

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

JOINT SHRIMP AND DEEPWATER SHRIMP ADVISORY PANELS

**Hilton Garden Inn
North Charleston, South Carolina**

April 16, 2015

SUMMARY MINUTES

Deepwater Advisory Panel

Mike Merrifield, Chair
Warren Gautier
Richard Reid
Laurilee Thompson

Steven Wilson, Vice-chair
Nancy Jones
Marilyn Solorzano
John Williams

Shrimp Advisory Panel

Frederick Dockery, Chair
Scott Baker
Nancy Edens
Robert Jones

Janie Thomas, Vice-chair
Scott Cook
Frank Helies
Marilyn Solorzano

Council Members

Ben Hartig
Mark Brown

Mel Bell
Chris Conklin

Council Staff

Gregg Waugh
Chip Collier
Julie O'Dell

Myra Brouwer
Julia Byrd

Observers/Presenters

Jennifer Lee

Other observers attached

The Joint Shrimp and Deepwater Shrimp Advisory Panels of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened in the Cypress Room of the Hilton Garden Inn, North Charleston, South Carolina, May 16, 2015, and was called to order at 9:00 o'clock a.m. by Chairman Michael Merrifield and Chairman Frederic Dockery.

MR. MERRIFIELD: We've got a lot to cover today. My name is Mike Merrifield; I am Chairman of the Deepwater Shrimp Advisory Panel, and Fred Dockery is here as Chairman of the Shrimp AP. I think the first order of business is we'll go around and do introductions.

MS. THOMPSON: I'm Laurilee Thompson. I own Dixie Crossroads Seafood Restaurant in Titusville, Florida, and I am on the Deepwater Shrimp Committee.

MS. THOMAS: Janie Thomas; Executive Director of Shrimp Producers Association from Fernandina Beach, and Vice-Chair of the AP.

MR. WILLIAMS: John Williams; Southern Shrimp Alliance.

MR. GAUTIER: Warren Gautier; Pascagoula, Mississippi, foreman at Pascagoula Ice and Freezer Company.

MR. REID: Richard Reid; Deepwater Shrimp AP. I work for Cape Canaveral Shrimp Company.

MS. JONES: Nancy Jones; Shrimp boat owner, Deepwater AP.

MR. WILSON: Steven Wilson; International Oceanic Enterprises in Alabama.

MS. SOLORZANO: Marilyn Solorzano; Shrimp boat owner, Deepwater Shrimp AP and Shrimp AP.

MR. DOCKERY: Fred Dockery; Chairman Shrimp AP, and a shrimper from Charleston, South Carolina.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Mike Merrifield; Cape Canaveral Shrimp Company, Deepwater Shrimp AP Chairman.

MR. COLLIER: Chip Collier; South Atlantic staff.

MR. COOK: Scott Cook; Shrimp AP, Murrells Inlet, South Carolina.

MR. HELIES: Frank Helies; Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation Program Director. It is my first meeting and I appreciate it.

MR. BAKER: Scott Baker; North Carolina Sea Grant, Shrimp AP, Wilmington, North Carolina.

MS. EDENS: Nancy Edens; North Carolina, Shrimp AP.

MR. JONES: I'm Bob Jones; Southeastern Fisheries, Tallahassee, Florida.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Okay, the first item that we would like to do is approval of the agenda. Are there any discussions about the agenda?

MR. COLLIER: I just want to point out that I did make two modifications to the agenda. One was the approval of the agenda, and then the second one was an overview of the TED compliance meeting that the Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation had. That was added as Number 6 on the agenda.

MR. MERRIFIELD: The only other thing I want to point out is that in the status of Coral Amendment 8 we'll also discuss minutes from the Habitat Committee in December at the Council meeting in December and the Golden Crab Committee and Full Council discussion of golden crab at the March Council meeting. That will be under Item 5, which is the discussion of Coral Amendment 8. If there are no other additions or objections to that, the agenda is approved.

The next item is approval of minutes. We have two sets of minutes that we need to approve for this. One is the Deepwater Shrimp AP. Okay, we have the Shrimp and Deepwater Shrimp Advisory Panel meeting from April 20, 2012, and we have the Deepwater Shrimp AP meeting from May of 2014. Are there any objections to the minutes or any additions or discussions on those minutes?

MR. DOCKERY: Just one request that in the future maybe staff could provide an overview of the minutes prior to the meeting. I reread the minutes and it is verbatim what took place. That is really hard to review and approve.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Any other comments? Okay, the minutes are approved. That takes us to our first item, which is the shrimp fishery biological opinion.

MR. COLLIER: Jenny Lee is going to be doing this through webinar, and she has a presentation now.

MS. LEE: Good morning. The Deepwater Shrimp AP, I believe almost a year ago now or just a little less than that, I came and gave you a presentation on the Shrimp Biological Opinion, as the new document had just come out. For the Penaeid Shrimp AP, I'm sorry we did not have a presentation.

This is the first time I guess that I will be presenting to you on it. I am just going to get right in – I am not going to go into a lot of detail – and sort of walk you through the whole document. I probably had a more detailed presentation last year, but just reviewing sort of the main components and what you need to know.

The proposed action for the biological opinion was the continued implementation of the sea turtle conservation regulations under the ESA in state and federal waters of the Gulf and South Atlantic and then the continued authorization of the Southeast U.S. shrimp fisheries in the Gulf and South Atlantic federal waters under the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

We were looking at both of those actions. The biological opinion updated and replaced the entire 2012 opinion that we had previously. We reinitiated because the 2012 opinion had

assumed that we would move forward with a rule to require TEDs and skimmer trawls. In November, 26, 2012, we made the decision not to move forward with that rule.

We had to review and redo our biological opinion because our proposed action had changed. One part of the proposed action in particular I want to point out; in the proposed action, of course, it reviews how we manage the fishery under Magnuson-Stevens. It reviews all of our sea turtle conservation regulations.

There is also part of the proposed action section that reviews how we manage effectiveness of TEDs via estimating a modern TED compliance and sea turtle capture rate in otter trawls. The 2014 opinion essentially maintained the sea turtle catch rate standard and monitoring system that we set up in 2012.

If you don't know what I mean by sea turtle capture rates or how this relates to TED compliance, I will review that later in the presentation. For now I just wanted to point out that this is a useful section to take a look at. The consultation considers the effects of NOAA Fisheries Services exemption of sea turtle takes to see what sea turtle conservation regulations have on listed species.

It looked at the effects that our existing sea turtle conservation regulations have on listed species in terms of how our TED and tow-time requirements affect listed species and then looks at the effects on our federally authorized shrimp fisheries, which are also subject to the sea turtle conservation regulations have on listed species. NOAA Fisheries doesn't assume responsibility for the effect that all state shrimp fisheries have on all listed species.

We're just looking at the effect of our take exemptions with respect to sea turtles and our specific requirements. The otter trawl analysis for sea turtles focused on our surrogates for sea turtle interactions and captures, which are effort in terms of days fished in the Gulf of Mexico, the number of trips in the South Atlantic, and otter trawl fleet sea turtle capture rates, and then the relevant impact of any documented changes to those parameters on the magnitude of effects of the proposed action.

I guess now probably is a good time to point out for anyone not familiar with that 2012 opinion that in 2012 we went through great effort to try and estimate and update our interaction capture and mortality estimates from what we had in our 2002 opinion, which relied heavily on a pretty old tech memo at this point.

Ultimately though our results were very uncertain, we didn't feel comfortable relying on the quantitative analysis. We didn't use them for specifying take in the ITS as we usually do. Instead we used fishing effort and sea turtle capture rates as surrogates or basically a different way to measure effects on sea turtles since both effort and compliance are parameters that directly affect mortalities and they are something that we can better monitor.

It is very important you understand what we mean by sea turtle mortality rates and sea turtle capture rates and how it is linked to TED compliance and performance. When legally constructed TEDs are installed and operating correctly in shrimp otter trawls, a small percentage of sea turtles entering the nets, 3 percent, still do not escape by means of the TED and are captured.

However, when your TED in your net is not constructed or installed to operate legally, then TED effectiveness can be reduced, in other words, have more than a 3 percent sea turtle capture rate and in severe cases can be completely compromised. For example, if it was an egregious violation where someone had actually sewn their TED shut or things of that nature, all the sea turtles would be captured.

In estimating our sea turtle capture rates, we try to take into account the different impact that various types and degrees in severity of TED violations have on the capture of small and large sea turtles. Basically not all TED violations have the same impact on sea turtle capture rates. There is a table in the biological opinion, Table 15, which reviews different types of violations associated with sea turtle capture rate estimates.

That is a good table to review if you are trying to understand what we mean in terms of the severity of regulations and how there are different effects. One example is an excessive flap overlap on a double-cover escape opening, insufficient cut measurements on both single and double-cover escape opening. Those are some of the types of things that the table looks at.

But, anyway, for this biological opinion what we did is we reviewed recent effort. While there was some fluctuation, effort in the Southeast Region generally did remain below 2009 effort levels. Tables 12 through 14 in the biological opinion show effort in different areas and depth zones in the South Atlantic and Gulf. If you want more details there, that is a good reference to look at.

With respect to our sea turtle capture rates, monitoring of otter trawl TED compliance and periodically conducting sea turtle capture rate analyses for the terms and conditions of the incidental take statement requirements indicated average sea turtle capture rates in the entire southeast for the entire data period, which we looked at for the biological opinion was from June 2012, so basically right after the 2012 biological opinion had been completed; and then through October 2013 just because we needed some endpoint to try to move forward with actually getting a new biological opinion completed.

Anyway, they were just 1 percent higher than anticipated. Table 25, Page 166, similar to the effort table, there is a table with all the results by month and then our six months and annual results. In the Gulf of Mexico the average sea turtle capture rate was right at 12 percent. Because we anticipated future effort to remain at or below 2009 effort in the long term and also a 12 percent sea turtle capture rate to be a realistic estimate of a rate we could maintain or can maintain; really the same methodology calculations our results for estimating otter trawl sea turtle interactions, capture rates and mortality used in the May 2012 opinion were repeated.

I don't need to go into a lot of detail there, but the main thing is consequently the results were subject to the same assumptions and sources or error that we presented in the May 2012 opinion. We again found the quantitative results were too uncertain to actually predict a specific number of each sea turtle species adversely affected. Moving on to our skimmer trawl analysis; new skimmer-related information included the 2012 Gulf of Mexico Sea Turtle CPUE, mortality, and tow times, data and new skimmer trawl effort data.

We also updated the skimmer trawl sea turtle capture rate mortality estimates to reflect the sea turtle CPUE data for the Gulf of Mexico skimmer trawl trawls from 2012 observer coverage. We have that observer coverage in the Gulf of Mexico skimmer trawls. We've been continuing to maintain that coverage.

We also were looking at the fact that skimmer trawls, pusher heads and wing nets will continue to fish without TEDs under tow-time restrictions; and then the extent of compliance with tow times in the Gulf, again based on the 2012 observed levels. Now, I know you are most interested in sea turtles; but as I mentioned in the beginning, the opinion does cover all species that the shrimp fishery potentially interacts with, and that includes sawfish.

For our sawfish analysis, we essentially maintained the 2012 opinion's reliance on bycatch estimates based on extrapolation of observer data, so that is a published science center report that we were relying on; updated otter trawl capture estimates to reflect 2009 effort baseline. There is a little change to our sawfish analysis and our capture estimates did increase slightly, but that was because again we updated to reflect the 2009 effort baseline.

The 2012 opinion had used the 2008 and 2009 effort average. The estimated mortality rates of total mortalities were also updated. In 2013 there were three observed sawfish captures in shrimp trawls, two of which were released alive presumably to fully recover and one of which was dead.

Adding those three records to the eight records we already had, our estimated mortality rate changed just slightly. It was actually reduced by 1 percent, so not a big deal. Gulf sturgeon is another species that we look at, but we still only have one observed take documented in our Science Center Observer Program, and it is an otter trawl.

We maintained that the quantitative extrapolation to the entire fishery was inappropriate. We also maintained that TEDs and shrimp trawl fisheries likely benefit Gulf sturgeon by providing a route of escape when rare interactions occur. But basically the reason why we believe we don't have a lot of interactions with Gulf sturgeon really has to do with when they come out of the rivers, where they go, staying in the really nearshore area mainly at least from the data that we have. We don't think there is a lot of federal interaction.

We were just looking at the federal fishery because of the scope that I discussed. Getting to the incidental take statement, again takes proxy was used for sea turtles. Take of sea turtles will be considered exceeded and the effects on sea turtles will be considered greater than analyzed, and we would be reinitiating if 2009 and/or 2010 effort levels are exceeded.

You have the days fished in the Gulf of Mexico and the number of trips for reference there, and then compliance levels are expected to result in TEDs in the fleet having greater than 12 percent sea turtle capture rate average. For the other species, we do have specific numbers as far as incidental take expected. I have that on the screen here. I don't really need to get into this. There is a little note besides Gulf sturgeon take not being exempt.

They are a threatened species and you have to have a special rule that actually exempts the take. Getting into terms and conditions; in order to be exempt from prohibitions of Section 9 of the ESA, NMFS must comply with terms and conditions which implement reasonable and prudent

measures. The terms and conditions are that there is a specific nondiscretionary action item that one must do in order to be fully compliant with the ITS.

There are actually 31 terms and conditions in the biological opinion; 21 of them relate to sea turtles, 5 concern sawfish, and 3 concern sturgeon. I am only going to present a small subgroup of these requirements which pertain to fishing effort and TED compliance, because I believe these are most important to you. I know that you have the full biological opinion in your briefing book and even a separate clip of the incidental take statements. Feel free to follow up on any of the terms and conditions if you have questions for me.

The first few Terms and Conditions here relate to monitoring effort, because effort as we discussed is one way we were measuring the monitoring effects. Terms and Conditions Number 2 relate to trying to improve our South Atlantic effort data so that we have more accurate days fished information and not just trip data.

Terms and Condition Number 5 requires to conduct experiments to improve the data used to estimate sea turtle capture rates associated with the different TED violations documented. This is something that shrimp fishermen had a lot of concern about, so we are working to continue to get empirical data.

Right now our sea turtle capture rate probability is based on some empirical data and then also a lot of expert opinion. I am just trying to remember the best way in terms of giving you the status of things. Maybe I'll run through and we can always go back if we have questions. Terms and Condition 10 describes how we'll continue to monitor compliance for TED regulations.

Right now we're using all the GMT boarding data exclusively, because these are data we know we can verify. We would like to expand on that. Our gear experts have been training observers on how to properly inspect TEDs, so we do have a goal of starting to use that information, because it would be a representative sample of the fleet.

We've had a big focus on standardized boarding forms in order to collect standardized information and have confidence and reliability of the information that we're using. Term and Condition 13 is to specify the broad range of different actions for addressing TED compliance and data problems.

Term and Condition 14 requires us to develop a policy specifying data requirements or minimum data standards for taking those various actions to address noncompliance. We had listened to concerns about how we would respond and handle situations for assessing responding to TED compliance. We are actively working on that policy now.

Probably the easiest way as far as you had asked for a status update on our Terms and Conditions; this screen shows you our main calculations when we're looking at estimated sea turtle capture rates. As far as effort goes, I should add again this biological opinion is now two days shy of being out for a year. In terms of looking at how we're doing with respect to effort, we don't have data yet to share on that.

I think we've recently gotten Gulf data for the year before and we're waiting on the South Atlantic data. But in the near term, sometime soon, we should have your information we need to

look at effort. But what we have here that we can present to you is we have been regularly, every month to every couple of months, making sure that we look at monthly sea turtle catch rates numbers and our overall TED effectiveness.

You can see that we've been doing well in terms of – as I told you, the 12 percent was the maximum we wanted to see and overall we've been well below that most months. I think that should be encouraging. In talking to our enforcement and gear specialists and reviewing information that they provided; it appears that as far as violations go we haven't been seeing many egregious violations as I mentioned.

Obviously, we're not getting 100 percent compliance; but in terms of the standard that we set, we are staying within that average sea turtle capture rate. That is all I have as far as formal slides here. The table I put up is now on our website. Unfortunately, we have been slow with getting a really good website layout that we had envisioned our one-stop shopping. I think when I came a year ago, I was mentioning we were going to have this great website.

The Southeast Region; we've been revising our whole website, so it has just been a longer process; but we now have the compliance numbers that I just shared with you. I just updated them yesterday so online they go through January, but we'll be updating that soon with the last couple months. There should be a lot of other good information for you to keep track and understand what is going on.

I know John Williams is in the room, so I know at least he is aware. We did just receive a lawsuit on the shrimp biological opinion. It is brand new; we haven't reviewed it. I can't comment on it; but I did want to mention that we did just receive that. Does anyone have any specific questions unrelated to the lawsuit?

MR. DOCKERY: I have two questions; one is the 12 percent catch rate is 12 percent of what?

MS. LEE: It is 12 percent of the sea turtles that enter the shrimp trawl nets. That is where we were saying with the legal TED; sea turtles that are entering the net, still only 97 percent will escape through the TED bars and be released. There will still be 3 percent essentially that will for one reason or another potentially get trapped in the TED.

When we set this 12 percent standard, essentially we were recognizing that it is unrealistic to assume that the entire fishery is going to have 100 percent compliance, you know, to have perfect TEDs. Things happen and whatever people's skill knowledge and willingness I guess to follow the rules.

We just looked at the data that we had and tried to set a standard for what we thought would really happen in the fishery with an acceptable – or I shouldn't say acceptable; but when we're reviewing a biological opinion, we're estimating what we believe will occur in the future. We looked at the data and basically determined that 12 percent was a reasonable expectation.

MR. DOCKERY: Yes, the 12 percent, I just wondered if that was of what came in the net or the turtle population. My second question –

MS. LEE: Yes, I'm sorry, so it is just what came in the net.

MR. DOCKERY: The second question is if I understood correctly, you are reviewing or revising the matrix that you used to calculate the assumption of compliance and violations. Will you be looking for input from fishermen in terms about the validity of that new matrix?

MS. LEE: I think any revisions of the matrix would be based largely on – it would be based on more empirical data, so based on more of the TED testing that the Gear Management Team and Science Center Pascagoula folks do. The biological opinion basically was just recognizing that that matrix was based on the best available data that we had, but we were committed to working to get more information to improve that.

MR. DOCKERY: Do you have a simple number that asserts what percentage of shrimp trips you assume are in violation? Is there like a single number or something like that, 1 percent, 5 percent? I don't really understand.

MS. LEE: What we're using here – again, our enforcement and particularly our Gear Management Team, they are really working right now with the Coast Guard and doing a lot of training with them, real positive. But for the actual statistics, I guess, the column that we're using, we're basing it on OLE and GMT vessel inspections.

On this table you can see the vessels that were inspected that were found fully compliant, the fifth column there. You will see those are the vessels that were fully compliant, and then following is the vessels that were noncompliant. That gives you an idea of just overall like the fully compliant means you were boarded and they didn't find anything versus the noncompliant just means you had one or more violations and it could have been something very minor; it could have been something more impactful.

Those two columns give you sort of the broad brush as far as just fully compliant versus noncompliant vessels that OLE and GMT boarded. Then everything to the right of there is trying to get at the impact of the violations that we saw. For example, it has been pretty high, but if you take March, overall only 69 percent of vessels are fully compliant, which was lower than we have seen recently.

But then if you look at the impact of that, it is not that dramatic in the sense that the overall average sea turtle capture rate was 10.5 percent. That gives you an idea of the extent of the violations. That is why we're trying to rather than just look at solely who was compliant and who wasn't compliant; that doesn't necessarily tell us as much as if we try to evaluate whether it is just some minor violation that really isn't impacting the number of turtles that would be released versus something that would have a real impact. Was that helpful?

MR. MERRIFIELD: I think I might know what Fred is getting at. Like in the one slide you said that it was 1 percent higher than anticipated. Is there an overall number that you say is the compliance rate that went into this biological opinion; and I guess what is that number? I went to that TED Compliance Meeting as well, and so there is going to be a lot more data going into this. As I understand it, the OLE partners are going to be doing a lot more boarding forms That data is going to start being collected and put into this evaluation as well; is that correct?

MS. LEE: Yes; we would like to use more than just OLE and GMT data when we're looking at the fishery. We just want to be careful that we do it in a very systematic way so that there is no concern over what data is used and what data is not used; that we have clear standards for I guess the quality of the boarding data that we're using, so that there is no question as far as whether they're all being evaluated in the same manner.

That is why we have been working, as you said, on the standardized boarding form now and getting state partners to submit that information and why Office of Law Enforcement, of course, is working with state enforcement agencies. We've got a big effort going on right now where the applicable gear monitoring team has been working to train the Coast Guard. There is a lot going on and as that progresses we can start to use more information, because obviously a bigger sample set is our goal. I think I also mentioned the hope to use the observer data as a representative sample or at least a comparison.

MR. DOCKERY: Just one comment. I think you've answered me as well as is possible right now; but if I understand correctly the take rate is 3 percent when you're compliant; but your estimated take rate adjusting for noncompliance is 12 percent, and that is a huge difference. I understand 12 percent is still considered acceptable, but I would like to feel a lot of confidence that you are not exaggerating the noncompliance to make that 12 percent bigger than the reality is. Most people I know are as compliant as they know to be. I would assume that the take rate is probably closer to the 3 percent than the 12 percent. That is just my comment.

MR. LEE: Sure, and I should clarify. I don't know if acceptable is the right word, if I said that. The 12 percent is what, when we reviewed the data, we anticipated that we could maintain that rate. Then when you do the analysis for the biological opinion we look at with that rate of sea turtle capture rates what is the impact on the population. That is how we analyze it as opposed to sort of setting something and just saying, okay well, we think that's good. It's all sort of what we think is going to occur and then evaluating the impact of what we think is going to occur.

MR. WILLIAMS: Do you happen to have a picture you could put on the screen of the capture rate matrix? That might help explain quite a bit how you get to that 12 percent.

MS. LEE: Yes, I could do that. This is Table 15 that we are referencing, the TED components and then, for example, take the first one, the TED angle, so the requirement, and then looking at the extent to which it was over, so Level 151 is 5.1 – don't get caught up in this, the actual numbers.

But if you basically just look at the different colors, I would say, so in this green box here where the violation is basically below 58 as far as the angle, then we're saying it is basically the same as a legal TED. We're still giving it credit to having only a 3 percent capture rate. Then it moves up from there. There is a difference, of course, in the size, the reason why, if you can see on the table, why there are different rates. It is obviously small turtles versus large turtles are impacted different, depending on what the violation is. But this just kind of gives you an idea of the different TED components that we're looking at and then trying to scale what the impacts are.

MR. WILLIAMS: With this capture rate matrix, I assume that the green is the least one that we capture turtles, and it goes progressively from yellow to orange to red; as I think Dale put it,

from jay walking to capital murder. Could you say that most of the noncompliant violations will be in Tier 1 as opposed to the other 3?

MS. LEE: Yes, we've been seeing more Level 1 and Level 2. I think in March the reason why – I just did March yesterday. I think in March I saw one more. I didn't look at the actual detail of the boarding; I was looking at the summary tables. I think there was one that was a more egregious one that we've seen in a while.

At least I think we might have had one Level 4; but, yes, the reason why we're getting these overall percentages that we are is because the boardings that we've done, we've been seeing the less egregious violations such that we can see we've had well under 12. The number of boardings, of course, is variable here, and we've talked about wanting to increase that sample size. But if you look at May of 2014, you have 23 boardings. We saw all good TEDs as far as it wasn't impacting the rate there, so, yes, I think that is safe to say.

MR. WILLIAMS: It looks to me like whatever we're doing is working as best as possible between the outreach, the training, striving for more consistency in the different boardings from the different law enforcement officers, including Coast Guard. But it looks to me like it's working, and hopefully we can continue.

MS. LEE: Yes, I personally think it is just a matter of really staying on it and keeping the focus and just continuing to advance.

MR. WILSON: I was looking at the opinions of the conservation recommendations, and it is saying that NMFS should support in-water abundance estimates of sea turtles to achieve more accurate status assessments. Basically, it is saying NMFS should be getting more information. Is that really possible; does NMFS have the funding to do more studies on these?

MS. LEE: We were certainly striving and doing all we can to get more information that we can apply to reviewing the impacts of the shrimp fishery on sea turtles, and, of course, other species. Conservation recommendation section, as you pointed out, that is a discretionary section. They are things that we think should be done, we want to do.

They are subject, of course, to funding; they are not requirements; per se. But, unfortunately, I think you definitely hit it in terms of trying to estimate more accurately the number of sea turtles that the fishery is impacting is very expensive work. We've certainly consulted with the Science Center. We have various proposals looking at different options to try to advance the science here; but we're certainly doing all we can within the constraints of our budget.

MS. SOLORZANO: I have a comment to make and then a just a couple of quick questions. My comment is there is definitely not 12 percent of catching turtles. If my boats went out and made 100 drags in a trip, they did not capture 12 turtles. That is guaranteed factual.

MS. LEE: Yes; and I should clarify when we say this we're looking at the overall fleets, so it is an average. It is not everyone is going out and seeing 12 percent; just to clarify. It is that some people are probably just seeing the 3 percent, and then maybe there is someone out there that is having a lot more interactions. Just keep that in mind.

MS. SOLORZANO: Okay, but I disagree with you.

MS. LEE: No problem.

MS. SOLORZANO: My second question is most of your study was done with Gulf fishermen? How much percentage –

MS. LEE: When you say study, are you referring to the boardings' data?

MS. SOLORZANO: Your matrix, your presentation here, was that done with mostly Gulf fishermen or was that done with Atlantic and Gulf?

MS. LEE: I don't know that I can answer mostly. I think we certainly have more Gulf data than South Atlantic data. That is probably the best answer I can give.

MS. SOLORZANO: The next question is when you were talking about educating observers to go on the boats; is this the observers that the federal government places on us that go out to fish? Are they going to be checking the TEDs while at sea, because that is probably one of your best ideas of what is actually being captured is what the observers are finding out?

When you come and do a test at the dock, a lot of those dock tests that you're getting are just people coming around asking to just get their Coast Guard inspections and stickers going on and then the Coast Guard comes around and does that. The boat may not have even been prepared to go fishing, especially in June when they're getting ready to go to Texas openings and they just want to be in compliance with things. I think that some of your numbers are not actually people that are going out and are at-sea fishing. Your studies are probably not being done on boats that are actually working.

MS. LEE: Yes, it is a combination of at-sea and dockside boardings. I don't know the actual percentage to share; but as far as your first part with the respect of the observers, yes, the observers are being trained by the Pascagoula Gear Monitoring Team in checking the TEDs. I think they are already collecting information when they're on the vessels, going ahead and measuring the TEDs.

That is where I was saying we certainly do agree and would like to have that data reliable such that we can rely on or at least partly rely on that information source, because it would be a representative sample. We recognize that using enforcement data has different vibes as both positive and negative.

MR. WILSON: I would just like to ask when they do dockside inspections; is there a certain number of boats they're supposed to look at, a certain rate, because I observed a NMFS dockside observer at our docks and he did three out of eight boats?

MS. LEE: I do not know the answer to that question. I don't know if they have a particular goal or not. I would imagine that when they're out there, they are trying to inspect as many TEDs as they can, but I don't want to speak for law enforcement on that.

MR. GAUTIER: Did you take into consideration or have you taken into consideration the number of dead sea turtles that have washed up on the islands off Louisiana and Mississippi because of the oil spill? We never hear anything mentioned about there are dead turtles that have been dying slowly. Was that taken into consideration?

MS. LEE: Yes; the way a biological opinion is set up, you are reviewing the proposed action, what the specific action is that you're consulting on; but then you are also looking at the status of the sea turtles, you are looking at all other activities that are impacting those same sea turtles. There is a section of the biological opinion called environmental baseline, which is looking at other impacts in the status of the species in the action area. All of that gets fed into the document and the decision.

MR. GAUTIER: But on the same note, we've encountered and are still encountering a lot of decrease in certain species off the Gulf Coast of Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama because of the oil accident. I think this needs to take a bigger part than looking just at the boats and our fishermen. This is being caused from other problems.

MS. LEE: Yes, I am personally not involved in the deep-water restoration activities, but there is a lot going on in the Gulf right now as I think you all know with respect to that.

MR. HELIES: Stepping back to the observer checking TEDs; that data, you guys are not fully fledged out to do that yet, so the data that is presented up on the screen doesn't include any observers, just dockside and at-sea from enforcement and the gear monitoring team; right?

MS. LEE: That is correct.

MR. HELIES: Yes; using observers to do these TED checks, there are a lot of moving parts there. I'm not sure we're quite there yet for that. On another note, I want to thank you guys for improving your transparency in this process. At the workshop it was brought up that your website in particular was empty and under construction for a while; and just that afternoon after that was brought up you guys fixed that and started putting information up for industry, which is very good.

MS. LEE: It was very fortunate how the timing came about. Certainly, that was something that had been in the works. We were very fortunate that we finally got approval that same day that you guys were discussing how inadequate it was. I'm glad we were able to do that. Like I said, this is sort of the first step we are still working on it.

Because our website was sort of undergoing an overhaul, it was harder to get initial information up; but now that we sort of have the actual page updates and revising the content will be a lot easier. We have a lot of good stuff planned, so keep looking.

MR. HELIES: And from a targeted outreach perspective – I know this was mentioned earlier – it would be helpful if you were able to break some of this compliance data into regions, if not by states at least regions, so we have some idea about where there may be problems with industry, and we can get guys on the dock to help them out.

MS. LEE: Great, thank you.

MR. WILLIAMS: Just one quick question, Jennifer. I thought I heard Frank say and someone else say also, but does or does not the dockside inspection figure into your 12 percent capture rate matrix?

MS. LEE: It is based on at sea and dockside.

MS. LEE: John, I know we've talked about that before a little bit, too. We've had some discussions I think with enforcement on that.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Just a comment on that meeting in Biloxi with the TED compliance. That was an excellent meeting, and I thought one thing that I can stress to everybody here is use or try to get the Gear Management Team out to your site. They are an excellent source of information. I've had them to our dock one time. I know they've been over. I know Lindsey or Dale, they will come out and check your TEDs and explain to you whether you are in violation or not.

They are a great resource to use. The other point I wanted to make was that with all this new data coming in from the boarding forms, I think it is going to be imperative that the training be – because there is some subjectivity to when they are doing all the measurements so I think it is important that the training be very consistent, so that we can try to have this consistent data coming out of those boardings as possible.

The other thing I wanted to bring up is there is a reasonable and prudent measure that we need to look at that are specific to our industry. I think that another thing that came up, like with some of the concerns from the industry, is not trusting necessarily the take rates; is the quantitative analysis.

Somehow we need to come up with a better method for quantitative analysis of takes, because the industry I've talked to just have a hard time believing that there are that many incidences, whether it is a catch where it actually comes on board or you see it slip out a net when the net is out of the water or whatever.

I know that is based on observer data, but the extrapolation – how we get to those larger numbers of actual incidences and takes; we're kind of baffled as to those numbers. Okay, in the biological opinion there is a section for reasonable and prudent measures. These are things that are necessary and appropriate to minimize the impacts of incidental takes of turtles. The first four are, which is the monitoring of effort; this is more of a state reporting, and that is the data that feeds into that effort level, correct? Jennifer, the effort level is all coming out of state trip ticket systems?

MS. LEE: Well, not exactly, but for our effort for the Gulf of Mexico, Jim Nance with the Southeast Fishery Science Center produces that for us. South Atlantic is trip data and Gulf data is days fished. That first reasonable and prudent measure is to monitor effort in state and federal shrimp fishery and continue to better to determine the effects.

I guess I didn't go over the reasonable and prudent measures, but I just highlighted some of the terms and conditions. But, yes, so in Section 9.3 it specifies what the reasonable and prudent measures are. Then in Section 9.4, you have more specific actions that outline how we are going to implement the reasonable and prudent measures.

For that first one it says we must coordinate with the state's monitoring fishing effort and major gear types and use this information to determine effort trends. That is where I was saying we say we must prepare a report, documenting your shrimp total effort; and that is why I say we haven't produced that report yet because simply the information is not available yet; but that is coming up.

That Number 2, also relating to the first reasonable and prudent measure and incidents, collect logbook data in the South Atlantic comparable to the logbook data collected in the Gulf or work with the states to collect these data. We're implementing that through working with ACCSP. There has been some advancement.

Essentially what that term and condition is driving at is with the South Atlantic data, because with trip data there are more assumptions to try to get the effort data in a format that we can then look at our sea turtle capture rates. That is what we're working on there is just drilling down a little bit more with the effort data in the South Atlantic.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Is there going to be any segregation between the South Atlantic and the Gulf or is it just going to be one view?

MS. LEE: Right now in the end we're adding everything up basically, but in order to – when we're looking at the information, we do look at effort in the Gulf of Mexico and then effort in the South Atlantic. The biological opinion is based on total effort, because there are different methods in how effort is collected and assessed in either place.

That is why in the Gulf of Mexico ultimately we have days fished versus in the South Atlantic it is trip. I know you have the SEDAR stock assessment for shrimp on your agenda. I know some of those related discussions happened at that meeting.

MR. MERRIFIELD: So basically what we do is monitor the website and see what the compliance rate is; but that is a general compliance rate for South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico shrimp fisheries.

MS. LEE: Yes. In terms of monitoring the incidental take statements and the – we have sort of two main take proxies with respect to sea turtles, which are the sea turtle catch rates or the compliance data that we were reviewing that is one component.

Then the other component is effort, in other words, making sure that – you know, the biological opinion was based on a certain level of effort in the fishery. If there is more effort in the fishery, then we assumed in the biological opinion that it would be reasonable that there may be more effects.

That is why we're looking at effort to make sure that the assumptions that we have in the opinion are reasonable. Perhaps I should have reviewed each one individually. I highlighted the effort in the compliance-related terms and conditions; but like I said there are 31 terms and conditions and I think I said 21 or 25 relate to sea turtles.

There are a whole bunch of different things that we've committed to working on. We are taking care to do all of those things. Our science center is working on various research and looking into exploring different options and we're continuing to estimate the impacts.

MR. MERRIFIELD: On Number 4; is there any development efforts being made to change TED – to modify TEDs? I know there is a fixed-angle TED that is being used over here on the east coast. I don't know if it is being used anywhere else. Is there any effort in that area being done?

MS. LEE: Yes. I'm sorry; I should have come a little better prepared to answer the science aspect of what we're doing. I can follow up and maybe provide some information to share post-meeting if that is desired. But, yes, our Southeast Fisheries Science Center Pascagoula, we do TED testing every June off of Panama City.

We've done various studies looking at smaller bar-spacing and looking at very small juvenile turtle interactions and different research to better understand that. But, yes, all of this work is definitely ongoing. I don't have any specifics for you as far as some new named TED; but certainly we're actively working on this issue.

I think most of you, or maybe I'm wrongly assuming; but the reason why we didn't move forward in large part on requiring TEDs and skimmer trawls is when we did the work the skimmer trawls were catching very small turtles, so the turtles were going through the bars and still being captured in the bag. The TED wasn't providing the escape routes just because of the size of the turtle it was interacting with. Since then we've been doing more research to better understand different options.

MR. HELIES: We're seeing industry go towards reduced bar-spacing. That has a lot to do with the compliance as well; because with the reduced bar-spacing, the odds of you having four-plus is lower. We're seeing that. We are trying to get some funding to see what kind of bycatch reduction we can get with that reduced bar-spacing TEDs, too, so we're trying to look into that.

MS. LEE: That is great, thank you. For those of you that went to the workshop, you met or perhaps you've met him before, Mike Barnett. He is really the lead on all of the TED implementation follow-up activities. He was excited to present to you and actually go to the meeting, and then he got a horrible case of the flu. I'm sorry he wasn't able to join you.

As a result I am giving the presentation and I am just not quite as intimate with the details of some of the research ongoing. This slide here has Mike's contact information. I encourage you to follow up if you have some of these specific questions with respect to what research is going on. I'm sorry that I don't have as detailed answers as I would like for you.

MS. SOLORZANO: I just wanted to make a comment on the TED bars. A lot of us are using closer-together TED bars now for the jellyball shooters. We've got so many jellyballs, most of us are probably already designed and using closer-together TEDs in the Atlantic. I don't think we're having near the percentage of turtles being caught with the type TEDs that we're all resorting to now.

MR. MERRIFIELD: And higher compliance rates as a result of it, because you have less chance of those bars being bent out of compliance, which is good. The other thing that came up in the

meeting that I thought was interesting, too, is that there was a lot of interest in I guess more severe penalties for obvious violations like sewing TEDs shut or not having TEDs installed. I don't know if there is any intent to go down that path or not.

I think there was some interest in going that route, too, because I think most people are trying to be compliant. Obviously, things happen as it is working gear, so it is going to change. I think there are obvious ones that people are making the industry look bad and most of the industry certainly should eliminate those from the fishery or at least penalizing them into compliance.

MS. SOLORZANO: I can't imagine anyone that is going to go out here on the east coast and trawl for shrimp and sew their TEDs closed with the amount of jellyballs that are out there. You wouldn't come back with any of your net left. It would pull it apart. I don't believe that is happening on the east coast at all.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Are there any more questions about the reasonable and prudent measures for shrimp? One suggestion I was thinking about regarding the smalltooth sawfish was that – I don't know if this is something we want to put off on the Gear Management Team or not; but there might be a good opportunity there for training for safe-handling guidelines to maximize release. That might be a good thing to add to your management while they're out there on the boat going over TEDs to talk about those procedures.

MS. LEE: Sure, I'll pass that along. Yes, that is certainly an area-specific problem, particularly areas where they are believed to be more common. That certainly would be good.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Other than compliance; is there anything that the industry needs to be doing to make sure that we have an open fishery and that we don't have to go back into another biological opinion?

MS. LEE: I just think the more – you know, all of you here, of course, are doing your part and more so in trying to stay really engaged and understand what the regulations are. That is really the key is just keeping on top. The TED regulations are complicated in terms of there are a lot of details.

Just really staying on top of understanding and maintaining the TEDs and making sure that sort of understanding which I think has become more common; just that it is not so much just put a TED in your net and there it is and you're done. It is really making sure that the angle is right and all these particulars are correct so that it is serving its purpose and not just there.

MS. THOMPSON: The industry is doing a fabulous job; and I think National Marine Fisheries staff is doing a fabulous job or ensuring that as few sea turtles and sawfish and other animals get caught in the nets as possible. Yet we still continue to be pounded by the environmental organizations.

They send out e-mails talking about the millions of turtles that we kill. How can we turn that sentiment around and get the NGOs to actually accept the fact that we are doing a good job and that they need to acknowledge that? It is a problem because the perception that they create of the commercial fishing industry is simply not true.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Jennifer, the only other concern I have was on the terms and conditions. There are 31 terms and conditions. The biological opinion; is that a vulnerable spot in the biological opinion that there are 31 terms and conditions? If any of those is not being met or any progress being made on any of those; does that create a problem for the biological opinion?

MS. LEE: Well, in order to be exempt from the prohibitions of take, NMFS must comply with the terms and conditions. Certainly, we are complying with our terms and conditions and taking action to continue to implement the incidental take statements. I guess that is really all I can say on that. I think the fact that there are so many terms and conditions, one could see NMFS is very active in working on this issue.

MR. MERRIFIELD: For example, Number 6 says because observers aren't able to detect the majority of sea turtle interactions in shrimp trawl fisheries that use TEDs, NMFS must investigate alternative methods that can be used to detect sea turtle interactions in shrimp trawls with TEDs.

This would go to your comment and basically everybody's comment is that the quantitative catch rate analysis, we need improvements. We believe that we need improvements in that area, so if this is a term and condition of this biological opinion; are there things that are being done? What can be done to estimate how many turtles we actually interact with when you can't see it?

MS. LEE: Yes, just as I said, we are investigating alternative methods that can be used to detect sea turtle interactions. We are most definitely doing that. I don't know how much detail you're looking for right now. I did not come prepared with a lot of detail on all of the things that the science center is engaged in right now.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I wasn't looking for that kind of detail; I was just pointing out there is some pretty detailed –

MS. LEE: Okay, I understand you are asking what are our vulnerabilities, but I guess we'll see; not to make light of the situation.

MR. JONES: Could Oceana use your document to come up with a number that we are killing 53,000 turtles a year here in the southeast?

MS. LEE: Honestly, it is not appropriate for me to engage in discussion about the litigation. We literally found out about it yesterday. I don't know that it has officially been served, even. I know that the press release went out. I obtained a copy, but I really don't feel it is appropriate at this time for me to try to speculate on anything related to the litigation.

I am sorry, I know where it just came out I am sure you do have lots of questions about it; but I personally haven't read the full complaint yet. If I had, I wouldn't be able to share my opinions about it. I'm sorry, it is very frustrating, but I just don't want to engage in conversation about something that is probably best we wait for our lawyers to review.

MR. JONES: Thank you, Jennifer. Forget the Oceana, forget the lawsuit; do your numbers that you presented here today indicate that we kill 53,000 turtles in our shrimp industry, regardless of the lawsuit?

MS. LEE: The biological opinion concludes that the quantitative assessment that we had was highly uncertain, and so we looked at the impacts of the fishery using other mechanisms, which I know you have a copy of the full opinion and our jeopardy analysis and how we looked at what we believed the impacts to be on the population with respect to status information and a host of other information.

MR. MERRIFIELD: What's the estimate?

MR. JONES: Do you have a number?

MS. LEE: No, that is what I am saying. The biological opinion comes up with draft estimates and then basically concludes that they are too uncertain. Again, I think this conversation – I understand your desire to have this conversation, but at this point –

MR. MERRIFIELD: Basically what you're saying is the draft says it is inconclusive; it can't determine a number; is that what you're saying?

MS. LEE: Yes it is hard for me to summarize. It is a long document that goes into lengthy analysis where it explains the quantitative methods that are used. I can point to the section. There is a section of the biological opinion that goes through all the caveats and why we are concerned with our ability to rely on the quantitative estimates, you know, the results of our analysis.

Then there is the jeopardy analysis looking at the impacts in other fisheries, looking at status and trends. Like I said a host of information; but in the end when it comes to monitoring take, we're looking at the compliance and effort of proxies.

MR. WILLIAMS: Jennifer, would it be safe to say that – and this is not speaking to the lawsuit; but would it be safe to say that Oceana and others are not comfortable with this biological opinion and how the shrimp industry operates under this biological opinion?

MS. LEE: Yes. We have a lawsuit on the biological opinion, and so they are raising claims related to us meeting our standards. But, again, I think we need to move on in terms of if you have other specific questions. I don't want to get into a discussion of the litigation. I don't want to talk about Oceana. It is just completely not something that is appropriate for me to do.

MR. MERRIFIELD: You answered the question. They are uncomfortable; not just them but the NGOs in general are uncomfortable with the biological opinion.

MR. WILSON: Not to sound combative; but if you have an opinion but you've determined that it is not reliable, why would you publish it?

MS. LEE: We looked at the best available information to estimate the impacts and we presented that information in a transparent way, showing the data that we had and what we reviewed and why we reviewed it and what our conclusions were based on what we reviewed. That is a biological opinion reviews the best available science and explains what our opinion essentially is based on the best available information. It makes determinations and supports it with analysis, and that is really all I can say.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I think that the good things coming out of that were that the effort that is there is quantitative and the compliance rates. The compliance rate was a good thing. Those are a couple of good things that came out of that.

MR. COLLIER: I think NMFS has done a good job with this biological opinion where they actually stated that we're not comfortable with this number. Even though this is what we came up with, we're not comfortable with it. We are going to use another method that we feel more comfortable with. I think that is a great approach that they took.

MR. WILLIAMS: Just a comment for the group here. Going through this and working with NMFS and all has certainly been a pleasure. I personally have no complaints on how we operate under this biological opinion. I think they did a good job. My fear is if something changes and we have a number, and we reach that number of turtle mortalities or it can be extrapolated to that number that we have reached that number; we can be shut down.

We will be in violation of the Endangered Species Act. But operating under this, we're making it work, this current regime, if you will. We're making this work. As long as we stay in compliance, I think we're in good shape in the industry.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I think that is the important thing to stress amongst everybody here is compliance, compliance, compliance. From our side, we have questions about some of the quantitative catch rate analysis, but it is what it is at this point in time. The opinion states that there are attempts being made to improve that; but at this point it is what it is and we're in compliance, so that is a good thing.

MS. SOLORZANO: I have one last comment to make on the compliance. Most of the things that they are checking on them would not result in the mortality of a turtle. In compliance, if you have a slight angle off in a TED, you are not going to capture a turtle and you are not going to kill a turtle. Mortality rates are very, very, very low.

Even if you took the 12 percent or the 3 percent; most of us in here that do shrimp or have boats and put observers on them know we're not catching turtles and we're definitely not killing turtles. When they come in and inspect your boat and look everything over, there may be a slight angle out. They are going to write that down on the paper and put it in and turn it in as an in compliance.

This is raising the rates. You can get your numbers to be what you want them to be if they want it high. They are just going to come out and find an angle off; but that is not killing the turtles. That is not going to kill a turtle because there is an angle off in a TED slightly. Now someone sewing a flap shut, I can't imagine anybody in the Atlantic doing that because you wouldn't have nets left, as I said earlier.

MR. BAKER: Jennifer, if you could – this is kind of related to that; but if you could summarize the status of turtles, of the five species in terms of their recovery, because I know a part of the biological opinion stays with the uncertainty in the numbers. Part of those reasonable and prudent measures, the effort and the compliance were because despite those things going down

the populations are actually recovering. I know that they are a very slowly-rebuilding species, but if you could elaborate or summarize on those issues for sea turtles.

MS. LEE: I am just reluctant to try to – I didn't come prepared to present information on the status of each species. The biological opinion has a status of the species' section and there is a lot of status of the species' information that is critical to the jeopardy analyses. At this point I don't feel really comfortable just off the cuff providing information just with everything pending.

I am probably being overly cautious; but like I said I can double-check with my coworker, who is our sea turtle lead, wants to share any information, I can follow up with you. I think you know loggerheads were declining for a while and loggerhead nesting trends have been up. Green sea turtle nesting trends, you know they have an up-and-down pattern, but the overall trends have been increasing.

Kemps, there is some recent uncertainty the last couple years. Leatherbacks in general have been increasing. I just don't know that my summary information is all that useful to you. I think you have a much better document in front of you if you really want to understand the status and what is fed into the opinion.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Is there anything else that we need to discuss on the biological opinion? Do we need more discussion of recommendations? I think we've pretty much covered this.

MR. COLLIER: A lot of this presentation was to make sure that you guys as industry leaders are comfortable with the biological opinion, understand it, and now you can take it back to fishermen in your areas and discuss it with them and really make sure that compliance is coming from the industry more than coming down from a council or coming down from NMFS. I think that is an important aspect as well.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Okay, I think we've discussed that enough. Let's take a break here and come back in about ten minutes. Next on the agenda is the SEDAR Procedural Workshop for stock shrimp assessment and bycatch estimation. Julia Byrd is going to give us an overview.

MS. BYRD: I am Julia Byrd and I am one of the SEDAR coordinators. As Mike mentioned, I am going to give you guys a brief overview of a workshop that we held last year to evaluate the shrimp data that is available in the South Atlantic. Before I get into the workshop itself, I want to just give a brief overview of what SEDAR is.

I'm not sure how familiar everybody is with the SEDAR program. It is a program that started in 2002, and it is basically a cooperative stock assessment development and review program. We kind of do two major types of projects. The first is doing actual stock assessments, so we bring people together to recommend data to go into an assessment model to give us stock status, so to see if a species is undergoing overfishing or if it is overfished.

That is one type of project that we do, and that is what a lot of people are familiar with. Then the other thing we sort of do is hold these procedural workshops, and that is what we did for shrimp last year. We basically put these workshops together on topics that arise in multiple stock assessments and we try to structure them to come up with best practice recommendations. That is just kind of SEDAR, what we do in a nutshell.

If you guys have more questions about that, I am happy to answer them as well. First I wanted to start off by giving you guys an idea of why we held this workshop on shrimp last year. The impetus for the workshop started at an October 2012 SSC meeting, so South Atlantic Science and Statistics Committee meeting.

There was a presentation that was given on a pink shrimp assessment done in the Gulf of Mexico. The SSC has discussion on it and they came up with a recommendation to try to proceed with kind of an exploratory phase to see how applicable the assessment that was done in the Gulf could be in the South Atlantic.

The first step in doing that was to hold a workshop to try to kind of evaluate and identify what data were actually available for shrimp in the South Atlantic. We held this workshop last July. We had a variety of participants. There were federal agencies, state agencies, and we had folks from ASMFC present, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

Frank was actually one of our participants at the meeting. Then we had South Atlantic SSC members, SEDAR staff, Council staff, so we had a large variety of people at the meeting and it was also open to the public. At the meeting itself we kind of wanted to evaluate the shrimp data for use for two main uses.

The first is for its potential use in a shrimp stock assessment; and then the second thing we wanted to do is look at the datasets that were available to try to estimate commercial bycatch, which would be used for a finfish stock assessment. The first thing we needed to do was to come up with a list or an inventory of all of the available datasets.

All of the workshop participants came up with a list. That was done before the meeting so everybody had time to review it; and that list is actually available on the SEDAR Website if you guys are interested in looking at that. Then at the workshop itself we kind of evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of all the datasets again for these two uses.

We came up with some best practice recommendations that I will highlight today, and then we also identified data gaps and research needs. I kind of have that highlighted on this slide, because I think one of the things that Chip and I are interested in getting your input on are what information or input can you provide, suggestions can you guys provide to help fill some of those data gaps.

That is one of the things that we're hoping to get input from you guys on after I've finished running through what happened at the workshop. Just a brief overview of what we did at the workshop, we kind of kicked things off with presentations on monitoring in management, both on a state and federal level.

Then we had some folks come and present on stock assessments that had been done on shrimp in different regions. Then some folks presented information on bycatch estimation methods that have been used in recent stock assessments. We had presentations in the morning, and then we talked a little bit about what data is needed for different stock assessment types and for different bycatch estimation methods. Then what we did is we broke down into smaller groups to actually get down into the nitty gritty and the details of the datasets.

We had three groups, the Life History Environment Group, Fisheries Statistics Group, and an Indices Group. These guys got down into the details and the strengths and the weaknesses of the datasets. Then we all came back together to talk about best practices. I know in your briefing materials, the final deliverable from the workshop was a report.

That was provided for you guys in your briefing materials; but if you are interested in seeing any of the other background documents, they are all available on the website, the link is right here. I can e-mail it to you if it is easier if you are interested in seeing it. What I am going to do for the presentation today; the report we put together is pretty long so I am just going to hit on some highlights; but if you guys have questions about things, feel free to let me know.

I am going to first talk about each of the working groups and hit on what they were tasked to do and some recommendations they came up with. Then I'm going to talk a little bit about the best practices discussion that we had and then close out with some of the data gaps that we want to have input from you guys on. Before I get started, I guess one thing I will note is that it became very apparent that most of the data that we have is on penaeid shrimp species.

There is limited data available on some of the other species, so the majority of the conversations we had at the workshop dealt with penaeid species. That is what a lot of the information I am going to be sharing with you is more towards the penaeid species. First I wanted to talk about the life history group; and one of the primary things that we wanted this group to talk about was life history parameters that were important and how they applied to shrimp.

When doing stock assessment models or monitoring and managing these fish or shrimp populations, it is really important to know a little bit about the stock-recruitment, natural mortality, age and length of the species, and growth. All of those things are important and for shrimp they are different than they are for fish. That is one thing that this group talked about.

I just want to highlight some key points from their discussion; and the first thing I wanted to talk a little bit about was about challenges with the stock-recruitment relationship. For some species of shrimp, which I'm sure you guys are familiar with, the size of the stock doesn't seem to affect recruitment to the fishery. Sometimes there will be a really cold winter and you won't think there are very many white shrimp that survived the cold winter, but then yet you'll still see a good fall season.

That relationship between stock size and recruitment doesn't always seem to be there. I know in some other crustacean species – I think this was found in blue crab in the Chesapeake – that the stock-recruitment curve can kind of shift according to environmental variables. Environment is really important to shrimp, so something like that may also be going on with these penaeid species.

The group also talked a lot about natural mortality, and their discussion centered on that natural mortality may actually have a greater impact on these populations of shrimp than fishing mortality. Natural mortality is influenced by a lot of things; environmental conditions, disease, predation.

When trying to estimate natural mortality for shrimp, you have to try to take all of those things into account and so that is very challenging. That would be a challenge if you were trying to put

together a stock assessment on shrimp. Then the last thing I wanted to mention is a lot of the finfish assessments that we do look at our catch-at-age assessment, so they are following age classes of fish through time. As you guys know, these penaeid species are really more of an annual crop.

When you are thinking about what types of assessments you want to use; that is something that you need to take into consideration. Not many people are aging shrimp, and there is a question on whether or not it would be helpful to age shrimp. One of the things that this group discussed was could you use the length of a shrimp as a proxy for age?

Some of the things that the group discussed is that growth in shrimp is really dependent on a lot of factors. Environmental factors can really drive it. It is not continuous growth, it is non-continuous growth. There was some question on whether length really could be used as a proxy for age in some of the species.

Then I just wanted to hit on some take-home messages that this group had, the first being that shrimp aren't fish, right. That was one of the things that came abundantly clear, they are really different. Maybe some of the assessment model and techniques used on finfish may not work for shrimp or maybe they need to be changed a little bit to be able to be useful to manage and monitor and assess shrimp populations.

Environment is really, really important and drives a lot of things in shrimp populations. In particular, temperature and salinity are things that have been noted in multiple publications that are really important for shrimp. The group also noted that habitat protection was really important and that more information was needed to get more information on which life stages are using which habitats.

Then the other thing that they noted is that to develop a lot of these life history parameters, so to look at stock-recruitment, to look at growth, things like that, the fishery-independent data are really critical to get that information. You guys are probably familiar; all of the states have fishery-independent surveys that they do on crustaceans and so a lot of that information will be helpful to try to come up with some of these life history parameters.

Again, there are a lot more details in the report, but we want to give you guys an opportunity to discuss things. I am going to go ahead and move on to the next working group, which is Fisheries Statistics. These guys were tasked with reviewing and evaluating fishery-dependent data sources, so things like state trip tickets, the observer program, and things like that.

How they tackled this issue is they first said, well, what data do we need, whether it be for a stock assessment or for a bycatch estimation? Then they basically went through each of the datasets based on these needs and said they are sufficient or not sufficient or they are adequate or not adequate.

The things that they listed as data needs were a long time series of both catch-and-effort data. You need species-specific catch. That goes along with shrimp. If you're doing a stock assessment or if you are trying to estimate bycatch, the data you have needs to be species-specific as well of what bycatch species are caught. You need information on the unit of time for the effort data, so that could be number of tows, hours fished, and things like that.

You need information on the gear description and configuration, so head rope length, what mesh size are you using, what type of BRD or TED are you using, that sort of information. Then the last thing was location information. There were specific recommendations for a variety of datasets. I wasn't going to get into those, but I am happy to if you guys are interested or have questions.

I just wanted to kind of give an overall summary of what the group thought of a lot of the key data elements. The first one deals with shrimp catch data. Everyone thought that the data that was available either through state trip tickets or ACCSP were generally sufficient. A lot of the datasets use different methods to determine species-specific catch.

Some state trip tickets actually have catch reported to species when they are being filled out by the dealers. Some states rely on the counts to the size of the shrimp to determine the species, and then some states have port samplers that go out during times of the year when the size of the shrimp are about the same for brown and white shrimp, to divide that up.

Next is this unit of time for effort. That really isn't consistent between datasets. The way the different states have information on unit of time is different. One of the things that Jenny Lee said earlier this morning that when they are looking at South Atlantic data, they do trip level data and not hours fished.

The reason is because in all of the states the unit of time isn't consistent; and when you're doing some of these analyses, in order to do them on a regional level you need a consistent measure of effort; and so trip is what they can get to in the South Atlantic right now. The gear description information is limited and isn't consistent among the states.

Again, some states have some gear-descriptive information reported on trip tickets or through licensing programs; but if you are changing gears throughout the season, that is something that is not really captured. Then also some of this gear-descriptive information comes from observers going out on boats and making those observations, which is probably some of the strongest information we have on gear descriptions.

You talked about this a lot this morning, but there is limited information available on BRD and TED compliance; and I think a lot of the questions you asked this morning covered that. That is an area that perhaps we need more information. Then the last thing I wanted to say is that size information is really dependent on the dataset, too.

Again, this is with shrimp and with bycatch species. Size information, length information on shrimp is available in some of the observer datasets; but on the trip tickets and things like that, you are getting counts of shrimp. I wanted to say also with bycatch, a lot of that information is coming from observer programs, but they don't get species-level length information for all of the species caught. They have kind of priority lists that they will focus on.

Some of the species that you may want to get bycatch estimates for, we may not have length information to go along with that. Then I just wanted to hit on a few of their overall recommendations. One thing that they thought would be really helpful is to develop a gear-type overview document or historical timelines.

It would be great to have that information on a state level; so when did regulations change, when did you change how you fished, just because that information isn't really captured anywhere and it would be a really great thing and a helpful thing to have. This group also talked about the observer programs, and they suggested it would be really helpful to increase observer coverage.

As I'm sure you guys know, the observer coverage in particular in the South Atlantic is fairly low, and so that data gets used a lot to estimate bycatch. I guess this group actually recommended increasing the observer coverage to 2 to 5 percent of overall effort. Right now the number of days sampled or trips are much higher in the Gulf than it is in the South Atlantic.

This group also talked a little bit about developing video techniques to characterize catch. I know there has been some pilot work that has been done on that in the past. Then they also thought it was really important to try to account for effects of fishing behavior on catch and bycatch.

Now I am going to go ahead and move on to indices. The indices group was tasked with two main things. The first one was to develop recommendations for estimating bycatch for non-shrimp species. Earlier in the workshop they talked about two methods. One was coming up with this BCPUE, bycatch per unit effort, so it is a relative index abundance.

Another way that has been used in the past is using a fish-to-shrimp ratio method. The group thought that this bycatch per unit effort was the preferred method; and so that is what this group talked about. The other thing this group did is that they reviewed shrimp data sources that could potentially be used for relative indices of abundance in stock assessments.

First I wanted to talk about bycatch per unit effort, and the discussions that this group had on that. Up here on the top of the screen you can see these grouping recommendations. What this basically means is these are things that the group thought were important to include as factors when coming up with these bycatch catch rates.

The primary things they thought were important were year, season, and area; and by area I mean are you trawling in a sound versus nearshore versus farther offshore. Then these secondary rankings were things that they said if the sample size is big enough, then we think these things should be taken into account, too; what gear you're using, what region – and by region they meant state or a northern versus southern region – target species, were you fishing for rock shrimp, were you fishing for penaeid shrimp, and depth.

The programs that had data available that they reviewed were the science center's observer program. North Carolina has fairly recent bycatch characterization studies that have gone on, and Georgia had some bycatch characterization studies that went on in the not to recent past. Then they also talked a little bit about fishery-independent surveys and if those can be used to help estimate bycatch. One thing I'll say is that years in parentheses are the years the program occurred.

MR. JONES: Do you have any information before 1995 that shows what the bycatch ratio was, the number of pounds and everything else that we might look at as a base with what we have actually reduced over the years? In other words, starting at 1995 isn't it a good year to start the

program if you are looking for a larger number in reduction of bycatch that the shrimp industry has been able to meet?

MS. BYRD: I don't have those numbers to show you now, but that is one thing that the group talked about. I think it will be the next slide or at the slide after that. One of the things that the group thought was really important was you need to try to quantify the effects of BRDs and TEDs on bycatch, because they were in place, and especially BRDs were made to reduce bycatch.

That is something that needs to be quantified when you make these estimates; because when those types of gear were introduced; these rates may be going down for some species. That is something that the group noted was important. Perhaps there is more research that needs to be done or there have been a lot of gear studies that have been done in the past that people need to perhaps dig into a little bit more to see if they can apply it to these calculations. I know that doesn't directly answer your question, but that is something that the group talked about.

The overall recommendations from this group as far as calculating this bycatch per unit effort, they noted that the science center's observer program probably has the best available data. It is the longest time series; it has the largest geographic coverage. It covers trips that take place from all over the South Atlantic. However, we did note this earlier; that the total number of sea days that they have is fairly low.

That is problematic, especially when we talked a few slides ago about groupings looking at things by target species or things like that. You need large sample sizes in order to be able to do that so increasing coverage is important. Then they recommended that these bycatch characterization studies that have been done in Georgia and North Carolina should be used to supplement the observer program.

A lot of the state-run programs really do a better job of covering the area and their state, and they have larger sample sizes. Generally those studies are much shorter in time series, so they are normal finite projects instead of long-term monitoring projects; but they also often collect a lot more detailed information on species-caught lengths, things like that.

It is thought that some of these state agency surveys could be used to supplement the observer program data. I wanted to talk a little bit about their discussions on potentially using fishery-independent surveys to try to estimate these numbers. It was very clear that the group thought that these fisheries-independent surveys, like the SEAMAP Nearshore South Atlantic Trawl Survey is one of the ones that typically gets discussed when you are at a stock assessment and you're trying to estimate finfish bycatch.

The group thought one couldn't be used as a proxy of one another, but these fishery-independent surveys could be useful if it was combined with the observer data. A lot of times the fishery-independent surveys show higher bycatch per unit effort. They are not using TEDs, they are not using BRDs.

They may not be fishing in the same areas or during the same times as the commercial fishery, so it is really important to account for that stuff if you are going to use this information to try to estimate bycatch. It is also important to look in years where there is overlap between the

observer program and the commercial fishery to see how well they correlate together. The idea is that these guys thought that these fishery-independent surveys could be explored to kind of scale or tune these bycatch per unit effort estimates; but a lot of things need to be taken in account, like the things I just mentioned, in order to be able to use them.

Then here on this screen is what we talked about a few minutes ago with Bob Jones' question. They also thought it was important to try to quantify the effects of BRDs or TEDs, because that may change these bycatch catch rates over time. Now I am going to switch gears a little bit and talk about their recommendations for shrimp indices of abundance.

Basically they recommended using the fishery-independent data over the fishery-dependent data. I will mention why in just a second, but they recommended using the SEAMAP, which is a nearshore coastal trawl survey, as a good data source to use and then using all of the state surveys that are done as kind of supplements.

State surveys are typically done in more inshore areas. There was also a North Carolina Juvenile Sampling Study that could be used to inform things like recruitment. Then they preferred or they recommended the fishery-independent data over the fishery-dependent data, because one of the things they mentioned that it is difficult to get a standardized unit of effort among the data that is available.

The way that effort data is reported is different by state and it is difficult to get a standardized unit of effort. Then also there have been perhaps changes in gear configurations or efficiency over time that may influence an index if it was made from some of this fishery-dependent data, so they suggested that the fishery-independent data sources should be used if they are available.

There were a number of good fishery-independent data sources that were presented at the workshop. Okay, that is all I wanted to say about the working groups. Now I want to quickly hit on some of the best practice recommendations and discussions that the group had. This first slide focuses on their discussions in regard to stock assessment.

One of the first discussions that the group had was shrimp are an annual crop and can overfishing occur? Can these stocks be overfished? The group thought that recruitment overfishing so there are not enough adult spawners out there to replace themselves; they thought that was unlikely with the way that the current penaeid shrimp fishery is managed and the way the fishery is prosecuted or executed.

For most of the states, there are closures in the winter, for instance, to protect overwintering white shrimp, and that is protecting the spawners, letting them spawn before the fishery opens; so that really would help with this recruitment overfishing. They thought growth overfishing could occur, so if there is significant harvest on small shrimp.

But again a lot of the ways the states are managing shrimp; they are looking at size and abundance already, so hopefully that would be helpful to try to prevent that. Again it would be possible to overfish if you allowed unlimited fishing on the spawning stock. But again with some of the management measures in place now, states are trying to stop that from happening. The other thing they talked about is the productivity of the shrimp stock and how that is not just tied to fishing mortality, it has been tied to environmental factors and disease and predation.

To really get a good picture, it is really complicated to get a good picture of shrimp productivity; I guess is what I'm trying to say with that. The last thing that they talked about that I wanted to hit on was that it deals with timing of the assessment, if any sort of assessment is done and management are really critical, because again these are annual crops.

Any kind of assessment that is done would need to be done on a quick time scale, and then management would have to be able to react quickly in order for it to be affective. The group talked a lot about what do we really need now to manage? A lot of the states are able to do management on a quick time scale. They have surveyors that go out and sample. They are able to open and close the season looking at those factors.

I know it came out that a lot of the shrimp biologists work very closely with the industry about openings and closings, things like that. Then when the Shrimp Amendment allows for federal waters to be closed quickly when winter temperatures drop below; that allowed another kind of quick management measure that can be put in place.

The group talked a lot about is that what we need to manage right now or are there other parameters or other things that we need to be able to manage quickly; and if so, what are they and what do we need to do to put those in place? The group overall felt like how it is being managed right now is good.

One of the things they thought as kind of a next step for maybe shrimp stock assessment is all of these states do these fishery-independent surveys separately. Is there a way to combine them so you could look at the stock regionally instead of seeing a snapshot in each of the states? That was the next step that they thought might be helpful.

Then this slide just has best practice recommendations for the bycatch per unit effort. We already talked about these. Again, there is this fish-to-shrimp ratio method and this bycatch per unit effort method that were discussed at the workshop. This BCPUE method was the preferred method. Again, the group thought that fishery-independent data could be used to supplement observer catch work, but there are a lot of caveats that I already mentioned that are associated with that.

Then the last thing I just wanted to mention is again what we're hoping to get input on you guys from is how we can help fill some of these data gaps. I just wanted to list some of the gaps that were identified that I thought you guys may be able to provide some input on. Again, a lot of the information, in particular the life history information is on penaeid shrimp, so it would be good to get more information on non-penaeid shrimp species. We don't have a lot of information on the bait shrimp fishery.

It would be great to have more detailed commercial effort, great to have more detailed information on gear descriptions and configurations. A lot of the information we have is on otter trawls, so it would be good to get information on other gears. Again, very limited information TED and BRD compliance rates, and then there is limited information on recreational catch and effort as well. That is just an overview of the workshop. The workshop report is pretty long.

I just tried to hit on highlights. I would be happy to take any questions. I guess the other thing I wanted to mention, too, is in the workshop reports there are copies of all the presentations that

were given at the workshop at the end. I just wanted to mention that so if you guys were interested in seeing what all the different states are doing or there is one on the Science Center's Observer Program as well; that is something that a lot of people were interested in. I guess with that, I will take any questions that you guys have.

MS. THOMAS: Let me start off. First of all, you've got to start back in about 1996 when the state of Florida – I'm going to speak for Florida – whenever the constitutional amendment took affect, some of the people went out of business. That's not okay, but a lot of people went out of business, but then where we could shrimp was limited, too.

I keep up with landings and they plummeted, because you could only use a 500 square foot trawl in the first mile, and then you could use any size trawl from two out to three miles 10 months out of the year. We have always had an April and May closing I am speaking of the Atlantic, because we're apples and Gulf is oranges as far as I'm concerned.

I think we keep up with what we do pretty good. As a matter of fact, our landings are much larger on the Atlantic Florida Coast. One year just recently it was larger than the Gulf landings. The Gulf has all kinds of landings reported, but our landings are not in federal. I always get my landings from St. Petersburg, and they do a very good job down there, et cetera.

Let me see what else I need to say. I know the life history of the shrimp. I've been out there, I've observed them. I've done grid studies of the bottom. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission has managed down to the very hilt of who can catch, when can catch, how we pay for our licenses, who can get a license.

We used to have – I guess back in 1996, probably, there was maybe almost 150 live shrimp licenses. We have them narrowed down now to 11 that are working in the rivers and creeks and so forth. A lot of the effort has gone down and how much is caught and everything and they are not peddled on the street. For the most part, they are sold live shrimp, I guess, if you want to say that.

We're just in compliance with everything, I think. I know we're in compliance with the TEDs, because we work with Lindsey Parker. He comes down like every three months and checks our TEDs to make sure they're all right. We teach the other guys, we have a workshop. We had one at Burbank Trawl Makers, and we install the type TED that he's using now, the fixed TED.

I was looking in my computer; I thought I had a picture of it, if people don't know what it looks like. It is an excellent piece of gear, and I don't know if any of Marilyn's boats are using them or not, but a lot of the boats are using those fixed TEDs and they like them. None of our shrimpers disapprove of using TEDs. They think it is pretty good since sliced bread, because they don't catch as much junk. That is all I'm going to say right now, but go ahead. I might have something else.

MR. DOCKERY: I will go from back to front. On data gaps; in South Carolina we have the shrimp baiting, which it seems like you could add a reporting requirement to the permit since people have to buy a permit, anyway.

MS. BYRD: The shrimp baiting survey is kind of the only recreational estimate we get of catch and effort. There is a mail survey that is done every year, and it is based on the permit holders, and we get estimates of catch and effort from that recreational section of the fishery from South Carolina, but that is really it for the whole South Atlantic.

MR. DOCKERY: Yes, I think a mandatory reporting requirement would be more effective than this survey. Also, we have a developing fishery of deep-hole cast netting, which seems to start right about when bait shrimping ends. It seems like the state could require a permit at that point and add a reporting requirement to that. I would throw that out as an idea.

I also would just like to comment on the idea of increasing observer coverage to 5 percent of total effort. That seems like a pretty high number, which I guess it would be great, but I imagine the cost would have to be borne by somebody. More observer coverage is probably a good thing.

The last comment that I have is I think I understood correctly that for estimating shrimp population, you felt like non-fisheries or fishery-independent data was more effective. Maybe you meant in real time, because it seems like in the end fisheries dependent, like our actual landings would be the most accurate; or am I misunderstanding?

MS. BYRD: I guess what I meant by that was for estimating some of the life history parameters – I will kind of answer this in two sections. First, I will talk about the life history parameters, growth and things like that. The group thought that the fishery-independent datasets were preferred.

Then when I talked about the index of abundance, they also suggested that the fishery-independent datasets were preferred. That is due to things like when you change fishing behavior or gears or if you are changing the way you're fishing; that will affect the index of abundance over time.

If that information isn't captured, then that survey won't reflect abundance. I will say that when you're doing a lot of these assessments, the landings' information is critical, and a lot of times the landings' data you assume are known. The information that you guys submitting, the landings' data, you assume those are known whereas some of these other pieces of information are based on surveys or things like that. The landings' data is really important. Does that answer your question at all?

MR. DOCKERY: I think I get your point. I think you're saying exactly what Janie said is that if people stop fishing, it will look like they went away when they didn't.

MS. BYRD: Exactly.

MR. DOCKERY: I got it.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I think regarding the bycatch CPUE, also; are you talking about doing independent surveys that way as well, like SEAMAP type, because that can be very extremely different depending on where you're at when you're at.

MS. BYRD: Yes; and that is something that this group noted and talked about. The preference is to use the observer data to get this bycatch per unit effort. Unfortunately, the sample sizes for the observer data are small, and they don't go back kind of far in time. A lot of times this SEAMAP data; there is discussions on can we use that instead.

What this group is basically saying is that you can't use it instead, but maybe it can help inform you where there are holes and you don't have a lot of observer data or things like that; but you can't just add it in there. There are lots of differences, like you're saying, with gear, with where you fish, with when you're fishing that need to be taken into account.

If you are going to explore using this data, you need to try to account for those different factors when using it. At most of the recent stock assessments that I've been to where they've been trying to estimate shrimp bycatch, everybody wants to use the observer data. It is just hard because the sample sizes are small.

MS. SOLORZANO: I wanted to comment on the landings when we went to shrimp size. When we turn in our trip tickets, it is not mandatory we put the size shrimp that is in there. There is a spot for it, but they don't require us to always. We put the weight and the dollar amount, not necessarily size. It is there, the space is there, but it is not a requirement.

Landings are not really a good piece of information to go by on the size of the shrimp, what the states turn in, at least for Florida. I can only speak for Florida's part. Another thing on Florida's is maybe only in the last 10 or 15 years has state trip tickets – I'm not really sure exactly how many years, but I know only in the last few years have they gotten somewhat reliable.

To go on Florida state trip tickets as a 100 percent case of how many shrimp are being landed, whether they increased or decreased; in the nineties no one was even using the state trip ticket system that I know of. I don't think it was required. But when I turn in my trip tickets, it doesn't ask me the size of the shrimp. Also on bait shrimp fishing; I don't believe Florida has a commercial bait shrimp fishery, where it is baited, so to say.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I think in general on data gaps, an outreach program, as far as I know there is already probably an outreach program to try to get with the states and get them to collect more information or more economic information; but I think you need to get down to the fish house or to the people that are doing the actual reporting and let them know how important certain attributes are, because there are a lot of attributes that are just – I won't say there is a flippant approach to them.

But like, for instance, time fished; if you say eight days, or it says number of tows, if you go, okay, eight times three, that is your number of tows. There is a lot of data that we don't understand the impact of how that data is being used. I think it is important that we get down and talk to the people that are reporting and tell them that it is important that you make these distinctions about number of nets and type of net, how long your tows are, how many tows and those kinds of things.

I think that would be very helpful. I know we had some issues a while back with pink shrimp, because pink shrimp reported – I know where we are browns and pinks came up together and they got reported as browns. You don't see pink landings, so there are issues there; and how do

you estimate that, I don't know. Maybe that is where some independent surveys would come into play. I just think that if we had a better outreach program and got down to the people that are actually doing the reporting and explain to them how important this data is and what you're actually looking for in those attributes; I think that would be a good thing.

MR. WILSON: In Alabama we are required to put the size. The trip ticket won't work unless you put the size on there. But like time fishing, like 90 percent of our boats are Vietnamese. When you ask them how much time they spend fishing compared to the hours; we go by hours in Alabama; but how many hours they were out and how many hours of that was fishing; you're not going to get an answer.

I basically just put three-quarters of the days they were out is the only way I can go, because they don't keep track of the time, anyway. Most of the Vietnamese were raised in a communist country and they don't trust any government asking any kind of questions like that. I don't know how to deal with that.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I think with an outreach program, though, we could look at those kinds of situations and come up with some kind of solution that is at least closer to accurate, and say if you know the number of tows and you know what an average length of tow is, then you could come up with a better estimate of time. Just little things like that of how to come up with maybe some better data I think would be good.

MR. WILLIAMS: I understand Dr. Rick Hart from the Galveston Lab attended the workshop last year. He created the stock synthesis model that they are using now in the Gulf or helped create it. It certainly did wonders for the pink shrimp in Southwest Florida like you had mentioned before.

It actually cleared up the assumption it was overfished. I think it finally wound up being determined it was just lack of effort. I know it has done a tremendous job on trying to determine MSY in the Gulf. I was wondering if that stock synthesis model will ever be used here in the South Atlantic; and if not, why not?

MS. BYRD: We held this workshop to figure out what data were available that could be potentially be used in a stock assessment model. It was Rick who actually presented that stock synthesis model to the South Atlantic SSC, which kind of got the ball rolling. That is why we held this workshop.

I guess the next step that these guys identified was to look at the fishery-independent work that is being done within the states and trying to come up with a regional index first instead of jumping all into the stock synthesis model although that is something that could potentially be done here in the future. Do you want to say anything else on that?

MR. COLLIER: It was noted that there was a large difference in data knowledge between the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic. There is a lot more data in the Gulf. That is an important factor for this stock synthesis model. It is a pretty data-hungry model. It can work on limited data, but it does much better when you can feed it as much information as possible. It was noted quite frequently in the workshop that we really lack a lot of information in the South Atlantic.

MR. WILLIAMS: I guess one of the purposes for this is to gather this data and maybe that stock synthesis model will be used or could be used and maybe you can compare it against the current model.

MR. COLLIER: Right now we don't have a model in the South Atlantic. MSY is based on landings and comparing that over a time series.

MR. WILSON: I guess I am going to show my ignorance here. Are you looking for like one number rate, bycatch rate that you can take and put into the formula with a catch effort?

MR. COLLIER: No, we're not looking for a single number. Something that would be informative from this group is trying to consider what has changed over time. A lot of stock assessments that are being done for like king mackerel or Spanish mackerel go back to the seventies, eighties.

We don't have much information on what is going on, because the experts we bring into the SEDARs or those stock assessments are the guys that fish in those fisheries. It is not going to be the shrimpers, so they don't know exactly what has changed in the shrimping industry in order to group that is where the nineties are all similar.

Obviously, they changed in the nineties because there were bycatch reduction devices introduced and TEDs introduced. That is a time period where we would say, all right, bycatch changed here. Was it consistent from maybe 2000 to 2014? Could we group those years together and maybe consider methods similar over that time period?

Then we would have to figure out another method to get estimates of bycatch for the nineties or a time period earlier than that. Because in order to get good stock assessments, you have to know total removals and that is what they are trying to get with these bycatch estimates.

MR. DOCKERY: I am probably stating the obvious here, but bycatch is really complicated, because you have the changing population of the bycatch. You have the changing bycatch devices. Then you have what happens to the bycatch when it escapes the bycatch device. I understand that we're looking for better numbers, but a lot of times the change is really hard to attribute to anything. I see more small flounder now than I have, but is it because my bycatch device is working differently or flounder are showing back up? I just wanted to throw that out there.

MR. COLLIER: Instead of really thinking about true levels; a good question here would be what significant changes have occurred in the fishery and at what time periods did those significant changes in the fishery occur? That would give us some indication on when to put these maybe not hard lines but kind of soft lines on, all right, we need a different method form this time period on in order to estimate bycatch.

MS. THOMAS: I think we need an educational process probably for the industry to learn how to do trip tickets, or teach them, show them. You're handing out things how to do the TEDs and everything now, but one of the major things, and everybody better keep it in mind, I just looked to see a couple days ago. We only got 458 I think it is of federal-registered boats in the Atlantic now. Best to my memory there was over 600 or so just a couple of years ago.

What is happening to all that bycatch that those boats aren't even there catching? Don't stop us from doing what we're doing; and we know what we're doing; we're smart. For the year that so many trip tickets started getting reported, it was the year that the federal money went down to everybody. They couldn't get their money unless they had filed trip tickets.

Everybody started in compliance with trip tickets then; not everybody, but a lot of people did so they could get the money if anything ever came around again. That's all I've got to say about that. But the decrease in the number of shrimp boats is out there in the Atlantic Ocean. I don't like it. I think we need to have more wild-caught shrimp everywhere. Thank you.

MR. HELIES: As a participant in this workshop, I wanted to applaud Julia for the work on the report. We covered a lot of ground in those couple days. I don't envy her job at all putting that report together, if you have read through it at all. That being said, we did cover a lot of different items.

A quick note going back to Bob's question earlier about the bycatch versus shrimp catch; the folks in Galveston put out a paper I guess maybe a year or two ago covering all of their observer data. It is showing I think like two-to-one in poundage for shrimp versus bycatch, which is much, much, better than the numbers that were put out back in the day where they claimed to be 12 to 1. We're doing a much better job when it comes to reducing bycatch in the fishery.

I think from my standpoint it is difficult to say, but if we can somehow standardize just the reporting with the states. Each state has a different reporting requirement. They record different information using different forms. Some of the spots in the forms aren't even needed to be filled out. Why even have it on the form if you don't need to fill it out?

That would go a long way to solving some of these issues, I think. But the main thing that came out of the workshop for me is the data gaps. That is it right there, big capital letters. We have hardly any data in the South Atlantic. Janie said apples and oranges; the Gulf fishery is much, much different. You've got 30- or 45-day trips.

In the South Atlantic you've got a day, two-day trips. If we can get a better handle on the effort in the South Atlantic through a voluntary pilot program where you just record the number of tows you make per day per trip and your average tow time as just a starting point; if we can get away from just the trips and get to the number of tows, I think that would help. In the Gulf you've got the electronic logbook system, so our effort is handled well over there in the Gulf.

MR. BAKER: In terms of the effort for the South Atlantic, it looks like about 50 percent of that is from North Carolina, if that is correct. North Carolina, like every other state in the South Atlantic, reports at the trip level. In my opinion it would be fairly easy to get an estimate of days fished just by region, because 50 percent of our harvest comes from Pamlico Sound, 25 percent comes from other internal waters, and 25 percent comes from the ocean.

Those vessels operate in fairly uniform ways. In other words, the vessels in Pamlico Sound usually operate on multiday trips, usually not more than five days because of the regulations between the bans on weekend trawling. Then, of course, the ocean trips, there is a difference between single-day trips and multiday trips.

But a relatively quick canvas of those, you would be able to figure out a rough estimate of the days fished and you could extrapolate that back, because all those numbers are in terms of the days per region or things are broken down in the latest fishery management plan, which is just finalized.

MS. SOLORZANO: On our trip tickets, my boats make weeks, month trips, as long as 15, 20 days plus most every trip, so we do put the days drag, the amount of drags made on the trip. That is logged into our trip ticket system. The part that wasn't was the size. That is not mandatory requirement. The gear, the gear type; all that is mandatory in Florida in the South Atlantic, I'm assuming the Gulf as well, because my boats fish the Gulf but always land back in Duval County.

As far as bycatch reduction goes, the device is in there. This is probably going to make a lot of people angry, but I am going to tell on my age. A long time before there were any bycatch reduction devices, if we had too much bycatch in the tri-net, we picked up and left. We didn't fish it, because you weren't going to make any money doing it.

Nowadays you are not going to fish it, whether there are bycatch reduction mandates any worse or not, because insurance only lets us take so many people on the boat. You are not going to go trawling in an area with a lot of bycatch, because you are not going to make money and you don't have the manpower to pick it up.

Here we are going deep into something that fishing – this is just something else, I'm going to say it; we don't need any more of. All right, so now that I've made everybody on the council mad today and said my two cents worth and told everybody how really old I am; I don't know that we have any less bycatch reduction than we did 30 years ago; because when it was trashy, we never set out to put the tri-net down. I ain't dragging here, there are too many fish, and moved on. Now it is the same thing, because you can only have three crew or four crew. I don't know that we're seeing less bycatch reduction because of what any fishery management council is doing.

MR. COLLIER: To that point, Marilyn, you brought up the insurance company and number of crew and that limited bycatch. Is there a time period where that would have changed? Was it due to the BRDs that came in? Was there overlap between the two? This is the type of information that we need and would be beneficial. Like when we go into an assessment, it is a group of fish people. We don't necessarily always get the best data on the shrimp. This is the type we need.

MS. SOLORZANO: If you used to want to go shrimping and have six crew, you could take six crew. If it was going to be a time of the year 20 years ago, you would load up the boat with six people. We would see Vietnamese crews with the whole family on there, ten people living. They are all nodding and say they knew it in the Gulf. Now you are not going to have insurance for that. You are paying for every man that is on that boat. You are not going to go out with that many people, so you are not going to fish those areas.

MR. COLLIER: When did that change?

MS. SOLORZANO: Probably changed, I'm going to say on or around near the time the rates went up around Katrina. I'm just going to ballpark at that because my rates started going up just

around that time. I'm going to say the early 2000s that my rates really increased. When things got hard in the fishing industry, rates went up and they said you are going to pay for every person that is on the boat. People couldn't afford to have ten crewmen.

MR. GAUTIER: To where Marilyn was, I think it should be noted that we never hear anything spoken about different cultures. On the Gulf Coast, in Louisiana and Mississippi we have a lot of Vietnamese. As Marilyn said, if they need more crew, they don't worry about the insurance. They just put more children and relatives on the boats.

In a lot of cases with the Vietnamese, they don't have bycatch. That is what they eat. They save as much as they can. They hang silver eels up and dry them out, ribbon fish, eat them like jerky. There is a lot of cultural in different areas from Texas all the way to Key West, a lot of differences in the type of people that fish and how they fish; and I hate to say it but maybe even a lot of disrespect for some laws. It is their nature that if it is in my net, I eat it.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Just to be clear, when you say bycatch, you are talking about anything, even if it is kept as a salable item, like you are talking about anything other than targeted shrimp.

MR. COLLIER: Bycatch really means anything beyond the shrimp; but we do have some estimates of what is being kept, but you can get that from trip tickets and different things like that. That information is definitely put into a stock assessment. The kept catch as a removal is always included.

They are trying to get down to the level of data where they can include information on some of the bycatch, because they are going to put it in one way or the other. They are either going to use good estimates that are derived from input from you guys or they are going to come up with another method to come up with how to calculate those removals. We want to get ahead of that trying to get the best information possible from the shrimping industry.

MR. MERRIFIELD: When you are talking about assessments, you are not just talking about shrimp assessments, you're talking about – this is to what you were saying is that it is whiting assessments and flounder assessments and all these other species.

MR. BAKER: Chip, when you were talking about the other assessments to date has it been – for ones that are using these bycatch estimates, has it been consistent? If it hasn't been accurate, has it been consistently applied?

MR. COLLIER: No, it hasn't been consistently applied. A croaker assessment, they basically did various estimates of croaker and it was just relative estimates. For Spanish mackerel they used one technique; for king mackerel they've used another. But for the majority of SEDAR assessments it is not really included. They are really important for Spanish and king; and if a spot assessment gets done, it is going to be very important for that one.

Croaker, they definitely need more; flounder is going to be another one that if that gets done through ASMFC; that they will need the information as well, as much information as we can provide and get some better information on how bycatch should be estimated in different time periods. Another question is are BRDs similar among areas? We know they vary. What has

been used in the past and what is currently being used and where are the different BRDs being used?

MR. REID: The biomass in my experience is a small fraction of what it was in the seventies. Where they made ten drags a day; they make three or four now. Unfortunately, there is no data on that. That includes even mainly croakers and spots, bullheads and things like that. But even there is no noticeable decline in the whiting along the east coast, also.

MR. MERRIFIELD: There is a lot of speculation, especially with the renourishment programs that are going on and some of the port dredging programs that are going on; that we've seen dramatic changes since those have taken place.

MS. THOMAS: I didn't mean to skip over habitat, but habitat is the most important thing to our industry. I have tried to teach everybody that talks to me or listens to me. Every blade of marsh grass is important, especially right now when the spawn is coming in and sticking to it and going down in the mud, hatching out by the middle of May or end of May.

But also we're fixing to face one of the worse things that has ever happened, and that is when they deepen the St. Johns River. It is going to be ocean downtown Jacksonville. The shrimp would have no reason to leave downtown Jacksonville and go back out to the Atlantic to spawn, because the salinity is going to be so high.

It is already so high now down around Palatka and all that area; that some of the shrimp down there are caught in crab traps, they're big. We're trying to get them out – we voted already to do this, to release the Rodman Dam so that freshwater can come out into the St. Johns River and maybe help dilute the salinity.

Maybe the shrimp that are spawning down in that area will do what they are supposed to do naturally, but they are going to dredge the St. Johns River down to about 48 feet, and that is going to make that water stay in there unless we get some way to push it out, because it flows north. The habitat to me has always been important.

I began on this Habitat Panel here in 1988. I was on it for a long, long time. They say I can't be on two panels, but habitat is critically important to me, because right now over right next door to where Marilyn lives, it is fixing to be a big disaster. When you put 795 houses on 390 acres of property that goes right up within 100 feet of the shell beds and the creek, you are looking for big trouble.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I noticed when you talked about environmental factors; they were typically temperature, salinity and those types of things and nothing in terms of pollutants or water quality. Water quality is something that we all pay very close attention to or try to have very heightened sensitivity to because that is where our livelihood comes from. The water quality, I didn't see that anywhere in there. I know that is probably a hard factor to incorporate in there.

MS. BYRD: One thing that we did do was we tried to come up with a variety of different environmental datasets that are out there. There is a lot of environmental data that is collected along with the biological data. When these state surveys are out trawling for shrimp, they are collecting some environmental variables.

We also tried to put together kind of a list of other environmental datasets that are out there. Some of them were kind of more water quality datasets that could potentially be used. There is a list of the datasets that we came up with on the website as well, so that did factor into the discussions a little bit and we tried to identify those datasets that were available.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Any other comments or questions? You are looking to us to fill in some data gaps. Is there anything else?

MS. JONES: They do a Gulf survey in order to get your permits. Why don't they just go ahead and do one for the South Atlantic? I know we use different gears, but a lot of people just keep the same nets on now. It is not cost-efficient to change. Like in our situation, we don't change our nets through the year. It is just the same net all year.

MR. COLLIER: To me, that is another one of the shifts that has occurred in the fishery where people would use flat nets or balloon nets, and now they're using a lot of mongoose or tongue trawls. Is there a time period when that changed?

MS. SOLORZANO: We use mongoose nets when we're working on the beach for white shrimp, but there are times when we'll also use our flat nets in there if we've come offshore from rock shrimping and we have our flat nets on and times of the year can change that, too. In the spring of the year the shrimp are older, they are not jumping as high.

We usually put our mongoose nets on, of course. But if we go out rock shrimping and we come in and it is still early and we've got flat nets on, we'll change out. We've changed out during a trip. If we're red shrimping, rock shrimping, white shrimping, Key West pink shrimp is flat net. You are not going to use the mongoose net down there.

Nancy's boat generally typically fishes whites and browns inshore so her boats wouldn't change nets. Are we on the deep-water shrimp as well here? Are we talking rock shrimp or are we just on – because that is another data topic that we wanted to bring up concerning deep-water data on information. That is why I'm thinking have we switched over are we still on just shrimp?

MR. COLLIER: Deep-water is an open canvass. We would welcome any information we have on that. We're taking down notes as fast as possible, so you guys can switch back and forth; that is fine.

MS. JONES: We don't have a rock shrimp permit. We do day trip in and out of Jacksonville, and we stay basically from Brunswick to St. Augustine is as far as we go with our 50 footer. Like I said, we just use the same nets. We've been back into it since '05, and we haven't changed. We use mongoose, period.

MS. SOLORZANO: Also when we go into different states, if we're working inshore, there are size limits. Like some states will only let you have a 55-foot mongoose, so that is all you can pull there. Then you go back into another one and you are allowed to have a different size net that is larger if you choose to. We have different nets.

We have different material in nets, lighter nets, heavier nets. We have a lot of nets. TEDs the same thing, we have the ones that we use for the jellyballs, and then we have certain ones that we

use further offshore, and in the red shrimp fishery, of course, you wouldn't need them. But when we go to data, with rock shrimp data and turning that in, the difference in the Gulf and the Atlantic is when you said back to trip tickets and data et cetera. We have VMS on the boats. The Gulf boats do not have VMS, so they have electronic logbooks. The VMS is showing where we're at if you have it on your vessel, if you're a rock shrimp vessel.

I don't think every one of the shrimp boats have to have them, but they pretty much know where we are at and where we're working at. If we were to come in, which we have where we've drug; and if we were out say September 20th and we had three drags for the night and what we had on it; if we brought that in here, you're not going to accept that because it is not going to be considered scientific.

There is no DR in front of our name; we're just shrimpers. We've brought information into the council and committee and stuff before that they said, well, we can't accept that because some scientist said it wasn't scientific. But it is all that we have. We don't have these groups and websites and all this stuff to go to; we have our own experience.

They don't want to accept a lot of our experience as data. We can turn it into the state, but that is only current things. We do turn it in and I turn mine in to the best of the ability that I know. I ask my captains how many drags did you make, what depth of water were you in? But when you are out there for 25 days, maybe the best of your shrimp were only caught in four of those days.

If you want to tell me that every piece of ground that is open is equivalent to the next piece, it is not. Maybe we caught them in September of this year on the south end, but maybe we didn't catch them in September there again for seven years. We went to the north end. Now you want to close the north end because you say there is no effort on it or there hasn't been.

Well, last year we had some effort on it; so if we're going to bring you in this information and present it to you in a format, but you tell us it is not scientific, it can't be used because it is just your written-down piece of paper information. The pings are there, but that doesn't tell you what we caught on that ping.

To have this area closed off or to add any more closed areas, it is crazy. We need to open it back up, and that is what I came here today for is to ask you to open up the bottom, give us back our trawl grounds, give us some that you've already taken and closed in the past. I'm probably jumping way over everybody's head here and moving full speed ahead, but there are only so many hours left in the day and I wanted to get to the point of what I came here for.

That is what I come for. In the June meeting, I want to firmly ask that we get our trawl bottoms back. That if we present you data that the fishermen bring in; that it is actually considered legitimate, real scientific information, not because Dr. so and so in his lab down south said it wasn't. We know it is. Anyway, I could go on all day about this, but that is what I came for is to get bottom opened, ask for it to be opened, and for no more to be closed.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I think that will be covered in our next topic. That is kind of talking about Oculina expansions that are coming soon. We will get to that. Is there anything else before we take a break here for lunch? We've still got quite a bit to talk about as far as – is there anything else that would help you out, Julie or Chip, as far as this is concerned?

MR. HELIES: Bringing it to the AP is a good start. I put together an informal-like questionnaire or something and we can get it out to the folks, because a lot of this is anecdotal information that you need. Marilyn and all these folks, they have that because they have been in the fishery for a long time. It is a good start getting it to this panel, but you need to get it out to the fishery as a whole. You will get more information that way.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I think there is tons of information out there, and I was going to ask earlier if there was a fisherman in the SEDAR meeting at all, which maybe would have given some of that insight, which might be helpful. Any way we can get that data; you can invite fishermen to the meeting, and you are going to have a hard time getting him there; because if they are out at sea and they are working, it is hard to get them there. There is usually somebody that is available that has that knowledge.

MS. SOLORZANO: I was going to answer his response back. I guess early 2000s, unless it was '96, actually, '97, there was a meeting in St. Augustine and it was bombarded with people. All the fishermen showed up. It was chaos in the room. I think everyone remembers. This was when things like this were just starting to get going.

We presented a lot of evidence, and we've seen things continue to get closed and to get closed and to get closed. It is as though the fishermen don't trust what happens, so they don't feel it is going to be beneficial to bring stuff in here to you, because you really don't seem to hear the fishermen. You hear the environmental groups and you hear Oceana and Friends of Matanzas writes 20 letters and, boom, the whole world knows.

The fishermen seem to be like this – we all want to go stomp on Capitol Hill and fly out a chopper, you know, because nobody pays us any attention – just using yesterday's news thing. When we bring the information in, it doesn't seem to be respected. That is why a lot of the fishermen don't want to – they give it to us and they bring it to just a couple of people to present it all for them, but to get the actual people.

Seasonal is another thing, we work a lot of the year. To get them all in here and for them to be trusting that you are going to use what they tell them, and that is a big problem with why it is hard to get it all together, because they don't trust council to pay attention to what they are bringing.

I am not saying that any one person is dis-trustworthy, but they feel like it is not going to do us any good, anyway, and we've all heard that line said from other fishermen when we go to present something to this. They say, well, why, they are just going to close stuff, anyway. That is a very negative response, and I am still here because I am not a negative person.

I feel like we can all work together; and if someone stands up and keeps fighting, maybe we can put it off as long as possible and make it where it doesn't happen, where we can all work together and protect fisheries to be opened for fishing and trawling for commercial fishing and protect species that need protecting.

MR. WILSON: Well, I'm going to stand up for Marilyn. Just as an example, okay, there were 600 registered boats in the South Atlantic, right, which has decreased. Now from my experience in shrimping, before the TEDs, before there was any concern for turtles, real concern, because I

am that old; I saw maybe one turtle in a year come up in the net. I'm thinking, well, if there are 600 boats and they are out fishing, how can there be 56,000 turtle interactions if there are not that many boats? Maybe they are double what I experienced, so that would be 1,200 turtles; but that is a lot of turtles. I am not saying that is acceptable, but I am saying how does that come up to 56,000? That is why there is always some problem with how the shrimpers see the numbers.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Okay, is there anything else we need to say about this SEDAR report?

MR. WILSON: I was just curious, you're also looking to do historical and you're looking to come up with past figures as well as updating current figures? Okay.

MS. BYRD: I just want to thank you guys for your input and your thoughts.

MS. MERRIFIELD: Thank you very much. I know we need to take a lunch break here, and keep it short so that we can cover our last couple of items. We need to go over some of the minutes from the Habitat Committee from December and the Golden Crab Committee meetings, too, so we've got to get that in. Let's be back here at one o'clock.

(Whereupon, the meeting was recessed at 12:10 o'clock p.m. April 16, 2015)

The Joint Shrimp and Deepwater Shrimp Advisory Panels of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened in the Cypress Room of the Hilton Garden Inn, North Charleston, South Carolina, May 16, 2015, and was called to order at 1:10 o'clock p.m. by Chairman Michael Merrifield and Chairman Frederic Dockery.

MR. MERRIFIELD: The OECA has an evaluation in progress, and so we're going to get an update as to where that evaluation is at.

MR. COLLIER: The evaluation right now is in review by the Oculina Evaluation Team, and so the review is expected to be done by May 1st. During that time period, while the team is reviewing it, it is also going to the Science and Statistical Committee to be deemed best science as well to make sure that they are following the protocols that is set forth for the South Atlantic.

Then after that is done and all the comments are incorporated, it is going to go to the council for their review. Within that, we finally got around to they have a response to the shrimp access area as was requested by the Deepwater Shrimp back in 2012. Some of the length of time for the response was basically it was changing of positions, taking up the report and making sure everything got along.

It has taken a little bit longer than we would have hoped, but it is getting there. The response to the shrimp access area is included in that Oculina Team Evaluation Report. Basically what they have said is they are against opening up the area right now. They feel that it is very important to protect that coral, it is old coral, and it is deep-water coral that grows very slowly; and even one interaction with the coral is too much.

They want to keep that area protected, not only to protect the coral, but also the species that live in the coral. In addition to that, they want to protect some of the habitat offshore of the coral, because it is part of the snapper grouper plan; and included in that is the golden tilefish, the

burrow holes that were offshore of there. That was some of the consideration for including some of the area offshore. I don't have much else. If you have specific questions I can go through the report.

It covers basically what the law enforcement has been doing, how they are trying to coordinate efforts, how things are changing in law enforcement as far as FWC, where they are having to move – the Randall was a large vessel that could have been doing a lot of the coverage of the area.

That has been moved over to the Gulf Coast, but they feel that they're going to be getting better coverage with the smaller vessels, because they are faster, more efficient, it doesn't cost as much, not as many crew members. They feel they can do a better job with the smaller vessels. That is really all I have.

MR. MERRIFIELD: The mapping; is that in progress; did that get fully funded? When does that begin?

MR. COLLIER: The mapping of the Oculina Banks got fully funded, and that is going to start up this summer. They are expecting it to be completed by 2018.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Will there be a review at that time of that?

MR. COLLIER: A full progress or a full grant report will be done. It is a three-year grant cycle that project is funded through; and after the end of three years, they have to have a full report completed. At that point, that document will be – well, before it gets published anywhere, it is going to go through National Marine Fisheries Service review, because that who is going to be doing the mapping. Then it will come to the council, I'm sure, because they are going to be very interested in the overall mapping of that area.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Are there any questions about the evaluation of the OECA?

MS. SOLORZANO: Who done the evaluation again?

MR. MERRIFIELD: There was an OECA evaluation team that was put together, and I participated on that team. It had a lot of the coral scientists were on that as well as – if you want to talk about some of the others, there were outreach people that were on that team.

MR. COLLIER: Yes; there were outreach specialists from Florida and as well from council staff. There were enforcement officers from the Coast Guard, NOAA, FWC, and then there was obviously South Atlantic staff, but there was also National Marine Fisheries Service staff, scientists from Florida State, Florida Institute of Technology, and I think one other university. There were a few shrimpers as well.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Any questions or comments on that?

MR. REID: Are they going to hold off to do anything until that mapping is completed?

MR. COLLIER: That would be up to the council as far as holding off on doing anything. I am going to provide this report to them at the June meeting. There was also a request in the March meeting to ensure that we treat the rock shrimpers the same way we're treating the golden crab fishermen. That request was if we are considering opening up areas for the golden crabbers, we should also consider opening up areas for the rock shrimpers. If we are going to do it, we need to use similar information for the two.

MR. REID: Wonderful.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I believe the action, Gregg, at the council meeting, and I don't remember which one it was, was basically they are going to reevaluate once this mapping is completed to see if there are areas that would not be compromised as far as habitat is concerned if it were released back to the rock shrimp fishery, given our access area was provided to the rock shrimp fishery; is that correct?

MR. WAUGH: Yes; what the council asked us to do is work with you and get some information to present to them in June, and Chip is working with you to get that information. They want to revisit this issue at the June meeting.

MR. MERRIFIELD: That is regarding the northern expansion; but as far as the OECA, I think that decision was put off until after 2018, when the mapping is completed, to look at those offshore areas of the existing HAPC.

MR. WAUGH: I honestly don't remember that being a part of it. I know that they are anxious to get the mapping done. There is a periodic review; and so that will come up. I am just not recollecting that they made a decision and said that they will revisit it once the mapping is done. It gets reviewed every so often.

MR. COLLIER: Okay, I don't have anything further.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Does anybody else have anything else? Okay, that is kind of an update on what is going on there. The next item is status of Coral Amendment 8.

MR. COLLIER: Status of Coral Amendment 8; that has been submitted to National Marine Fisheries Service for approval. What is taking so long for a Coral Amendment 8 is there was a VMS ping rate that increases once you get into a protected area or the Oculina Habitat Area of Particular Concern or the Experimental Closed Area; and you are supposed to increase the ping rates.

Originally it was thought that several VMS units were going to have to be replaced in order for that regulation to go through. They found out about halfway through that some of the VMS units didn't have to be replaced, and so they had to backtrack and redo all their economic analyses. They have just completed those economic analyses and the amendment is sitting on General Counsel's desk for final review before it becomes a rule. That is basically what is taking so long for that amendment to go through.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Okay, so we're saying that there will not be a need to replace VMS units at this point in time?

MR. COLLIER: Some units might have to be replaced; but some units, instead of having to be replaced, they could actually be upgraded for a much, much cheaper price.

MS. SOLORZANO: If we had to upgrade the units, what about this potential for logbooks, electronic logbooks; would they be tied in with the VMS? If so, are they designing something that is going to put them together?

MR. COLLIER: That hasn't been a consideration on the South Atlantic as far as electronic logbooks. Would those be tied in with the VMS units; that is something that we probably should explore to make things much easier and to make sure they are functional together. It might be a situation where some of these fishermen might not be subjected to require the electronic requirements, I'm not positive. That is going to be something that we need to consider as we go forward with some of our electronic reporting requirements.

MR. WILSON: Does this pertain to the response to the shrimp access area, also, the pinging and the VMS?

MR. MERRIFIELD: It is in response to the transit requirements for transit across the HAPC.

MR. WILSON: Did the Habitat Committee – it seemed like when I was reading the notes they weren't really in favor of the transit.

MR. MERRIFIELD: It's in the amendment. It is part of the amendment and it has been approved. The ping rate will increase to once every five minutes, I believe, and the question was how is that going to occur and what equipment changes were going to be required? I think that is what they've been working out before roll out.

As part of Coral Amendment 8, this is where we brought a lot of data to the table that said there are some areas of high productivity in the northern end of that expansion. It is actually probably a little over halfway up that expansion that was a highly productive area that we went back and asked council to revisit that boundary and move it a little bit.

The amendment at that point was probably too far past or at that point there was no interest to change that amendment to accommodate that. What they've done is asked us to present data, which we did last year. We presented some data, 2013 trip ticket data. We presented that and then what the council would like to do is look again at a full set of data for 2014 as well. I have pretty much put that data together, so I have that economic data available for them for this next meeting.

There is some additional data that there is some interest in seeing if we can provide – and it is going to be a little more difficult to provide, because it is a lot of personal captains' log data that might be in journals and things like that; but what they are really trying to do is isolate – if you are looking at that eastern boundary of that northern *Oculina* expansion, looking to see if we can isolate what kind of landings took place in an area inside of that boundary that will be closed versus outside of that area that will still remain open to fishing.

That data is really not available electronically, so we're going to have to manually collect that from face-to-face contact with captains. I guess what we need to know, Number 1, is that data

going to be valid? Is that something that will be accepted as being good data to present? Then Number 2, what are the attributes that I guess the council is really looking for that would meet those criteria.

We talked about tracks and associating landings to tracks. I don't know that we necessarily can provide that, because not every track is recorded every trip. A lot of times what you're basically doing is tracing over an existing track that you've done for numerous years. Is it you're looking for bathymetric data; are you looking for GPS data? What are we looking for there that would identify productivity inside versus outside?

MR. COLLIER: Some of this information that you guys could tell us we're way off base with asking it. This is a good opportunity for telling us what tree to go up. That way we don't have to start with the forest, we can narrow it down some. Ideally what we want to be able to do is look at individual tows and try to figure out is the productivity here in an area that is not being closed the same as an area that is being closed and trying to be able to compare that level of information.

If we can't get total level information, can we use maybe some of the VMS data and try to figure out what is going on in different areas to try to calculate productivity. If a fisherman is inside for half the trip and offshore for half the trip, we know we probably can't separate the catch out on that.

But if a fisherman is only on the inside for two hours and then fishes for 20 hours offshore, we can assume that the majority of the catch probably came from offshore. He moved for a reason. He is not going to move because he was catching shrimp; he moved because he probably wasn't catching anything.

If there is information like that that you can provide us, that would be great. Another piece of information that we want to know – since this area is being closed, Charlie was under the impression that some of these areas all the fishermen couldn't go to; so is there a depth profile that kind of separates where fishermen will go and does that match up with a boat length or should we just do it based on names of boats or fishermen or how would that work; and if you could provide us information on that, that would be great.

MR. REID: That area you are talking about on the east side; the difference between 90 meters and 100 meters along that edge; we started dragging in 90 meters, about there, 50 fathoms. That is where the first – in the first few years that is mainly where it was. We slowly moved out deeper than that. Unfortunately, that is pre-VMS time, and that goes back to why I was interested in the charting, because that is going to show that 90 meters is far enough off to avoid any structure at all out there.

That is a vital area. Usually shrimp are thicker near edges as a general rule. That is why we put it out there. The boats that don't fish on the east side of that deals with two things. One is the amount of cable on the boat and the other thing is the fear factor of the tide. The majority of shrimp fishermen won't deal with it, because they just aren't going to deal with the tide running like that. If they are not royal red shrimpers, they are not going to go out there is the deal.

MR. COLLIER: If we look to see number of fishermen that land royal reds; that could be a proximity –

MR. REID: Those would be the ones that will fish in there.

MR. MERRIFIELD: The interesting thing I've seen – and I think the last two years are not good years to evaluate that because the rock shrimp landings have been so poor. There haven't been that many boats rock fishing to begin with. When you get those data, you can take a look at it; but I think there were like in 2013 there might have been like seven boats that fished offshore.

Some of those fished offshore and inshore, and then there might have been additional five boats that were inshore; but that is really because there has not been any rock shrimp. There have been very few boats on the inshore side. Those same boats that are going offshore are doing the inshore side as well.

That is what I am kind of seeing, but the problem is that the landings have been so bad in the last couple years, so it is not a good dataset, I don't think, to really look at in terms of how many boats, rock shrimp, and how many rock shrimp offshore versus inshore unless somebody's got some kind of an idea that they can answer that question. Would 25 percent of the rock shrimp boats be the ones that are offshore or can you say 50 percent? Is there any feel for that kind of a number?

MR. REID: Depending on the year, it is 100 percent last year, because none of the normal inshore boats went rock shrimping, because there wasn't enough to go out there for. They were too difficult to catch. They wouldn't fish where you had to catch them last year. The rock shrimp pressure is a function of what is happening inshore. If they can make an inshore, a majority of the boats aren't going to go offshore. They don't like to get out of sight of land.

MS. SOLORZANO: He's right; years are going to vary on the percentage that is going to be working offshore versus inshore. Some of mine actually would go rock shrimping. It is not like they only go rock shrimping if there is nothing inshore. If there is good money on rock shrimp, they are going to go rock shrimping or red shrimping. Whatever the case may be, they are going to do whatever shrimping they need to make the money.

If you've got a lot of rock shrimp and you are getting paid a good price, it isn't going to matter what's inshore, speaking for my boats and the six or seven or eight that I'm speaking about. They would work wherever the money is at, inshore, offshore, red shrimping, whatever they need to do, and every year is going to vary. There is no percentage to say what you're – they might be fishing to the north, south, inshore, offshore to make a trip wherever you have to make it.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I think the basis for the question is that Charlie actually asked this question, because this year I think in some of the VMS point analysis, I think we've seen numbers like 4 percent VMS points were offshore or inside that area that is going to be closed, and this year in 2014 we saw the VMS data showed there were like 17 percent.

It was a sizable increase. One of the comments made in the meeting, and you may have seen this, is that was this just to make a point that that is a valuable area, which we know you can't

afford to make that kind of a point. That is just not economically feasible just to go out and be there just for making a point. Obviously, there was more productivity in that area, and I think the data kind of shows that, but it is so hard when you've got such low landings' years.

MR. COLLIER: I think Richard's point is a very good one where the inshore guys just didn't go. Based on landings, it didn't appear that there was a real big change in the offshore landings. It was just a huge drop on the inshore landings. That is going to change your percentage even though the offshore effort stayed about the same. Just because the inshore effort decreased, it is going to show a rapid increase in the offshore.

MS. SOLORZANO: Maybe I'm getting a little confused here. Rock shrimping is not a supplemental fishery for the times of the year that we're not catching other things. We plan every year to go rock shrimping; it is part of where we make our living for the specific boats who stay in that central northeast Florida regions who have permits, who are active in the fishery.

We plan to go every year, so it is not something that we say, well, if we're not catching something, we might go. No, it is a main fishery for us to go to every year. We depend on the fishery. It is not supplemental if that is what somebody is trying to say we only go when we aren't catching elsewhere. Well, inshore boats may only stay inshore and catch white shrimp or whatever they're catching, but the rock shrimp boats that are in that area depend on that.

MR. MERRIFIELD: There was a question about tow times and is the tow times out there about three hours and about three tows a night?

MS. SOLORZANO: Yes and that is something I seen on there, the time of the year. We've caught rock shrimp into November; they've not shown up before until October, and we've caught them as early as June. To say there is a certain season that you're going to catch them in; that changes and varies each year. It can be north and south, north end of the bottom, south end of the bottom. But I've had people say, well, it's September 20th and there is no rock shrimp, there is not going to be any. October 2th they show up. It varies.

MR. COLLIER: The speed of towing, I know it varies depending on the current, but what would be the general – if we were looking at VMS data, what would be the general speed of towing or the range of speeds that we could look at that may be indicative of towing?

MR. REID: Two to three and a half knots.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Are we going to have a full suite of 2014 VMS data available for the June meeting?

MR. COLLIER: We have not gotten that data yet. We've requested it, but I don't believe we have it yet.

MS. SOLORZANO: I just want to say when we present the drags' data information, if that is going to be accepted, it is going to look something like – I'm going to use my son's name because I can. It will say Captain Lee Vogelsong drug September 17, made three tows, and he's going to have this handwritten out. It is not going to be some logbook computer-oriented thing. He is going to tell you what he done and where he was at and the depth of water and the area he

trawled and for how long. That would be his personal information he would be presenting for us to present that to you.

That is going to be acceptable to the council, because that is what we go on for history past. Every year is not the same. I can't go in and say just because we done this in 2010, we didn't do it in '09 and '11, but in '06 we had a terrific year in the same place. We just want to make sure when we gather this information from the people and present it to council, the council is going to be acceptable with that because that is what it is going to look like.

MR. MERRIFIELD: That is why I asked is the – I can deal with formatting issues and making it electronically; but I'm just curious if it is going to be a fairly significant effort, I just wanted to make sure that it is going to be something that is of value.

MR. COLLIER: Because I'm not familiar with the Florida trip ticket, if it is any different than what is on the Florida trip ticket, then I can get the data from Florida. But if you guys can provide me the data is more specific than what is on the trip ticket, that is excellent. That is the data we want to use.

MS. SOLORZANO: On the trip ticket we only have one area. We check federal box, offshore. That is such a vast, open area you can't tell what we caught where, how much was produced there. That is where we're trying to give you a really pinpoint right on this is what we were doing on that day, because the boat may have been out 20 days and caught the vast majority of their shrimp in five of those 20 days.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Which speaks to the point that not all VMS points are the same, which was the point we were trying to make. Just because you've got a scatter of VMS points, some of those VMS points are very valuable and some of them are not. When you do these VMS point analyses and say that only 4 percent are being impacted by this change; that does not equate to a dollar value of what that impact is. We've made that point before.

MR. DOCKERY: I'm a little out of line speaking on this, but I'm not sure I'm hearing the direct answer to the direct question, which sounds to me like they're asking are you going to trust that data? In other words, it is in a handwritten format; is it something that you will give honest weight to? I'm not sure I've heard it answered directly to that.

MR. COLLIER: In my mind that is going to be the best information we have. It would be hard to contradict it. I think it is going to be valuable pieces of information.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Okay, I think what I'm going to probably do is try to put together a written response to the questions that came up in the Habitat and Environmental Protection Committee in December of last year, because there was a lot of – I wasn't able to be at that meeting, and so there was nobody to answer those questions. I'll try to respond to that and address each of those separately.

In the Golden Crab Committee meeting in March of this year, this council meeting in March, the Golden Crab AP is asking for expansion of their fisheries' access areas in the Stetson/Miami Terrace. That is when the comment was made by Jessica McCawley that if we were going to look at this for the Golden Crab Committee, then we need to be looking at it for the rock shrimp

fishery as well. I thought that was bold and very supportive of the rock shrimp fishery. If it puts the golden crab guys in the same boat as us, I kind of feel sorry for them. Did everybody get a chance to take a look at that and did anybody have any comments on that? That is really about all I have on those minutes from those meetings.

MR. WILSON: I just wanted to make one comment. With these fishermen providing this information, data is kind of hard to come by from fishermen because it is how they make their living. It is like asking them how much money they've got in the bank or where you catch the most fish so I can go there and somebody else can find out and go there. I just wanted to comment that data from fishermen is very precious to them and that it is handled properly.

MR. COLLIER: Yes; and we definitely respect the data that the fishermen will be giving us, but it also goes to the point of if data is not given to the scientists, we had to assume that all these points were equal, because that is the only information we had. Better data at least in most people's view works out better for the fishermen.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I will definitely be – and I will not have names, I will respect the confidentiality to a certain degree of the captains that provide the data. The last thing I wanted to bring up was if you read the Habitat and Environmental Protection Committee minutes from December of last year; there was a presentation by Dr. Sedberry regarding a Sanctuary nomination on the east coast from Jacksonville basically down to Fort Pierce. I believe it went about 200 miles to the north, and I can't remember how far it was off of Fort Pierce.

MS. THOMAS: Ninety.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Ninety, okay, thank you. That nomination was rejected, but it was pretty clear in that meeting that George had said that they were probably going to resubmit that. I don't know if that has been resubmitted yet to this point or not. He made it pretty clear that it looked like they were going to resubmit that.

We had a meeting in St. Augustine with Friends of Matanzas, and there was a lot of people at that meeting, a lot of fishermen, hoteliers, restaurateurs, a lot of businesses along the coast that came to that meeting that were very concerned about this process, number one, because I think it took everybody by surprise, and so we didn't understand the process for nominating sanctuaries, and how it had gotten to the point where it was being evaluated when nobody even knew it was submitted as a nomination, number one; and, number two, that it had been considered.

Basically everybody was saying that they were very concerned about the impact on local businesses, because there are just a lot of misunderstandings about what it means and what the impact would be. I don't know if you have anything further to say on that.

MR. COLLIER: The council had asked staff, just because it came up pretty quickly to them as well, to try to get involved with this process in an earlier form and try to keep up with if new nominations are coming on board we want to get ahead of the game. If we feel like it is going to be impacting fisheries, we want to know and be able to provide comments, give it to the APs and to the council members to get as much information on these areas that we can potentially get.

MR. WILSON: Well, my comment is I'm just going to base it on my understanding, because I'm not well educated in it; but if you set up a marine sanctuary, that pretty much is the end of the discussion. I don't see how the council could consider it since when Congress mandated in the Magnuson-Stevens Act that there are ten conditions that have to be met and one is economic impact. If you shut down fishing and shrimping, that is a pretty huge economic impact.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I think that is where a lot of the misunderstanding is. I don't think people really know what it means and what the impact could be. I don't think people understand necessarily what – I mean, the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council is in place to manage fisheries in this area, and the Florida FWC is in this area to manage fisheries and now we have a Sanctuary. Well, how do these interact and who trumps who, who has power over who? How does that work? I think there was some discussion about that; but I'm not sure that is still really very well understood.

MR. COLLIER: Grays Reef is another National Marine Sanctuary that occurs in the South Atlantic; and for the most part they give jurisdiction of managing fisheries to the South Atlantic Council. They do have a closed area within that as a kind of research area, but for the most part they allow fishing in Grays Reef National Marine Sanctuary. They just don't allow certain activities like anchoring and shrimping is probably another example that they don't allow in that area.

MR. THOMPSON: I read Dr. Sedberry's presentation in the Habitat Committee minutes, but I was also present at a presentation that Dr. Sedberry gave at the St. Augustine Lighthouse, and it was a presentation that was done to the fishing community. I was confused because in the Habitat Committee meeting minutes, Dr. Sedberry said that MSA trumps the National Marine Sanctuary and that the councils would have the final say so.

But unless I heard him wrong, that is not what he said in the meeting in St. Augustine. He wasn't really happy about doing so, but he did admit that the Secretary of Commerce has the final say-so over the National Marine Sanctuaries and would trump the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Fishery Management Councils. I am confused between those two statements. I am going to listen now for a while and see what other people say.

MR. COLLIER: The Secretary of Commerce is actually in charge of both sides. It would actually end up being a decision of the secretary on who would win that one. I am not positive. It might be dependent on the information that goes in and it might be a case-by-case basis which one would win out.

MS. THOMPSON: It also concerns me, too, because I saw what happened in the Gulf with like the Flower Garden National Marine Sanctuary when it was first put in place. I was longlining out there and you could fish on it. Now you can't. There is nothing in place. They can say at the beginning we're going to let fishing take place, but there is no guarantee that further down the road fishing will still be allowed to continue.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I think it is those unknowns that have got everybody kind of in a panic about it. There was an overwhelming objection to it at that meeting at Friends of Matanzas, but I just think there is a lot of misunderstanding about what it is. I think what overrides all is what are the objectives of the sanctuary; and those are really what will override everything.

The particular one that they gave was the right whale, turtles, and habitat issues with like Matanzas and Indian River Lagoon and things like that. Obviously, the first concern goes to what is going to be eliminated and how could you possibly ever guarantee anybody that anything is going to stay open or stay in place when things change and if the priorities of the sanctuary are not being met, what will be done to meet those priorities?

MR. WAUGH: The way it has worked thus far when we've participated in these sanctuary issues is the councils have done the fishery management side of it. I will follow up with our NOAA GC and just confirm that is still the case, as well as I'll follow up with George Sedberry and get clarification on what he said at both places and get back to you all.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I know the example that was in the minutes said that I guess there was a regulation that the sanctuary wanted to put into place down in the Keys, one of the sanctuaries down there, so they went to – I guess that would have been in the state and asked that regulation be put in place, and they did so. There was cooperation there, but I would wonder what would have happened if the state would have come back and said, no, we don't want to implement that regulation.

MR. WILSON: I'm looking at their minutes and they seem to have a concern about the oil and gas industry, but he said here under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act it is prohibited to drill into the bottom, dredge, or otherwise alter the seabed. That is one of their objectives.

MR. MERRIFIELD: The answer to that was that each sanctuary is set up differently and has different objectives and different rules. But, anyway, the Florida Fish and Wildlife in Florida did come out with a letter. Nick Wiley came out with a letter that stated that they do not support it and that they were very concerned about the process, because it was more of an exclusive process than an inclusive process where it brought people into the decision-making and evaluation process.

That letter went to Senators Rubio and Nelson and I know Congressmen Crenshaw, for sure. I'm not sure who else that went to. I think a copy of that letter went to Dr. Basta at the Marine Sanctuaries. If anybody is interested in a copy of that letter, I have that. If you would like a copy, just let me know. I don't know would it make sense if we made a statement here whether we support it or not support it? Probably at this point there is not enough information available. There has not been a second nomination at this point. Any thoughts on that?

MS. THOMAS: When all this came up, it was a friend of mine that used to be in the St. Johns River Riverkeeper, but now he is in the Matanzas Riverkeeper, and he sent me an e-mail telling me they were having a meeting, but they thought they had fishing taken care of. That is when I sent it to Bob; and that is when he sent it to Gerald Peck, and that is when we had about 50 commercial fishermen, really interested people at a meeting within a matter of days.

I am reading here in these minutes. Well, anyway, at first it was to protect the whales. At second it was to protect the turtle, and then they said and to stop the seismic testing of oil drilling. Well, anyhow, there are a lot of the Chambers that are opposed to it. The city of St. Augustine supports it, but the County Commissioners in St. Augustine did not give an approval of it.

I see here where it says Dr. Sedberry said right now there isn't a public comment kind of process, and this would happen. If the sanctuary has been found to be sufficient to move forward by NOAA, then there would be public scoping to look at the actual boundaries, get input on how the objectives should be refined.

That would come later after NOAA say, yes, this is a good idea, and we're going to move this nomination forward; but we hadn't been notified or considered. I am very much so opposed and whatever I have to do to tell everybody on the South Atlantic Council all the way up to whomever, let's go for it. I'm sick of them.

MS. SOLORZANO: Who would we be sending this letter to because there has nothing happened yet; you know what I'm saying? Who are we going to address a letter to because – it is just the Friends of Matanzas, and they certainly aren't going to accept our letter of opposition. At this point I don't know where we would send anything to because NOAA is not in favor of it, FWC is not in favor of it. It doesn't look like a lot of people are in favor of it, so this is where we're sending a letter?

MR. MERRIFIELD: I don't know that NOAA has come back – is it South Atlantic? There is no position on that?

MR. COLLIER: The South Atlantic didn't really have an opportunity to comment on it either, because it didn't meet the first stage. It didn't get beyond that. The comment would come after it gets approved by NOAA to go forward. At that point, that is when the public scoping is open and we would provide comments then.

But if you guys want to give some direction on what you guys feel about the potential for a National Marine Sanctuary in that general area or if there are any stipulations you would like to see on a Marine Sanctuary, things like that; that could be of interest to the council.

MS. SOLORZANO: Hell, no.

MS. JONES: I was also at the meeting; and we just have to stay on top of it, because if she does get – I heard woman that was the writer on this, she resigned from the organization. But if they manage to get backing from enough varied backgrounds and they propose it, we won't hear about it until after it is accepted, which was one of the main concerns at that meeting that we were at was we didn't hear about it until it was declined. What if it would have passed? We would have had no say-so until it was already a done deal.

MR. MERRIFIELD: According to the minutes from Dr. Sedberry, I guess that is when it would go out to public comment and that would be the opportunity.

MS. SOLORZANO: What we're all asking is how to stop something that hasn't started.

MS. THOMPSON: In looking at all of the things that they're interested in protecting, nowhere does it say commercial fishing, nowhere. They are interested in offshore springs, the Indian River Lagoon, whales, dolphins, fish habitat. They are interested in providing additional protection for the kind of coastal lifestyle of the area to support recreational fishing, outdoor water sports, and maintaining the culture of a coastal area that has been in place for a long time.

Unless we somehow fit into the culture of the coastal area, they don't even mention commercial fishing. I have a problem with that. We were the first industry in the area if you look at shrimping in Fernandina.

MR. WILSON: Well, they didn't say fishing, but you cannot alter the seabed. It is not allowed so that puts out shrimping right there.

MS. JONES: They swore up and down they didn't want to stop fishing, because it was a local historical thing that shrimping had started in this area, but they wanted to protect any shipwrecks, previous historical shipwrecks. Well, we know where they all are, but they don't. But the other thing totally different was the oil rigs; nothing is to stop oil rigs or seismic right outside the boundaries of the sanctuary, which they didn't even think about that because 200 miles out, 200 miles and a half, they could do it, and it is still the same thing.

MR. MERRIFIELD: If we are going to make a statement, I guess what we would say was that the right whale, first of all, is being protected and new measures are being looked at continuously to better protect them. I think there are new amendments going in currently that they are talking about the black sea bass pots and different habitat for the right whale.

Oculina is one of their other concerns. We've just doubled the size of the Oculina HAPC in length. The seismic testing; I don't know if there is anything that we can do about that. But I think with the management measures that are in place; I guess our position would be that we don't believe there is any need for any kind of a sanctuary in this area given that those things that they are addressing with this nomination are already being addressed by management measures, either state or federal, in this area.

MS. SOLORZANO: Why don't we have council draw up something that says outside of state waters all the way out to the already-closed area remains open to trawling, because it is a historical fishing ground and cannot be closed due to any oil rigs or sanctuaries. You are laughing, it is true, why can't we do that? Why don't we do that? They've got to agree – it is already in there that you can't close us up because we got to you first. That makes sense to me. Everybody is laughing, but it makes sense to me.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Marilyn went to a shrimping sanctuary.

MS. SOLORZANO: Right, there you go, why not? If they want one closed for theirs, why can't we have it left open for our historical trawling grounds? It has been there since Florida was there, so why can't we continue to utilize the resource?

MR. WILSON: I just have a question; were you at this meeting, Chip? They asked the question about the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and how does that work? Has anybody found out how that is working properly or how it is working right now?

MR. COLLIER: We haven't looked into that.

MR. WAUGH: Yes, the Keys Sanctuary, we went back and forth with them, and we developed a working protocol with them. We've worked closely with them and developed the fishing

regulations and commented on those together when they went forward as a rule. That may be a model that can be called on should this happen again in the future.

MS. SOLORZANO: In that Sanctuary in the Keys, what can you do in it besides stop, nothing, right?

MR. WILSON: No fishing.

MR. WAUGH: Well, you have to separate federal waters from state waters. The council doesn't have any authority in state waters, and there is a whole host – this was discussed at our Snapper Grouper AP earlier this week. There are lots of different regulations and lots of different areas where you can do – well, not do lots of different things.

It is very complex, and that is part of the concern that was raised during our AP meeting. There are some small areas where there is no take allowed. There are some larger areas where certain types of gear are prohibited, but there are areas within some of those areas that you can still trap for lobsters and other things, so it just varies across the board.

MS. SOLORZANO: Okay, but I am still serious about the amendment to allow historical fishing ground trawling to stay open. I don't know why we can't have that for shrimping. Richard is over here going, this is not God, but if we've got to do it – that is the only way you get anything is to ask for it. I've been told no a lot.

MR. WAUGH: Those of you that have been on here for a while will remember the pitch that we made to the rock shrimp committee many years ago. It was in recognition of the increasing scrutiny that is coming to any types of gear that impact the bottom. We suggested let's work together and define what your historical area is and create rock shrimp allowable trawling areas and then you guys defend that with your life.

That is the same advice we gave to the golden crab industry. They took advantage of that and that is how they ended up with their allowable golden crab trapping areas. The rock shrimp industry at that time wasn't willing to limit themselves to what was their historical area. They still wanted the ability to go out and hunt and fish in other areas.

I understand your desire to do that and that has been part of the tradition, but in this day and age that is going to be more and more difficult for you to defend that type of practice. What the council did with the golden crab industry is say, okay, we recognize to what extent there was interaction with the bottom; that you all have fished these areas so that interaction has occurred, that damage has occurred; and let's, quote-unquote, write off that habitat in there, because we value the golden crab fishery and we want to see that continue, so that is the tradeoff the council made there.

We wanted to do that same thing, and I think we could still do that same thing for rock shrimp. I still feel it would be in your best interest long term to look at doing something like that. The concern outside of the industry over interaction with your gear and the bottom is only going to increase.

MS. SOLORZANO: Well, that is what we're asking you for is to take three miles out all the way to the Bank and leave it all open for shrimping and rock shrimping and not take away any more bottom. When we did that meeting, we ended up going to limited entry, VMS. I think the rock shrimp people gave quite a bit in exchange for that. We had already been traditionally trawling in the area so as you said the damage was done.

Now we see the golden crab people having to come back and ask so that they can explore for more allowable trawl areas, for areas that were closed back then. There was some give and take in both directions back then; but now we need to hold on to everything we still have left, and the only way to do that is to put something in action that says it is historical trawl area; and regardless of what marine sanctuary, whoever comes in, that we're still allowed to continue doing the historical trawling that we've been doing on it for hundreds of years.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Gregg, I don't think the issue is about exploring and looking for new areas, because I don't think there is anybody looking for new areas. I think it is all traditional stuff. The issues becomes when you do these VMS analysis and you talk about 4 percent impact here and maybe 20 percent impact here, well, yes, we're going to give you 20 percent impact but we're going to take away the 4 percent. It becomes an issue of it is not always the same every year.

Yes. if you want to look at cumulative traditional trawl, I'm hearing there is some room to do something like that. But if you look at it and then you want to put a baseline that says, well, anything less than this amount of productivity in that area and we want to eliminate it; I think that is where the issue comes in not in the terms of exploring, because I don't think that happens.

MR. WAUGH: I would encourage you all – it sounds like you're interested in pursuing this. It is certainly nothing I think that you can draw lines on a chart today; but when you all go home, get together and put your proposal together and send that to the council with a request that you would like the council to amend the shrimp plan to create these rock shrimp allowable areas.

Recognize going in there is going to be some evaluation and some give and take on both sides to end up with what we end up in the end just like we did with the golden crab guys. They asked for more area than they got. I would encourage you all to do that. That is something the council would welcome. That is fully consistent with what Jessica said at the last meeting. That would be evaluated by the council. I would strongly urge you all to do that.

MS. SOLORZANO: We're asking for rock shrimping and shrimping, all trawling from all state-governed water out to what is currently closed to remain open. I would like to make a motion that we draw something up as a group – I don't know how I go about doing that – that says it stays open, that there are not more closures, because we've been trawling the areas we've been trawling anyway; that regardless of these sanctuaries, it stays open because it is historical trawl grounds.

MR. WILSON: I would second the motion.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I think we need to explore that further; but I think what you are saying and what Gregg is saying are two different things. I think that you want an all-inclusive area; that even though from three miles out to wherever there a lot of areas that is not trawled. I think what

Gregg is saying is they want to box in the areas that you do trawl. The other areas that you don't trawl, they want to be understood that those are areas that are off limits. I don't know how you would regulate or enforce something to that effect, because you still have to have transit and all these issues about transiting and all those things. I think it is pretty complex to merge those two ideas that you guys have there.

MS. SOLORZANO: I don't think it is complex. I think that it all stays open, because we're not going to drag across the rock piles and the reefs, but we need to transit from A to B to C to D to E to F to get to where we're going. Anybody who knows anything about shrimping and trawling knows we're not just going to just drag through everything.

We wouldn't have any equipment left. It is Florida's east coast, and it doesn't work like that or Georgia's east coast or South Carolina's east coast. These areas need to be left open to trawl. I'm not saying open for everything and everybody to do anything they want to do on, but it specifically says for shrimping in these areas.

The shrimpers are not going to be trawling where they don't trawl, and you can't draw out 950 little trawl boxes because that wouldn't work either. We have to have it all left open, transit through, trawl through, do as needed to run the fishery. We don't have that many boats over there fishing, but those boats that do fish it produce a lot of shrimp. A lot of the domestic shrimp for the South Atlantic are produced in the very areas where this sanctuary plans to go in. That is a lot of the South Atlantic's white shrimp.

MR. WAUGH: I don't think we're talking about anything different. You all are astute business people. You are talking about entering in a negotiation. You all put together a request for what you think your industry needs to have as your trawling access areas. I would encourage you to do it separately for rock shrimp and other shrimp.

We've got two APs; their habitats are slightly different. I think it would just be cleaner long term, recognizing there is probably going to be some overlap, but do that separately. You all meet on your own, put together a written request, and send it to the council. We will definitely move on that.

MS. SOLORZANO: There will be some overlapping of areas, because off the Cape sometimes rock shrimp are way inshore and there are times where we've caught white shrimp, brown shrimp, and hoppers offshore. There definitely would be overlapping of the two species of shrimp. There would have to be two areas drawn out; but it is going to encompass from three miles all the way out to the Oculina Banks.

MR. WAUGH: Ask for whatever you want.

MR. DOCKERY: I will chime in one thing on it, which if you look at what happened with golden crab, they did give up stuff to get what they got. It seems unlikely that you would get or we would get everything that we want just by saying we want it all to preserve it forever.

MS. SOLORZANO: Okay, but it is historical trawl bottom.

MR. WILSON: There is one thing that always stuck in my craw from way back when the security issue came up. They asked us for security to expand the HAPC one mile around would help increase security; so we gave into that for some reason and it was some kind of deal that was made. I don't know why, I don't remember all the details of it. But I always remember that one mile, and I kept saying why don't we take that mile back?

MR. MERRIFIELD: I don't know where to go with this at this point. I think this is something we're going to have to explore a little bit more. What I can do is do an e-mail campaign and see what kind of consensus there is in developing that. Maybe it would be better off, if you really think that is something you want to pursue, is that we start with a fishery like rock shrimp fishery and start there and see what that does. The white shrimp fishery is a lot more encompassing. I don't know. Any other comments?

MS. THOMAS: I'm here representing the Shrimp Producers Association, but I am also the Vice-Chair of the Shrimp Advisory Panel. Nancy is here, she is a member of our organization, and quite a few of you are members of the organization. I think that the Chair of the Shrimp AP and the Chair of the Deepwater AP should adopt right now what we're here to do is to represent our industry and give it to Mr. Gregg over here and have him take it to this full council that we're opposed to all this and to protect our rights to continue our livelihood.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Are you talking about which thing?

MS. THOMAS: To stop anything they can do.

MR. MERRIFIELD: You're talking about the sanctuary.

MS. THOMAS: The sanctuary, absolutely. All the people in our area, they are going to start shrimping now, they are going to be busy. You won't ever get each one of them to write a letter. I can write all the letters in the world, but it is not going to be like, hey, I was here at this meeting, I represented the Shrimpers AP and Deepwater, I mean deepwater and regular shrimp, and we're asking them to do it for us. Thank you; that is all.

MR. DOCKERY: Just a short clarification; are you talking about a response to the sanctuary request or are you talking about Marilyn's request, because to me they are two different things?

MS. THOMAS: I'm sorry; I should have made it clear. I am talking about the Eubalaena, meaning right whales; Oculina, meaning coral; National Marine Fisheries Sanctuary that George Geiger is supporting, but he is not the only one. You should see three typewritten pages of everybody that is supporting this, including the Dr. Quinton White at Jacksonville University and all these other people that have DR behind their name. I only have shrimp-ologist behind my name, but all the other people that are on this thing, we don't have a chance. This is a time that it has got to be stopped is right now. Thank you.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Okay, so Chip is writing up a motion and Janie is making a motion that says the Shrimp and Deepwater Shrimp APs are against any marine sanctuary off the east coast of Florida. I don't think they want to put that there, Chip. That is what you're saying, period? We have a motion from Janie that says the Shrimp and Deepwater Shrimp APs are against any marine sanctuary off east coast of Florida. Is that specific enough or do we need to identify that

we don't support the Eubalaena Oculina Sanctuary nomination, and we don't even know what the current nomination is because it has been modified, correct?

MR. DOCKERY: I would just like to comment on the saying we're opposed to any marine sanctuary. If we take a stance we can't win, I think we're wasting our time. I think there will be marine sanctuaries. I think that either we're opposed to a specific marine sanctuary or we're opposed to any marine sanctuary that would impede what we represent, which is any kind of trawling.

MR. BROWN: Well, as a South Atlantic Council member, I do support the shrimping industry and their opinion on this. I don't agree with the marine sanctuary either.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Janie, the only problem I have is that the nomination was rejected and there is not a current nomination. Even though it is pending according to George Sedberry, there is not a nomination in place. I don't think we can do a blanket statement that says we're against marine sanctuaries off the east coast of Florida.

MS. THOMAS: We can't name this one out?

MR. MERRIFIELD: We can name out this particular sanctuary, but that nomination has been rejected. Maybe their next nomination is something that will not impact us whatsoever. I don't know how to address that particular –

MS. THOMPSON: Why don't you change it to the Shrimp and Deepwater Shrimp APs do not support any future attempts to establish the Eubalaena Oculina National Marine Sanctuary off the east coast of Florida.

MS. JONES: We are the Shrimp AP; and like that gentleman was saying, we should say that we are not in support of any future attempts at a marine sanctuary off the east coast of Florida that prohibits trawling in traditional areas. We're trawlers; that is what we're trying to protect.

MR. MERRIFIELD: That one didn't prohibit; that nomination did not prohibit trawling.

MS. JONES: But like I said, we're trawlers; that is what we do. That is what we're protesting.

MR. DOCKERY: It did prohibit trawling, according to Steve, in that he said it prohibited any kind of tampering with the bottom, which could be defined as trawling. I would also like to say that it sounds like really the biggest problem is the whole process; that we ought to have a motion asking that the process be forced to come through either the APs or at least the council before it becomes official and open to public comment. I think that is the biggest problem is that we're afraid that it will be 90 percent done before we're even allowed to comment on it. I don't know if there is a way to make a motion to change that process.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I think that stems from everybody's fear that – just because something gets nominated doesn't mean that it is going to take place; but everybody's fear is that once it gets nominated, it has got a toe hold and then you know you're going to get something. I think that is the fear that everybody has.

MS. THOMPSON: That is; and that is why I would be opposed right now to put language in it that says specifically that would prohibit trawling, because they can put that language in and then put the national marine sanctuary there, and then three years down the road go, oh, we decided we don't want trawling.

They will have kept their word; they established it; they had trawling. But once the national marine sanctuary is established, it is easier then for the Sanctuary Advisory Committees and all these other entities that are in place that are making the rules and regulations to go through a process to change what is happening in the national marine sanctuary.

I think that we would be making a mistake to put any kind of – you don't want it to start in the first place, so I think by saying we don't want a national marine sanctuary that doesn't allow trawling, you're kind of giving them the okay to put in the national marine sanctuary and then change the rules down the road. You don't want it to get started in the first place. There are enough regulations out there I think to take care of all of the issues that have been raised by the Friends of Matanzas.

MR. WILSON: I would like to second Motion 1 as it is.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Okay, so need to take a vote? **Okay, the motion by Janie Thomas is that the Shrimp and Deepwater Shrimp APs do not support any future attempts that creates the Eubalaena Oculina Sanctuary off the east coast of Florida.** We have a second by Steve. Is that how we want the motion?

MS. SOLORZANO: Can I ask a question? They have it drawn on here that it is supposed to start from the Georgia/Florida line. What if they take it further north? Should we say South Atlantic coast or is it okay to just leave it at Florida?

MR. MERRIFIELD: Well, we're addressing a nomination that doesn't even exist. If this comes back up, we're going to have to readdress it again. If it becomes a real nomination, I think that what you're saying is correct. There might be a second motion here that says that we might have a problem with the process itself, which is what the state of Florida said; that it needs to be more of an inclusive process.

Maybe it needs to have some input before the nomination can even be accepted as a nomination. I don't know that we know the process that well, because according to George Sedberry it just gets nominated, they vet it; and then when it is a nomination; that is when everybody gets the opportunity to give their two cents about it. But there is such heightened reluctance, because we feel like it is not necessary. Fred.

MR. DOCKERY: Mike, I think we are just spinning our wheels here. Let's just vote on it and we have a council member here who hears our concerns. We are putting it out there we are just saying that we don't think there should be any more sanctuaries. They are not going to be able to do anything with it, but they have our concern. If this issue comes back up again, they will bring it back to us. I think we should just call the motion.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I read this motion and it has got a second by Steve. Now we vote. **All those in favor raise your hand; any objections? One abstention. The motion passes. Eight,**

one abstention. Okay, are we good with that or do we want to go any further with that at this point?

MS. THOMAS: I don't know how to say it or state it other than what I said a while ago; that this be emphasized to the full council to look out for our rights, because they are closer to Washington than you and me. You know, to this Batiste right here, because I'm sure that all those people at St. Augustine are sending letters now supporting it, because there has been so much publicity on it. I know that we don't meet that often. The council will be meeting again in June. The sooner we kill, this the better off we're going to be for everyone.

MR. CONKLIN: Chris Conklin, South Atlantic Council. Mrs. Thomas, I just want to let you know we hear your concerns. There are two of us here and we will definitely be taking that back to the meeting in June. We hear what you're saying. On another note to Marilyn's ideas about the handwritten logbook and stuff like that and the information that Chip said could be validated and much more useful than what we are currently using; I strongly urge you guys to get the ball rolling on that as soon as you can so we can have that information. The sooner the better.

MS. SOLORZANO: On that; I am not sure that it will be ready by June meeting if that is what they are shooting for, because all the guys are getting ready to go out for their beginning trip like tomorrow, and they are going to be kicking into gear; so to get them to all sit down, pull out their records, get it all written up and submitted by June is going to be really cracking the whip, because we only have, what, six weeks, five weeks, six, seven weeks before then? Not long.

MR. MERRIFIELD: I think what I'll do is I will get with you and we'll get a format that we think that will be easy for them to plug in numbers and information into. Hopefully this is something they can do while they're out there and they can send that data back to us. If at all possible, it would be great to have it for June.

We have some data to present in June, but that level of detail would be good. Is there any other business that anybody has to bring to the table? In other business Frank wanted to talk about the TED Enforcement Meeting that took place in Biloxi, Mississippi.

MR. HELIES: I'll be real quick here. This is an idea that we've been kicking around for a number of years now. We finally got funding through the Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program to host this workshop. As you all know, there are issues with inconsistencies in TED enforcement amongst the states and NOAA and the Coast Guard.

We tried to put together a workshop to get everybody basically in the same room, and we can try to work out some of those issues the best we can. We held the workshop in Biloxi in March. We had representatives from industry, state enforcement, NOAA OLE, NOAA Fisheries Protected Resources, Coast Guard, and who am I missing? I know I'm missing someone.

Basically, all the stakeholders involved in the TED issue participated – Gear Management Team. The purpose of the workshop was to try to get these issues out on the table and have industry, because many times industry is left out of these things, have their opinions and their concerns brought out to the folks who are doing the enforcing. We had some presentations given by the states.

Unfortunately, we reached out to all the states from the Gulf and the South Atlantic, and North Carolina, Georgia, and South Carolina were unable to send any state representatives. Their budgets were tight, but we did reach out to them to participate. Florida did send someone who gave a presentation.

It was a two-day workshop and we had very positive feedback. Mike was there, John was there, you guys may want to say something about the workshop that you thought was important. Ms. Janie was there, yes. I've just worked up the workshop report, and I made some copies and they are on the back table.

If there aren't enough copies there, just shoot me an e-mail and I will get it to you. I didn't know how many people were going to come to the meeting today, so I only made a few copies. All in all it was very good, I think. We did accomplish some of the goals of the workshop. I think if we can get some consistency in the enforcement that is just going to do wonders for our compliance rates.

From the presentation we heard earlier today; that is really our number one issue in the shrimp fishery right now is making sure our gear is up to standards so we keep that 88 percent compliance rate. I think that basically covers it. I am trying to get funding for a follow up, and I will keep everybody posted on that. But it took me three years to get the funding to hold this one, so I can't promise anything.

MR. MERRIFIELD: That was an excellent meeting, by the way. I thought that there was a lot of information shared there. I think what is interesting is, and I've experienced this at our own dock, too, is that when OLE comes down and trains officers on our boats, the officers have said, well, why are they letting us use their boats to do this kind of stuff?

The OLE guy says that we're on the same side. We're about trying to get compliance and whatever we can do to educate ourselves to be measuring it correctly and whatever we can do to tell them if they are out of compliance, the better off we're all going to be as a result of it. I thought the cooperation level was great and you heard that in the meeting as well.

There were a couple instances where boats have problems out on the water sometimes with an officer that is a little rough. Most of the state agencies said you need to raise that issue up, just let people know; don't take it onto your own to address it at that point in time; you are not the person in control there. But they did say raise it up and they'll address it. But there weren't very many incidences of that that were discussed. I thought that the cooperation and the sharing of information was great. John, did you have any comment on that meeting?

MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, I certainly mirror everything that Frank and you say, Mike. It was probably one of the better meetings I've ever been to. I like the way it was formatted. That was different for us, but I think it was great presentations, great cooperation and the participation I know from North Carolina through Texas was amazing. I certainly look forward to the next one.

A lot of good information came out of it and a lot of good ideas on how we can move forward with compliance and consistency in the boarding. That seemed to be the theme of the meeting overall, but I am glad that it got out because we've been preaching that for quite a while now that there is just no consistency in this boarding from the different joint enforcement agreement

agents. I think that has been addressed; and hopefully through the training with the Coast Guard and others, that we will see more consistency. You will see our compliance stay at a good rate.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Again, I want to just encourage everybody to use the GMT, the Gear Management Team, because they are great guys, they really know their stuff. They are there to help you and get you in compliance and make sure that we don't have compliance issues.

MS. THOMAS: One of the main things I took out of it was on Page 7 next to the interest in pursuing responsibility: Multiple boat owners shared scenarios which TEDs on their vessel are 100 percent compliant while docked but were later modified or otherwise made noncompliant due to certain captains and crew actions.

In other words, the boats will be in compliance when they were at the dock; but once they went offshore for about 30 days, they might not have been in compliance with everything. It is a challenge of how to make sure they stayed in compliance. You remember that; if you want to elaborate a little more on it.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Yes, it is working gear, so it is important to check it periodically, and that is what the Gear Management Team is good for. You just schedule a time with them to come to the dock and they will check gear. I think that is why the training of the officers is so important and we allow them to come down to our docks and use whatever boat is there to do all the TED training they need, because it is important that they're all consistently trained and all doing the measuring in the same way, because it can be a very subjective process.

MS. THOMAS: That's not my point. The point was that who is going to be responsible if they are not in compliance? Was it going to be the captain or was it going to be Marilyn, the boat owner?

MR. MERRIFIELD: You're right; that was a good point that was made, too. As it stands right now, the boat owner is the responsible party even though they may not be on the boat. There was talk about –

MR. HELIES: I guess we decided on shared culpability as the word of the day for that. As Janie said, a lot of fleet owners rely on their captains to be up to speed on it and some are lacking. When the boat gets ticketed for a bad TED, the owner has to pay the fine and nothing happens to the captain or crew.

That was discussed as something to potentially look into in the future. Obviously, that would come from the enforcement side, whether or not they could change the penalties around. But that was just one of many of the good discussion items that we had. They are outlined and summarized in that report on the back desk there.

Another item about the Gear Monitoring Team; speaking from the Foundation we have Gary Graham in the Gulf and Captain Parker in the South Atlantic. We are more than happy to do courtesy inspections for anyone who asks. We have money to do that so just give us a shout. If you have issues even if before your season starts and you want to just make sure everything is up and just double-check it; we can send them down to the dock and help you guys with that.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Okay, anything else?

MS. THOMAS: I've got an announcement to make. I had an e-mail from our Coast Guard Safety Officer, Robert Butts at Mayport, and he said for me to remind – and I'm telling everybody else, too – to remind all boat owners to have those boats inspected, have the inspection stickers on there, because October the 14th it becomes compulsory. Thank you.

MR. MERRIFIELD: Okay, anything else? I think we've come to the end of our meeting. This meeting is adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 2:45 o'clock p.m., April 16, 2015.)

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

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May 2015

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✓ Julia Byrd - julia.byrd@safmc.net

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Mike Collins
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Financial Secretary

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Admin. Secretary /Travel Coordinator

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✓ **Purchasing & Grants**

Julie O'Dell
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SENSEFER LEE

JT SHRIMP + DW SHRIMP AP 4/16/15 N. CHAS SC

Last Name	First Name	Email Address	Time In Session	City	State/Province	
Laney	Wilson	wilson_laney@fws.gov	5 hours 43 minutes	Raleigh	North Carolina	
Lee	Jennifer	Jennifer.Lee@noaa.gov	5 hours 42 minutes	Saint Petersburg	Florida	federal fisheries biologist SERO
MaHOOD	BOB	robert.mahood@samc.net	4 hours 58 minutes	North Charleston	South Carolina	Bandit reel fish for pink shrimp
MacLauchlin	Karl	karl.maclauchlin@safmc.net	2 hours 41 minutes	North Charleston	South Carolina	staff
Gore	Karla	karla.gore@noaa.gov		Sarasota	Florida	
Mehta	Nikhil	nikhil.mehta@noaa.gov		St. Petersburg	Florida	
c	m	mec181@yahoo.com		mtp	South Carolina	admin
crabtree	roy	roy.crabtree@noaa.gov		st pete	Florida	other