Thank you, Dewey, and I'll give it to Charlie. The Roberts Rules people are like rolling in their graves now, but anyway.

MS. HOWINGTON: All right, and so then the last thing, your next steps is --

MS. MURPHEY: I'm sorry. We need -- Any discussion? **Any objection? Motion passes.** Thank you, guys.

MS. HOWINGTON: All right, and so then, again, you guys will be presented with the final draft amendment in December of 2025, and have the opportunity to approve the amendment for submission, and so then, with that --

MS. MURPHEY: Do we have any other business? Seeing none, I will adjourn the joint Habitat & Ecosystem and Shrimp Committee meeting, and we're back on time, and so I'll give you all a fifteen-minute break, and we'll reconvene -- We'll convene the SEDAR Committee at 3:45.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on September 18, 2025.)

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Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
October 14, 2025

JOINT ... Thurs 9/18

| SeatNumber | Committee | Prefix | First | Last | Suffix | Position | Affiliation | Seat |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ✓ | 1 Shrimp | Dr. | Carolyn | Belcher | | Chair | GA DNR Coastal Resources Division | State Agency |
| ✓ | 2 Shrimp | | Amy | Dukes | | Vice-Chair | SC DNR Marine Resources Division | State Agency |
| ✓ | 3 Shrimp | | Gary | Borland | | | | Obligatory |
| ✓ | 4 Shrimp | | James | Hull | Jr. | | | Obligatory |
| ✓ | 5 Shrimp | | Jessica | McCawley | | | Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation | State Agency |
| ✓ | 6 Shrimp | | Trish | Murphey | | | NC Division of Marine Fisheries | State Agency |
| X | 7 Shrimp | Lt. | Tom | Pease | | | Seventh Coast Guard District | USCG |
| ✓ | 8 Shrimp | | Charlie | Phillips | | | | At-Large |
| ✓ | 9 Shrimp | | Andy | Strelcheck | | | NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region | NOAA Fisheries |
| ✓ | 1 Ecosystem Habitat and | | Trish | Murphey | | Chair | NC Division of Marine Fisheries | State Agency |
| ✓ | 2 Ecosystem Habitat and | | Tom | Roller | | Vice-Chair | | At-Large |
| web | 3 Ecosystem Habitat and | | Robert | Beal | | | Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission | ASMFC |
| ✓ | 4 Ecosystem Habitat and | Dr. | Carolyn | Belcher | | | GA DNR Coastal Resources Division | State Agency |
| ✓ | 5 Ecosystem Habitat and | | Gary | Borland | | | | Obligatory |
| ✓ | 6 Ecosystem Habitat and | | Amy | Dukes | | | SC DNR Marine Resources Division | State Agency |
| ✓ | 7 Ecosystem Habitat and | | Judy Francis | Helmey | | | | Obligatory |
| ✓ | 8 Ecosystem Habitat and | | (Dewey) | Hemilright | | | | Obligatory |
| ✓ | 9 Ecosystem Habitat and | | James | Hull | Jr. | | | Obligatory |
| ✓ | 10 Ecosystem Habitat and | | Kerry | Marhefka | | | | At-Large |
| ✓ | 11 Ecosystem Habitat and | | Jessica | McCawley | | | Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation | State Agency |
| X | 12 Ecosystem Habitat and | Lt. | Tom | Pease | | | Seventh Coast Guard District | USCG |
| ✓ | 13 Ecosystem Habitat and | | Charlie | Phillips | | | | At-Large |
| [illegible] | 14 Ecosystem Habitat and | | Robert | Spottswood | Jr. | | | At-Large |
| ✓ | 15 Ecosystem | | Andy | Strelcheck | | | NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region | NOAA Fisheries |

more on back

Joint HE-Shrimp
Thurs 9/18

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# Attendee Report: September 2025 Council Meeting

Report Generated:
09/22/2025 07:15 AM EDT

| Webinar ID | Actual Start Date/Time |
|---|---|
| 302-385-691 | 09/18/2025 07:39 AM EDT |

## Staff Details

| Attended | Interest Rating |
|---|---|
| Yes | Not applicable for staff |

## Attendee Details

| Last Name | First Name |
|---|---|
| Addis | Dustin |
| Aines | Alex |
| Barile | Peter |
| Barrows | Katline |
| Beal | Bob |
| Bell | Mel |
| Bernier | Quinn |
| Bianchi | Alan |
| Bogdan | Jennifer |
| Boots | Benjamin |
| Borland | Gary |
| Bradshaw | Christopher |
| Brantley | William |
| Brouwer | Myra |
| Brunson | Jeff |
| Buntin | Jesse |
| Bunting | Matthew |
| Burky Lechwar | Heather |
| Byrd | Julia |
| Carrigan | Abby |
| Cermak | Bridget |
| Coleman | Heather |
| Corbett | Ellie |
| Cox | Jack |
| Curtis | Judd |
| Darden | Tanya |
| DeVictor | Rick |
| Degan | Jacqui |
| Delaney | Glenn |
| Dingle | Julie |

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| Dover | Miles |
| Dukes | Amy |
| Dyar | Ben |
| Ealahan | Maranda |
| Emory | Meaghan |
| Enright | Nicole |
| Farrell | Delaney |
| Foss | Kristin |
| Gannon | Megan |
| Gentner | BRAD |
| Gentry | Lauren |
| Gloeckner | David |
| Gore | Karla |
| Gravitz | michael |
| Griffin | Aimee |
| Griner | Tim |
| HEMILRIGHT | DEWEY |
| Hadley | John |
| Hallas | Sara |
| Helmey | Judy |
| Hildreth | Delaine |
| Hooten | Jackson |
| Huber | Jeanette |
| Hudson | Joseph |
| Hull | Jimmy |
| Iberle | Allie |
| Iverson | Kim |
| Juliano | Jocelyn |
| Klasnick | 01Kelly |
| Klibansky | Lara |
| Knowlton | Kathy |
| Kolmos | Kevin |
| Larkin | Michael |
| Lazarre | Dominique |
| Leavel | Lillie Callaway |
| Levy | Mara |
| M Dobbs | Jeffrey |
| Mackesey | Brendan |
| Marhefka | 00Kerry |
| Masi | Michelle |
| McClair | Genine |
| McCoy | Sherylanne |
| McWaters | Mark |
| Meehan | Sean |

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| Mehta | Nikhil |
| Merck | Nicole |
| Merrifield | Jeanna |
| Merrifield | Mike |
| Muffley | Brandon |
| Murphey | Trish |
| Neer | Julie |
| Newman | Thomas |
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| Salmon | Brandi |
| Schmidtke | Michael |
| Seeley | Matthew |
| Seward | McLean |
| Silvas | Rachael |
| Smart | Tracey |
| Smillie | Nick |
| Solinger | Laura |
| Spanik | Kevin |
| Spurgin | Kali |
| Stephen | Jessica |
| Stephens | Haley |
| Stephenson | Sarah |
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| Thompson | Laurilee |
| Vecchio | Julie |
| Waldo | Jennifer |
| Walsh | Jason |
| Walter | John |
| Wamer | David |
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| Willis | Michelle |
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| marinko | Jeff |
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| Alexander | Nathan |
| Angers | Jeff |
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| Bajema | Jordan |
| Baker | Scott |
| Barbieri | Luiz |
| Barger | Jeff |
| Black | Karlisa |
| Brown | Hunter |
| Bruning | Jake |
| Carruthers | Tom |
| Cerny-Chipman | Elizabeth |
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| Downes | Athena |
| Dunn | Russell |
| Dyar | Ben |
| Evans | Joseph |
| Fields-Rivera | Kayla |
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| Flowers | Henry |
| Floyd | Brad |
| Foor | Brandon |
| Franco | Dawn |
| Froeschke | John |
| Gialanella | Tiffany |
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| Gravitz | Michael |
| Gray | Alisha |
| Guyas | Martha |
| Harmon | Jake |
| Harrell | Ryan |
| Hart | Hannah |
| Hatcher | Dale |
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| Helies | Frank |
| Herrick | Daniel |
| Hiers | Homer |
| Hilton | Kurt |
| Hollensead | Lisa |
| Hordyk | Adrian |
| Horton | Chris |
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| Ingram | Jamal |
| Kalinowsky | Chris |
| Karnauskas | Mandy |
| Kellison | Todd |
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| LEWIS | SAVANNAH |
| Leach | Scott |
| Lind | M |
| Lloyd | Shannon |
| Locke | Charles |
| Lopez-Mercer | Maria |
| Lorenzen | Kai |
| Martin | Drew |

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| McGirl | Maria |
| McManus | Brian |
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| Mikalian | Amanda |
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| O'Donnell | Kelli |
| Perkinson | Matt |
| Peterson | Cassidy |
| Reding | Brandon |
| Reed | John |
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| Rule | Erica |
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| Saurman | Emma |
| Sedberry | George |
| Simmons | Carrie |
| Smit-Brunello | Monica |
| Smith | Leah |
| Smith | John |
| Spratt | Paige |
| Stemle | Adam |
| Tidball | Victoria |
| Turley | Brendan |
| Walia | Matt |
| Walsh | Mick |
| Warren | Camilla |
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