

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

MACKEREL COMMITTEE

**Savannah Hilton DeSoto Hotel
Savannah, Georgia**

MARCH 6, 2012

SUMMARY MINUTES

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Jack Holmes
Bob Gill
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Dr. Jack McGovern
Monica Smit-Brunello

Martha Bademan
Dr. Marcel Reichart
Don Hesselman
Andy Strelcheck
Lt. Brandon Fisher
Phil Steele
Dr. Bonnie Ponwith

Other observers listed in the back of the document

TUESDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Mackerel Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened in the Madison Ballroom of the Savannah Hilton DeSoto Hotel, Savannah, Georgia, Tuesday morning, March 6, 2012, and was called to order at 11:20 o'clock a.m. by Chairman Ben Hartig.

MR. HARTIG: All right, we'll convene the Mackerel Meeting here this morning. The first order of business is approval of the agenda. Are there any changes to the current agenda? Seeing none, is there any opposition to approving the agenda as stated? Seeing none, the agenda is approved.

The next order of business is to approve the December 2011 minutes. Are there any changes to the minutes? Are there any objections to approving the minutes? Seeing none, the minutes are approved. All right, that brings us to number them, status of commercial and recreational catches versus quotas for king and Spanish mackerel, and that I think we'll go to Jack McGovern.

DR. McGOVERN: The landings information for king and Spanish mackerel from the quota monitoring system are in Attachment 1, Tab 13, and then Mike just sent out this e-mail to everybody that shows the landings information on the screen. That compares the landings from 2011 and 2012, this fishing year and the previous years.

Based on information from the Science Center, as of January about 52 percent of the king mackerel quota had been met, and you can see that landings are a good bit lower than they have been in previous years for king mackerel. For Spanish mackerel, which is down below that, Steve Turner said on the call yesterday that we're pretty close to meeting the quota for Spanish. Our website shows that as of January about 92 percent of the quota has been met, and the trip limit was triggered going to 1,500 pounds on January 27th of this year. That's it for those.

MR. HARTIG: Are there any questions for Jack? I had one, Jack. There have been some talk – I guess Rusty had called about the mackerel quotas and there was some trouble with the coding of some of the mackerel; is that true? Do you know anything about that?

DR. McGOVERN: No, that might be a question for Bonnie.

MR. HARTIG: Bonnie is looking at me like, no, there isn't a coding problem.

DR. PONWITH: Actually, no, I haven't heard anything about it, so I'd have to check with staff because I haven't been made aware of that.

MR. HARTIG: Any other questions of Jack? Go ahead, Doug.

MR. HAYMANS: Just to verify, Jack, that is cumulative total and not monthly totals?

DR. McGOVERN: That is correct; that is the cumulative total.

MR. HARTIG: Any other questions? Seeing none, Jack, thank you very much. I guess next we will do the recreational totals. Are you going to do those, Jack, or Bonnie going to do those?

DR. PONWITH: This slide shows the catch history through time up through 2011. We've got the recreational landings above and then the recreational effort in the line below, and I see that we're missing the 2011 effort there, which may be just a function of not having the headboat effort finalized.

Again, you'll notice that's New York to Florida on the east coast. The recreational data for 2011 is still preliminary because I believe the Wave 6 hasn't gone final yet. Here is the same format for the Spanish mackerel; the 2011 recreational landings broken out by the different fishing modes as well as the recreational fishing effort down below. This one does include the 2011 so that just must have been an error in that last one.

MR. HARTIG: Any questions of Bonnie? Go ahead, Gregg.

MR. WAUGH: I guess this is for Bonnie and perhaps Jack as well; cobia now has a recreational and commercial ACL. Do we have any idea where we are with respect to those ACLs?

DR. McGOVERN: We've talked to Dave Glockner in the Science Center and he has indicated that he is aware of it and he is working on getting the quota monitoring information to us.

MR. WAUGH: And then what about the recreational side?

DR. PONWITH: I'll check with staff on that and get back to you.

MR. CURRIN: Jack and/or Bonnie, the folks that I've talked to that mackerel fish, a bunch off of our state, have noticed that they haven't been seeing nearly as many fish and they don't quite know why. I'm just curious as to whether landings have been going up in the Mid-Atlantic area. Are they tracked; how are they accounted for and is it worth our trying to look into that to get landings from Virginia and Maryland and perhaps even further north just to see if there has been kind of range extension or shift in the distribution of those fish? I don't know what good it would do us except perhaps answer some questions.

DR. PONWITH: I think that certainly could be done, to take a look at sort of the sub-regional patterns in landings to see if we're seeing a peculiar trend that corroborates what the people on the water are seeing. I think that is possible.

MR. CURRIN: Mac, to that point, our fishery has been off the last two years and considerably off last year. I was looking forward to see what we saw in the fall fishery in the Carolinas, and it seemed to be relatively strong for that short commercial season in the October/December timeframe. Something is going on with the migratory pattern different than it has been, and we have had off-ocean conditions the last two years. We've had some significantly cold water in the

summertime in Florida, which has impacted our mackerel fisheries the last two seasons; this year more than last.

It also looks like we may be looking for another good year class in that fishery. It could be a combination of both. All those landings are included in our totals for those species for those other states. For mackerels they are included. Any other questions about the recreational landings. Seeing none, we'll move on. Next on the agenda is status of Mackerel Amendment 18/EA from NMFS.

DR. McGOVERN: Mr. Chairman, the final rule for Mackerel 18 published on December 29, 2011 and the regulations became effective on January 30th of 2012.

MR. HARTIG: Any questions for Jack about that? Jack, weren't there some increases in quota there for the wintertime? When will they be implement; do you have any idea?

DR. McGOVERN: The new ACLs are effective with the new fishing year.

MR. HARTIG: Any other questions of Jack? Thanks, Jack, I appreciate that. The next item on the agenda is North Carolina's experience with state-by-state quotas by Don Hesselman.

MR. HESSELMAN: Good morning, everyone. I warned you all yesterday if you were here that this was going to be like a rerun. I've tweaked the presentation a little bit and we'll focus a little less on daily monitoring and a little bit more on state-by-state quotas and those experiences that North Carolina has because of its unique geographical position that we given some state allocations of about four species of fish by the Mid-Atlantic and Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

Again, a little background; we've had a trip ticket program since 1994, both paper and electronic. I mentioned yesterday our resources are more than adequate for what we do. I've got fourteen staff in the trip ticket program that allow us to focus people specifically on quota monitoring and transferring quotas, just managing fisheries in general. The budget is not 800 bucks like I reported yesterday; it's actually \$800,000.

We do get an awful lot from federal sources, including the Cooperative Statistic Program, which is always greatly appreciated. We have assorted other staff, administrative staff as well as somebody like Michelle Duval over there who assists with managing transfers; something that I know she enjoys doing on Saturdays, Sundays, nights, holidays.

This is our universe of dealers here. We believe that all northeast and southeast regional federally permitted dealers have been provided the trip ticket software that we got from Bluefin data. They have been trained. We spend probably about an hour an two installing the software and training them.

We've got about 700 total state-licensed dealers, but there are probably 120 or so that we've installed and trained on the software but actually less than a hundred probably use the software

on any given month. We have 27 northeast regional dealer permits, 45 southeast regional dealer permits, and I've got the question mark there about being fully compliant.

In December of 2010 our dealers received a letter from the National Marine Fisheries Service that beginning January 1st they were going to have to report electronically. I successfully negotiated with David Glockner and Steve Turner to move that back to about March 1st, but we expended considerable efforts in installing the software at those dealers and training those dealers, so I believe we should be fully compliant. Are they reporting every two weeks? I don't know; that's not our responsibility.

We don't have the authority to enforce that. I was a little concerned yesterday when I heard that the compliance is so low, and I think the term "well on our way to electronic reporting" was used yesterday. In North Carolina we feel like we were there. We expended considerable effort to get there and we'll keep working with you to make certain it goes forward.

We've also got a about 40 HMS dealer permits in North Carolina, but I've heard that the eDEALER reporting has been delayed for some time. I'm not certain exactly where we are with that, but we would like to approach that the same way we approached the southeast mandate and that was allow us to assist you with it to do the installations, and training and so forth, and we will ensure that everybody is up to speed just to make your jobs a little bit easier.

We have about 66 total federal dealers considering there is some overlap between those various regional permits. We've also got a state-managed species, striped bass. All in all we monitor about 92 dealers daily during the season and luckily the season for all those fisheries is a winter-type fishery. It's about November through April, so luckily it's constrained within a certain period of time.

It allows us to spend those other six months just validating the data and doing all the other things that we have to do. The quota monitoring program began in 1994, so that gives I guess about 18 years' experience. It has changed over the years from a system whereby we called the dealers and asked them what they caught and now we've put that burden back on the dealers to inform us what they caught or what they purchased.

We enhanced it in 2000 with specific quota monitoring reporting dealer permits; comma, quota monitoring dealer permit. You have to have one if you're going to purchase any of those species beyond a bycatch level. We do have daily reporting, as I mentioned yesterday. We give them the option to do it via phone, fax or e-mail.

The trip ticket software that we got from Bluefin Tuna allows them to push a button and basically print out this daily form that we require from all the dealers. We also have some species-specific permits and licenses. We have a limited entry license to land flounder, and we also implemented a striped bass fisherman's permits a couple of years ago just so we could get a better handle on the number of people in the fishery and amount of effort expended.

In 2004 we further enhanced the quota monitoring program with a trip ticket software that coincided with the National Marine Fisheries Northeast Region Initiative for Electronic

Reporting. As I said, we actively monitor about six quotas right now. These are the quotas that we have, the state allocations, river herring – that’s a funny little four-day season.

There is basically a moratorium on that; but during that four-day season we require the dealers with the river herring permit to report to us daily. Striped bass, we’ve actually got three separate little quotas; an ocean and two inshore ones. Again, that’s daily reporting. Summer flounder, that’s a big quota, three to four million pounds a year; daily reporting. Spiny dogfish, another big quota, three million pounds a year; daily reporting.

Black sea bass, that’s much smaller, it’s actually about 188,000 pounds this year; daily reporting also. That fishery is joined at the hip with the summer flounder fishery. It’s pretty much the same trawl boats that are harvesting both and often bring them in at the same time. And then we’ve got blue fish, which is a big quota. We don’t monitor that daily; we just do that through the normal trip ticket and monthly reporting.

Red drum, 250,000 pounds is actually a cap; not too dissimilar from a quota; we split the season on that and we just require monthly reporting on that. That’s only about a ten-fish trip limit, anyway. And then we’ve got horseshoe crabs, which we’ve been in de minimis status for that. I know we went over this year, and I just realized last night we went over the previous year, too.

A comment was made yesterday, well, maybe you ought to start doing some daily reporting for that or at least some sort of quota monitoring, and that may be something we’ll have to consider. I have to go back and put some thought into that. Summer flounder, like I said, is three to four million pounds each year. It’s a joint Mid-Atlantic and Atlantic States FMP.

NMFS issues a quota and we get 27.5 percent of the coastal share. It’s open November through April. We have the state dealer permits for reporting and we’ve got the limited entry license to land flounder; about 140 vessels in that fishery; 70 or 80 of them are really active in any given season.

The National Marine Fisheries Service I believe has responsibility to manage this quota. We do it as a double-check. We have found in the past that they weren’t doing a real good job of managing this and monitoring this quota. I believe we even went to court over it one time, so that’s one of the reasons we continue to monitor this fishery very carefully; although we will work tightly with the northeast region on validating the numbers and just monitoring throughout the season.

Black sea bass, just to clarify, it is just north of Hatteras. Our quota is 188,000 pounds; again another joint Mid-Atlantic and Atlantic States FMP; 11 percent of the coastal share; daily reporting and so forth; not too dissimilar to summer flounder; although we don’t have any kind of limited entry license or permit for the vessels.

Spiny dogfish; three million pounds each year; ASMFC FMP; we were getting 16 percent of the coastal share and now we get 14 percent. This is interesting in that it was a coast-wide quota, but now it has been broken up a little bit. North Carolina has an allocation as do states up to New

York, I believe, and then from Connecticut to Maine they have a regional allocation so that's interesting.

I think you can look at spiny dogfish as a good example for perhaps some of the southeast species that are currently coastal quotas right now. If you ever consider breaking them up into state allocations, this may be a good model to look at. Again, state dealer permits for reporting; it's a winter season; and there is a stipulation I believe in that FMP that you're allowed to have 5 percent rollover of underages from one year to the next.

Striped bass, we have a 480,000 pound ocean quota; 275,000 Albemarle Sound; and 25,000 pounds Central/Southern Area, which is basically the Tar/Pamlico River and the Cape Fear River and Neuse River – ASMFC, Ocean FMP and DMF Estuarine FMP; daily reporting; state dealer permits and the state fisherman permits that I mentioned earlier. This used to be a derby fishery. This fishery is one that did require daily reporting during the season. When those fish came inshore, they could wipe out their quota in a day or two. This year the fish just haven't come in at all so we're way under the catch, but we're still requiring daily reporting of those dealers.

Like I mentioned, the other miscellaneous state quotas; I won't spend much more time on that. The tools that we have available to us that allow us to manage these quotas is the director's proclamation authority, which allows him within 48 hours to open a fishery or close the fishery except for public health or quota management reasons, which can be immediate in that case.

This is a very important tool for us. I heard yesterday Dr. Crabtree say that it might take you guys a week to close the fishery because of the processes and the steps you have to go through. We can do it in a much shorter timeframe. It gives us a lot of flexibility. The limited entry license is very useful, too. It gives us an exact count of the maximum number of boats that will be out there fishing at any given period of time.

When we don't have a limited entry license we rely on the trip ticket program to count the number of boats that have historically, whether recent or longer term, been operating in that fishery. We have split seasons that we apply to certain numbers of these quotas; for instance, the summer flounder fishery, which about 80 percent of that is established for the winter/spring fishery and 20 percent for the fall.

Now, if that early winter/spring fishery goes over, we'll take it off the fall, so it gives us a little flexibility there. Of course, we have quota transfers to other states. I'll go into more detail on that later. Control and forecasting; this is the process that we use to manage summer flounder, black sea bass and so forth.

We establish a window, a catch window. This can be historically from two weeks to a month. Earlier this year, beginning January 1, we opened up two-week windows; January 1 to 15th. Once it closes, we might sit on it for two or three days. If it closes, say, on Friday, we might not reopen until Monday or Tuesday and spend that time getting the numbers together to make certain we know exactly where we are.

Now, that early in the season with a four million pound quota it's not an issue, but that does become an issue later in the summer. Right now for the month of March we're going to a one-month catch window, and that is because March 1 a lot of the boats go up and begin scalloping. Some of the summer flounder boats go up and begin scalloping.

Another reason we went to this one-month thing, we upped the trip limit to 175 boxes to try to give some incentive for these vessels to come into Beaufort Inlet instead of landing everything in Virginia, because Oregon Inlet has shoaled up and it's not passable right now. We have a known number of vessels because of the limited entry license or the historical effort information from the trip ticket program, and then we set trip limits based on all that. How long do you want the season to last; here is my summer flounder example; 80 boats; 10,000 pounds; we know we're going to get no more than 800,000 pounds for that window.

It allows us to forecast exactly how much is going to be caught – excuse me, the maximum that is going to be caught for any given window. Based on industry input we can shorten the season or we can extend the season. Here is the example that I used yesterday for the black sea bass pot fishery. I spent a little more time on this to make certain that everybody understands it.

We know we're going to have a commercial quota of 309,000 pounds gutted weight. If the endorsement program goes through, you know you're going to have 31 vessels. If you establish a trip limit at 500 pounds and you set it at 500 pounds a week, you know you're not going to have anymore than 15,500 pounds per week; which dividing that into the total quota, you know you're going to have a season of 19.9 weeks or about a 20-week season.

Alternatively, given the same quota and the same number of vessels, the same trip limit, which I believe is established, but you change that to 3,000 pounds per week, you're going to end up with a 3.3 week season or somewhere between a three- and four-week season. Generally, vessels will not land the maximum.

They will be somewhat under, so these numbers are kind of funny; but when you talk to the industry do you want a short season, do you want a long season – I guess 20 weeks is relatively long, but it's kind of a management tool, anyway, but you can have some flexibility with it and help you control those small quotas.

This applies to 188,000 black sea bass north of Hatteras fishery; this same example applies to a four million pound summer flounder fishery. We do transfer quota to other states. We recently received 2,000 horseshoe crabs from Georgia this year. I just updated this slide last night, and we've now transferred over 1.7 million pounds of summer flounder and greater than 100,000 pounds of sea bass to Virginia.

In 2000 we traded with Massachusetts, some horse trading going on, some sea bass for some scup. Here are some considerations. I mentioned this yesterday about familiarity with your customer. I truly don't support daily reporting even though we do it out of habit and the potential for the striped bass fishery to be a derby fishery.

But, things happen, you have illnesses, you have deaths in family, you have vacations, and I think familiarity with your customer is important. You hate to be, as a regulator, to be put in the position of calling a dealer asking him for his landings for the previous day or the previous week knowing that he lost his boat in Oregon Inlet and fought for his life. You don't want to appear stupid. Those are some of the things that come along with daily reporting.

You go from 200 reports coming in a week to 1,400 and it just gets unmanageable. You want to make it easy, avoid duplication and redundancy. We have what we call one-stop reporting. There is only one form that captures summer flounder, sea bass, spiny dog, striped bass, river herring, everything, it's all on one form.

The trip ticket software actually will print that form out so the dealer is physically entering the landings any given day for each trip ticket in the software; and the next day when he has to submit his quota report, he can just push a button to print that report out and either e-mail it or fax it to us. You want to keep it simple standardized requirements and it will become habit. I know when the northeast region established that weekly reporting, there was an awful lot of squawk in the first four or six months.

Now you'd have to take them kicking and screaming away from electronic reporting. They love it, they're established, a weekly reporting, it has become habit to them. I would suggest you do the same in the southeast. I think weekly reporting should be adequate for most everything, and I think it's feasible for dealers to adhere to.

Data timeliness has limitations. Sometimes the management must fit the data rather the other way around. I think a lot of times we try to work and modify and tweak the data so that we get it in the fashion that we want it when in reality there is so many limitations on compliance and timeliness of getting the data that you really need to consider what your management is and tailor that to the data that you can get.

Validation; quota monitoring should be quick and dirty estimates of landings. However, the ACCSP standard is for a two-ticket system. Now we don't have that in North Carolina. We have our dealer trip ticket program and we've got a fisherman logbook for the eel pots fishery, but that's a small fishery.

I've got \$800,000 to run a trip ticket program and I don't have another \$800,000 to run a logbook program, so that's the realities of it even though I realize the advantages of having multiple reports come in. When I say that, I mean a trip ticket and a quota monitoring report. We do spend a lot of time at the end of the year with the National Marine Fisheries Service validating both trip tickets and quota monitoring reports.

Personally I don't care a whole lot if the quota monitoring reports are real accurate or not. I do care that we're getting compliance from all the dealers, and this is a time where we check that. I care very much that the trip tickets are accurate, and sometimes those quota reports help ensure accuracy of the trip tickets.

I mentioned this earlier there, our quota monitoring procedures are in reality a double-check of the Fisheries Service monitoring. After that validation is conducted is usually when our quotas are adjusted for the following year. Underages are rarely carried forward; overages are always deducted at least recently.

Compliance procedures; we talked a lot about this yesterday. Our procedures require a courtesy call for the first instance of failure to report, whether it's daily – well, when it is daily. The second instance results in permit suspension. There was a question yesterday about due process, and there is a very good question and I've thought a lot about that.

All I can say is that our rule authority allows us to suspend a permit. That was approved by our Marine Fisheries Commission, but any kind of suspension like that would have to get the director's approval and, of course, there is an appeal process for that, also. The first instance after a courtesy call is a ten-day suspension. The second instance is a 30-day suspension.

We're very appreciative of our marine patrol for their rapid response that they always give us when there is an instance of non-compliance. It's not much more than a phone call or an e-mail, and they will send an officer by. That is a benefit that we have with 40 officers for coastal North Carolina versus one National Marine Fisheries Service officer, and I believe you only have one port agent. I've got five port agents so those staff resources that I mentioned in an earlier slide are very important to our processes.

Our track record, I went over this a little yesterday, summer flounder has been pretty good there; we go over a little bit; maybe the quota will be adjusted the following year, but for the most part we stay underneath the quota; sea bass, similarly. Spiny dog, I mentioned this earlier, this is a good model for I think the southeast species if they ever become state quotas.

We had that four million pound coast-wide quota and you can see what the landings in North Carolina where that yellow line down there is pretty low. Many years I don't think we caught anything because the spiny dogs don't migrate to our waters until the water turns cold. By that time all the northeast states have caught up the quota.

Since we got our state allocation in about 2008 and 2009, we've been monitoring that quota, our catches have gone up, and we've still stayed well within the quota that was allocated to us. Much appreciated by our industry, too; that's turned into a nice little niche winter fishery for our guys up on the Outer Banks.

Bluefish; tracking that pretty well; the one year we went over we got a quota transfer from another state. Striped bass; we're doing pretty well there, too. I left that dotted line in there. That quota was actually static during that period of time, but internally we modified that quota to adjust for the overages that occurred around '98 or '99, somewhere around in there.

I do want to acknowledge my staff that takes care of this quota monitoring. Grace Kemp, who is our primary quota monitoring biologist, she is just one of those people that is just a very nice person, and she likes to function with honey rather than vinegar. She has no problem calling the

dealers over and over. She has formed personal relationships with most of them. That works really well for her.

Our procedures, even though it requires a courtesy call followed by a suspension, that rarely occurs. I double-checked with her this morning and we've had four suspensions in our recollection. One of them was a true ten-day suspension. The remainder of them resulted in the dealer's wife getting the permit so they continued operating.

Their penalty was \$50 to come and get another dealer license and the hassle of actually having to go into the office, so that was the extent of their penalty at that time. Charlie, your point yesterday about a fine instead of a suspension may have some benefit to it unless that fine is so low that it's just a matter of cost of business. That's all I've got; I'd be happy to entertain any questions.

MR. HARTIG: Thank you, Don, that was great. Any questions? Go ahead, Wilson.

DR. LANEY: Mr. Chairman, I'm not on your committee. Don, this is a followup to the question I asked you yesterday. The followup is we talked about restaurants and the restaurants in North Carolina having dealer permits. Do you have any idea what percent of your dealers are actually associated with restaurants as opposed to fish houses or some other venue?

MR. HESSELMAN: It's pretty low, Wilson. I would say probably less than – certainly less than 10 restaurants. The trends we do see are more fishermen dealers rather than just strictly fishermen or dealers.

MR. BURGESS: Don, one of your comments was management to fit the data. Something that has been brought up by industry quite a bit is the possibility in the future of a trigger when the quota reaches a certain point of the ACL to trigger a drop in the trip limit to lengthen the season and also to address discards; and as the fishermen say to me, to maintain a profitable fishery and trip. Is this possible under this system?

MR. HESSELMAN: I think it certainly is, Tom. You would probably consider having fairly short windows of opportunity so that whether it's a week, ten days, two weeks, at the end of that period you can then adjust the trip limit to bring it back down. We do that with our fisheries. Generally that summer flounder fishery will be I think I'll say a hundred boxes or so, but we may end up dropping that to 75 or 50 boxes near the end of the season so that we can stay underneath that quota.

MR. CURRIN: Don, I'm sure you're aware at the behest of many of the fishermen in North Carolina the folks that represent North Carolina around this table have been pushing pretty hard for a number of years to give some consideration to state-by-state quotas or a state and regional quota or whatever.

We seem to be the only state that has any real interest in that, and I hope we'll continue to move and try to work that out so that it will benefit our fishermen or at least they think it will. My question to you is are you guys set up right now or could develop the capability if you're lacking

it right now to accept additional quota monitoring responsibility if the mackerel fishery, for example, which has a fair number of people in North Carolina that would have to be monitored, and even the snapper grouper fishery or some aspects of it; would that create a hardship burden for you guys to require additional staff to maintain or pull off some additional quota monitoring?

MR. HESSELMAN: That's a very valid question, Mac, and it's possible, especially for something like mackerel, yes. The snapper grouper species, I think we could absorb that. Similar to your question we've had discussions in our Southern Flounder FMP about establishing a quota for that, but all of a sudden overnight picking up 400 extra dealers we'd really have to look at our procedures. We'd probably have to incorporate electronic reporting a lot more into what we do. I'm not certain about how many dealers we have with king and Spanish mackerel, but we'd have to look at our procedures very carefully.

MR. CURRIN: Just a followup, let's say we did implement, as we seem to be heading in that direction, a requirement for electronic reporting from all the dealers; would that simplify things for you guys and perhaps require less additional staff under the current system?

MR. HESSELMAN: You have to be careful with electronic reporting. Perhaps you've heard when you were on our commission, I think in some ways you transfer from a manual administrative level or clerical level staff to technical staff because you have problems with electronic reporting. The FTP site goes down, files get corrupted, files get mixed.

Unfortunately, our process right now still requires manual importing of each electronic dealer file each month into our data base. It's not automated, so it's a shift from clerical staff to technical staff. Technical staff gets paid a whole lot more than our clerical staff does. Those are some of the issues that we have to consider.

Our Marine Fisheries Commission recently mandated that any dealer landing more than 50,000 pounds is going to have to report electronically, and we're going to be capturing 95 percent of the finfish landings in North Carolina when we implement that. For the sake of standardization I would seriously consider going to weekly reporting for all our quota monitoring dealers. I believe we could do that.

We're going to need a little bit of IT help to automate the process, but I think we can do it. I think we have stabilized our FTP site right now. The software is about as stable as you could ask for. Claude is always extremely responsive to any issues that come up, whether it's for us or from the dealer, so we could do it.

MR. HARTIG: Any other questions for Don? I had one. On black sea bass, that 188,000, that is coming from the Mid-Atlantic?

MR. HESSELMAN: Yes, I believe that's a joint Mid-Atlantic and ASMFC FMP.

MR. HARTIG: Are they the same fishermen that catch the South Atlantic quota or are they totally different fishermen?

MR. HESSELMAN: It's a trawl fishery. I would say totally different, but we do split up that quota a little bit and maintain 15 or 20,000 pounds for our summertime hook-and-line pot fishery that occurs off the Outer Banks. If I may expand on that a little bit, somebody asked a question yesterday about confusion over permits and it had to do with Gulf permits versus Atlantic permits.

Mac, I believe this was your point. There is some confusion with black sea bass in North Carolina. Because all our dealers are federally permitted, some of them carry southeast permits and northeast permits. Some of that black sea bass, if we're not cautious, will be double-counted by the northeast region even though it's caught south of Hatteras.

Because they're a federally permitted dealer, they still have to report to NMFS Northeast; and even though they're black sea bass caught south of Hatteras and that trip tickets says south of Hatteras, they're still sometimes deducting that from our quota if we're not very cautious about watching that. That is a consideration for permitting, but it should be broken up by the water body indicated on the trip ticket.

DR. DUVAL: Ben, I was just going to clarify that. As Don mentioned earlier, the black sea bass north of Hatteras, that's almost all the same folks who are out there trawling for summer flounder. There are a few individuals around the Hatteras area who participated in both fisheries, and we do save a little bit of that quota, as Don indicated for – you know, a little bit would be north of Hatteras quota for a hook-and-line component of the fishery. There are folks that participate in that, but generally it's all the trawl guys.

MR. HAYMANS: Just to comment to Mac earlier about maybe North Carolina being the only state interested in state-by-state quota, I think we may be all interested in it. Commercially it's a lot easier; it's the whole question about the recreational division of quota that I think is the sticky point. I think we're all interested in talking about it.

MR. HARTIG: Well, Don, I appreciate a very interesting and informative presentation. I'm sorry I missed yesterday. I was with the Law Enforcement Committee, but I'm glad I got to catch up on it today. I guess we'll recess for lunch if Mr. Chairman concurs with that move; back at 1:30.

(Whereupon, the meeting was recessed at 12:10 o'clock p.m., March 6, 2012.)

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TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

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The Mackerel Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened in the Madison Ballroom of the Savannah Hilton DeSoto Hotel, Savannah, Georgia, Tuesday afternoon, March 6, 2012, and was called to order at 1:35 o'clock p.m. by Chairman Ben Hartig.

MR. HARTIG: We'll go ahead and start the Mackerel Committee. All right, the first thing on our agenda for this afternoon is to discuss tournaments and the sale of fish. We have Jack Holmes from the Southern Kingfish Association with us today who is going to give a presentation on the importance of tournament sale of king mackerel.

MR. HOLMES: Good afternoon. First I want to thank you for this opportunity to express our concerns over the prohibition of the sale of Gulf and Atlantic king mackerel by fishing tournaments. First I'd like to inform the Mackerel Committee members about the Southern Kingfish Association who produce the largest saltwater tournament trail in the world.

When we formed this association in 1991, we had tournaments who in our opinion abused the resource. Our first accomplishment was to change this policy going to one fish per team events or one fish per day for two-day events. We knew we also had to change fishermen's attitudes toward the resource.

Finally, we knew we had to make sure we kept records for our pressure on the resource, and thank God we did. It wasn't easy but we persevered. For the past 22 years we are very proud of our efforts. We certainly have changed tournament sportfishing. We created the boats we are fishing in today and worked with outboard manufacturers to give us the higher horsepower we needed.

Fishing tackle was created for our fisher people and by 2006 we were a \$100 million industry; all this from a reported to be junk fish. Obviously, because of world economic conditions, it's not quite that size now. This is also the same fish that commercial interests almost annihilated in the Gulf of Mexico in the late seventies and early eighties. So just what is the economic impact to our country; over \$40 million a year in new boat sales; \$3.5 million for tackle and nearly \$5 million a year in fuel. We add another \$2 million for electronics; over \$3 million in tournament fees; \$2 million for insurance; \$32 million for new trucks and trailers, plus another \$2 million for transportation fuel.

When we add in direct impacts to coastal cities, which include lodging, we have totaled over \$100 million a year. Yes, tournament fishing is big business and through our efforts up until now no waste or harm to the resource. We do our tournaments from North Carolina south to Key West and around the Gulf coast through Louisiana.

We do not do events in Texas as there is not a big recreational king mackerel interest. In 2007 we were asked to sit on a panel of academics to adopt a vision for the king mackerel fishery. The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation funded a team of scientists from the Universities of Maryland, Florida and Florida State, along with lay people and conservation groups who had an interest in developing a model for use and protection of a resource.

I believe we and Ben Hartig, a commercial king mackerel fisherman who has been fishing since the early seventies and also had good, hard data, were the major contributors. Over a nine-month period we met and a plan was developed. This plan was presented to the full council with recommendations. A quota of 8 million pounds was suggested, even though we don't come close to that quota, would sustain the resource for generations.

We were given 15 minutes to present our findings of this data to the full council. Nothing has ever come from our efforts. If you've never seen this study, let me know and I'd be more than happy to get you one. Also, the SKA has donated over \$80,000 to the College of Marine Science, the College of South Florida in Tampa, Florida.

Unfortunately because of economic conditions, we have had to eliminate this funding. We literally paid for many ongoing studies plus allowed Carrie Wall to produce her thesis on the linkages between environmental conditions and recreational king mackerel catch off of West Florida. Our fisher people gave her location information for her studies.

We've collected a lot of fish in tournaments for age sampling. It was the state of Florida's intent to ensure there were samples from all age groups to ensure we did not have a given year's spawning problem. Tournaments have been the perfect source for low-cost sampling. Our tournaments, which are mostly charity-driven, has given over a million dollars a year to local charities.

In the last couple of years these funds have decreased dramatically, dropping 50 to 60 percent. These are charities who came to depend on this money, which came from the sale of king mackerel caught in the events; fish that would otherwise end up at the bottom of the ocean. That is unacceptable.

We have certainly understood the sold fish went against the commercial quota. Did it affect that quota? Well, I haven't seen quotas in the Atlantic close in many, many years. Tournaments in the upper Gulf do not sell their fish because it's hard to get a processor to pick up the fish. The fish from our National Championship in Biloxi this past year went to a local food bank who are very appreciative, but most food banks aren't able to take our fish because they do not have the staff to collect or clean the fish.

One year we gave the fish to the prison system in Mississippi, but they too have informed us they cannot do it anymore; no reason given. If tournaments were to accept the responsibility of providing a report to the government of what was caught, which fish processor accepted the fish, the poundage and which charity received the donation, what is the problem?

This is also a great source of information for fishery managers. In other words, give us a quota. It certainly sounds like a win-win for everyone and nothing goes to waste; absolutely nothing. Costs for this reporting would also be minimal. I do it now; keeping the overall tournament catch information from 50 events between the Atlantic from Morehead City, North Carolina, south around Florida and west to Louisiana.

I would be more than happy to make sure all SKA events got the information about reporting, send out the forms and make sure these forms got returned to the department in charge of this data. I would also work to find events that included king mackerel in their tournaments and make sure they were aware of the program.

There are quite a few small events that are not a part of the SKA Tournament Trail. I certainly can't guarantee I can get to all of these events as they come and go, but we will give it a 100 percent effort. Processors could also help us in this effort. How much fish are we talking about? Last year it would have been between 60 and 70,000 pounds of fish.

Keep in mind that we had a horrible season last year because of westerly winds that forced the fish to deeper water and areas that most fisher people were unaccustomed to fishing. They are primarily beach fishermen. When and if the economy rebounds and if the weather pattern changes, it could be between 110 and 120,000 pounds of fish the SKA tournaments collected; certainly nowhere near the recreational quota, but I do not see us rebounding to mid-2000 levels for some time.

We are slowly evolving to a have and have not society. The results are we have a very robust fishery right now. Is there a downside? The only one I could see is if other tournaments tried to sell other species. Let's look at dolphin, wahoo, tuna, cobia, snapper and grouper. Would anyone want to donate his or her catch? Not much.

I would request a quota of a half a million pounds to start because of the unknown. That could be adjusted as we progress. I briefly discussed this with Roy, Dewey and Bob Shipp, who agreed this has merit. However, this is the first time anyone has addressed this issue. The bottom line is you need as much data as you can get.

While our data is still minimal, it's still more than you have now and possibly other ways to collect data could come from this. Thank you for talking to me as representative of all of our tournament directors, the fisher people and, of course, the charities we support. I would be happy to answer any of your questions.

MR. HARTIG: Thanks, Jack, that was a pretty comprehensive report and I appreciate that. Questions for Jack? Go ahead.

MR. HAYMANS: Jack, you didn't bring any of the years of data with you? That's what I was hoping to see was some average annual landings for tournaments.

MR. HOLMES: I've got the 2010 and 2011 right here for you. Catch data, in 2010 we caught a total of 59,490 pounds of fish; and then in 2011 we caught 53,249 pounds of fish. I have this broken down by tournament for you.

MR. HAYMANS: Would you say effort is 50 percent lower than it was in the mid-2000's?

MR. HOLMES: I would say probably 40 or 45 percent right now, somewhere in that neighborhood.

MR. HAYMANS: And so that's how you came about going from 60 to maybe 120,000 pounds?

MR. HOLMES: Yes, correct. I'm not even sure at this point that we'll ever get back to those numbers possibly in my lifetime, and it's only because of the fact that as you know boats have

become much more expensive. Your resins and everything for fiberglass boats are derived from oil products, so the costs keep going up.

I was absolutely amazed this year at the Miami International Boat Show when I started looking at the price tags on some of these boats today that in the past were 120 or \$130,000 and now they're up to over \$200,000. It just never seems to end how the costs have gone up. I've also found that in past years where guys would fish their boat one or two years and then sell their boats are not doing that as much as they were; only just because of the increased costs in the product that they use.

MR. HAYMANS: And based on your knowledge of the fishery and the number of requests that you get for SKA sanctioning, how many tournaments are out there? How many SKA tournaments are out there and how many tournaments do you think are out there?

MR. HOLMES: Right now we do – I think we have like 48 tournaments plus a championship scheduled for this year like said from Morehead City, North Carolina, all the way around the coastline to Fushan, Louisiana. That's our gambit that we run. There are several tournaments in South Florida that do king mackerel; very few from Fort Pierce north to Jacksonville that we aren't involved in.

There area couple of tournaments in Georgia that we're not involved in; South Carolina, probably three or four; North Carolina, I can't keep a handle on North Carolina because it seems like every year tournaments crop up all over the place. One starts, they don't make no money and they're gone after that year. North Carolina is my biggest problem for finding tournaments.

Most of the other tournaments we know about, but there are only so many tournaments you can do during the season. We start in Key West at the end of January and then we don't do another tournament until the end of March on the west coast of Florida, and then we slowly work up both the coasts as the fish migrate north.

We don't catch many events coming back when the fish start coming back. We're usually done – we have a couple of tournaments in October, maybe three or four in October, and then the first part of November we do our championship tournament in Biloxi, Mississippi. We spread them out. We're a big organization but it takes a lot of effort for us to go to each one of these tournaments and work with our tournaments and our directors.

Over the years we've made some great friendships with a lot of these directors. We've instituted a lot of policies for these tournaments to keep them all the same, but we still have a couple of tournaments that abuse the system that we certainly would like to see go away, but they're still around.

MR. CURRIN: Jack, can you just give me a feel for what the average gross proceeds are from these tournaments? If you don't have a feel for that, I guess I could ask for the number of boats and the average entry fee.

MR. HOLMES: It all depends upon the size of the tournament. If it's a 50-boat tournament, it's not a lot of money; maybe \$1,500, something like that. The bigger tournaments could be 6, 7 or \$8,000. I will give you one example.

MR. CURRIN: No, just so I understand what those figures represent.

MR. HOLMES: From the sale of the fish.

MR. CURRIN: All right, I'm talking about the whole gross proceeds. Let me ask it a different way then; average number of boats per tournament, roughly.

MR. HOLMES: I would say the average is probably 70 boats, average.

MR. CURRIN: And the average entry fee?

MR. HOLMES: Three hundred to \$350. We have some tournaments that are – I've got a couple of tournaments in North Carolina that are 200 boats. We have the Greater Jacksonville Tournament each year, which is run by Jacksonville Marine Charities. They have donated so much money to different charities, and most of the charities that they work with are marine related. Back several years ago when that was a thousand boat tournament, you'd have a tremendous amount of fish come in. Today that tournament is – I think last year it was like 265 boats. It has really dropped down dramatically.

MR. CURRIN: Yes, one more, then. As far as the contributions to charity, are they strictly and solely from the sale of fish or are there proceeds from the tournament other than the monies from the sale of fish that are donated to charity?

MR. HOLMES: It depends upon the event. For example, we have a tournament in Swansboro, North Carolina, that is produced by a philanthropic organization. Everybody in that little town of Swansboro gets in the program book, so they probably make \$40,000 a year off their program book. Every bit of that money goes to scholarships. The sale of the fish goes to other philanthropic things that they do within the community.

MR. CURRIN: And I know, for example, the Raleigh Saltwater Club has had a tournament for a long time and most of their net profit, other than I believe sale of fish – I believe I'm correct in that goes to their clubhouse building fund, whatever that is.

MR. HOLMES: Correct. Usually all of the monies at least as far as we can ascertain from these events – and we're pretty close to all of them and have been for almost 20 years – the sale of the fish money always goes to a charity. We don't have very many tournaments that – I mean some tournaments don't sell their fish. Because they don't have a charity, there are a couple of them that do it that way and give the fish back to the fishermen, but that's the worse thing in the world and I'd like to see those fish can do so much for local communities.

We do a tournament out of Onslow Bay each year, and for the last seven or eight years the proceeds from the sale of their fish has gone to underprivileged children at Christmastime. Last

year they presented kids with not only a whole bunch of toys for the smaller kids but they gave away 120 bicycles to kids who would never have a bicycle.

I can't think of a better way to see that those fish – keep in mind I'm not out to change what the council is doing now. I don't like going against a commercial quota. Those are hard-working people on the water. We think that we should have our own and then we have to report to the council to make sure that those monies from the sale of those fish, number one, doesn't affect the commercial quota; and, number two, you know who took the fish and what the club does with the money.

I don't want to see that money go into coffers of groups to help pay directors or whatever. I want to see that money used directly back into charitable foundations. We would monitor that very, very closely. I've talked an awful lot to tournament directors to make sure that was the intent that we were trying to do and most of them agree a hundred percent.

They don't want to keep the fish and the fishermen don't want them back when we're all done fishing predominantly, so we know what happened. I mean it's just a waste of the resource when that money could be used for a lot of good issues.

MR. CURRIN: Just for clarification, so is it safe to say then with some few exceptions – and you mentioned Swansboro which contributes well over and above the monies from the sale of fish – safe to say that with some few exceptions that the contributions made from the tournaments are solely derived from the sale of fish?

MR. HOLMES: I can say that's the case because we have been doing that for as long as I can remember. We find a commercial fisherman to take the fish; we take them to the fish house; they sell the fish; and then the fish processor writes a check back to the charity. It is a very simple process, but that does go against the commercial quota. I don't see any reason to penalize the commercial guys.

MR. HARTIG: Any other questions for Jack? I've got a couple, Jack. How much money do you think the SKA has donated to charities since you guys have been in existence?

MR. HOLMES: Oh, golly, you know, the one thing that I haven't done is I've never gone back to the tournaments and asked them exactly what charity it was they gave it to because a lot of you have seen the tournaments brochures from different tournaments such as Raleigh..

They spell it out right in there what they do so I haven't really paid attention to it. If you take 60,000 pounds of fish times whatever the cost of the fish is, I think that would more than give you an idea of the monies that are being generated.

MR. HARTIG: I appreciate that, and in a nutshell you're talking about 500,000 pounds of fish basically coming out of the recreational side of the allocation to be put aside for tournament sales?

MR. HOLMES: That's it exactly and we will do the same thing that we've always done in the past. I am very conservation oriented, as you know. We keep track of every single fish that we weigh. That was one of the reasons why between your data and our data, the fish stock that we worked on to see just where the king mackerel was and to make the ideal model between your data and my data, and I think everybody was pretty impressed.

I'm a very stickler on that – besides I want to see what the tournament is doing; because when I look back at the data that I have also, I can compare that to the areas that found an abundance of fish in them and other areas that did not. It's another way of seeing what the pattern of the fish are doing.

MR. HARTIG: I know you've got a long time series of data and we've talked about it a number of times on how possibly it could be used in the assessment. Unfortunately, the assessment people don't like to use tournament data so we've never been able to use it, but that doesn't mean that sometime in the future we won't come back to you and say, hey, can we have your numbers?

MR. HOLMES: Sure. I'd be the first one to sit here, as you know, Ben, because you and I have talked an awful lot because we share the resource; if I honestly and truly believed that we were taking more fish out of the water than we should be taking, I'd be the first one to get up on the table and jump up and down. Again, that's one of the reasons why we've gone to a one fish.

I can tell you right now there are a couple of tournaments in North Carolina that think I'm the worse person in the world because I won't do their tournaments because they abuse the fishery. I want to make sure that just doesn't happen. I've got one tournament in particular that still has fish bowls that we don't know where that money goes to. We've never ever been able to find out where the money goes to. It's not a good situation but I refuse to do the tournament for those ethical reasons. We want to know; we want to know what is happening with everything.

MR. HARTIG: Well, I appreciate that and I appreciate you taking the time to come before us today and give us that and that should help us along in our determinations on what we do about tournament sales. Thank you very much for coming.

MR. HOLMES: Thank you. I'm going to leave these with you; that's the last two years' data.

MR. HARTIG: Okay, we've got some additional data to look at that Gregg just informed me of, some from Georgia.

MR. HAYMANS: I was kind of hoping that the other states were going to follow suit and do the same sort of thing, but we're small and a few number of tournaments. I just canvassed our tournaments and asked them to provide me with what they could, and most of them sent me three to five years worth of data. You see the tournaments that are held in Georgia and you kind of get an idea for the sense of how long some of these tournaments have been around; the Sapelo Open for the last 31 years; the Two-Way Tournament for 25 years.

From Sapelo down through the Golden Isles Tournament, they're all run by the same organizer. One of the things that they're proud of is that tournaments alone over their histories have given back \$360,000 to the local communities. I'll tell you we're actually recipients of some of that. Golden Isles Sportfishing Club last year wrote us a \$40,000 check for artificial reef deployments.

Now, that's not \$40,000 from one tournament; that's a building up of the account until they get enough to actually do something with. Two-Way did a \$10,000 check the same year. They try to do that sort of thing as well as some scholarships and whatnot. If you'll scroll down to the bottom there, Gregg, and what that is is sort of an average for the tournaments that are there.

I don't have all the data, but you'll see that in Georgia at least each of our tournaments are generating somewhere around 1,200 pounds of fish. Now, I'll tell you that's also a little low because probably 10 percent of the anglers – Jack, correct me if you think it's higher or lower – catch more than the one fish that they get to weigh in.

They might catch three or four fish and they'll donate those straight to the truck, you never weigh them, they come back in through the sale, so the actual sales are a little bit higher than what the scales actually show. I was hoping that maybe all the states would have taken the opportunity to try to get some of their data. That's about it on that.

DR. DUVAL: Doug, I ask our staff to pull data. Unfortunately, according to our laws I can't tell you a tournament name. That's confidential information. What I have done is I have average number of pounds for the different tournaments over the lifetime of that tournament. The tournament that has been going on for four years or seven years or ten years, I can tell you that they range – you know, a couple of these tournaments only happened one year, and that's it.

Your actual average pounds have ranged from like just 200 to generally like 1,500 pounds over the lifetime of the tournament. There are a few that are significantly higher I think just due to the length of time the tournament has been around. There is one that averages about 10,000 pounds; another one averaging about 3,000 pounds.

In terms of the number of tournaments that we've had per year, that has also ranged – the high I think was in 2004 with 23 tournaments and the low was actually – well, the low has been ten. The last several years we've had a lot fewer tournaments. It has been like ten or eleven tournaments and the total number of fish has ranged on a yearly basis, total number of pounds from tournament sales, around 50,000 pounds back in 2000 and it is dropped off significantly, but since then only ranging from 20 to 30,000 pounds; and last year it was pretty dismal, about 7,000 pounds.

MR. HAYMANS: I was just talking about participation as well. You'll see the participants up there and you'll see how they've dropped off. Golden Isles had a total of 240 several years ago down to 80 boats last year. I'm sure that's the same thing you've seen not only in the reduction in tournaments but in the reduction in participation per tournament.

MS. McCAWLEY: For Florida we had difficulty locating some of this data, but we do have a mechanism on our trip ticket to separate out tournament sales from other types of sales. It's just

not really being used that way at this time. We're not even sure of the total number of king mackerel tournaments that we have statewide or the numbers of fish that each of these tournaments are donating.

MR. HARTIG: Thanks, Jessica; there are a lot of them. That I can tell you from fishing on the east coast almost every weekend in the summertime there is some kind of tournament going on and sometimes two and three. There is a lot of activity that happens in the area where I am.

MR. WAUGH: And, Ben, the intent is that all of this data will be put into Amendment 20 where we talk about prohibition of sale. We've got an alternative that would create a set-aside for the recreational ACL for tournament sales.

MR. HARTIG: So we don't have to take any action right now with this and we'll just go into the scoping document under what we're moving forward with. Any other questions or any other comments on tournament sales? Michelle.

DR. DUVAL: Just one comment, in talking to some of our staff, is that notwithstanding the argument of sale of tournament caught fish going against the commercial quota or being actually an oxymoron in terms – I think Robert brought that up at our last meeting. You know, there is a little bit of concern that a couple times a year the sale of tournament caught fish can impact the commercial prices, so I just wanted to get that out there. Thanks.

MR. HARTIG: That happens with us, also, at certain times. All right, that's enough on tournament sales and it's going to scoping so we'll move right along. The next thing on our agenda is Scoping Document for Joint Gulf/South Atlantic Mackerel Amendment 19, which is the permits and sale issue, and I'll turn it over to Gregg and we'll show you where are with that one.

MR. WAUGH: Some of you remember we talked at the December meeting. We were just looking at Amendment 19 at that time and framework actions. What we've got to address now to take out to scoping are Amendments 19 and 20. These have been split into two amendments. That still leaves us our list of items that we're looking to do by framework.

One of those has to do with adjusting the Spanish mackerel size limit in North Carolina to account for the smaller fish that show up in a certain time of year, primarily August, in the pound net fishery. That's not in these amendments because we're going to address it through the framework.

We've got our Mackerel AP coming in April and we have a list of framework items that we're going to go over with them and refine that list and then that will come to you in June for guidance on how to move forward. The Gulf has approved both Amendments 19 and 20 Scoping Documents to go out to scoping.

They have scheduled their scoping meetings for March and April and we need to talk about how we're going to handle scoping. I'm going to use documents that are just updated a little bit from what you have. Sue Gerhart has gone through this and provided some edits. There are a couple

of places where we're suggesting some changes to the number of alternatives to make sure we have three where we only had two before and a couple of clarifications.

We'll go through those but you all can follow along with the first one is Attachment 3B, which is Amendment 19, and I'll point out where we have some slight changes. In discussing this with the chairman we thought what we do is go through each scoping document and get any changes that you want to any of the wording where there are changes and then have a motion at the end to approve that document to go out to scoping.

The first action deals with permits for coastal migratory pelagic species. No action, we currently have a single commercial king mackerel permit and a single commercial Spanish mackerel permit. There are separate coastal migratory pelagic permits for the charter and headboats; separate South Atlantic/Gulf.

Option 2 would create a single commercial cobia permit, and we're suggesting that we add Option 3 which would modify the Spanish mackerel permit to be a Spanish mackerel/cobia permit. That will give us three alternatives – three options to take forward. We'd be looking for any additions. Again, this has been approved for scoping.

This new alternative is being suggested after the Gulf Council approved the documents to go out to scoping, but generally what we've done before where we're working on documents like this, if one council has a suggestion for an additional change, that is taken out to scoping.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I think this is an intriguing idea because both would be open access, too, but, Gregg, right now has the IPT thought anything about whether the Spanish earned income requirement, 25 percent of the applicant's earned income or at least \$10,000 must be derived from commercial fishing; had you considered whether that would just automatically apply to cobia?

MR. WAUGH: I don't think that entered into this discussion. I know we address that later on whether you keep that earned income requirement, but that's certainly a point here.

MR. HARTIG: Well, to that point, it's interesting, Monica. If you look at the cobia at catching two fish, I don't think we have any commercial cobia fishermen. People who make their living catching cobia at two fish, I don't think we have that. I would think that all the other permits would cover that and that people – but one thing we don't have is the reef fish, and a lot of cobia are caught by people with reef fish permits.

That's one thing that could also be considered with cobia. We could wrap it into the three main permits that they're caught under and that might do it because we don't have any commercial cobia fishermen, per se. Most of them all have permits in other fisheries to fish for, so I would think that it would be easy for them to meet the Spanish mackerel requirements if that was a prerequisite to get that permit for cobia. Jessica.

MS. McCAWLEY: So are you suggesting adding a fourth option that would be a combination of the reef fish permit and cobia rolled into one?

MR. HARTIG: I think that's probably a pretty good way to do it. Like I say, where we are there are a lot of snapper grouper fishermen who catch cobia as a bycatch in the snapper grouper fishery, and I know that happens all along the coast. I think we may be able to get it all done with the permits we have if we add that one additional permit.

MR. WAUGH: Okay, and the intent here is that anyone with a king mackerel, Spanish mackerel or reef fish – are we including snapper grouper; Gulf reef fish and snapper grouper? Anyone possessing those would be able to harvest and sell cobia commercially?

MR. HARTIG: Yes, that will do it.

MR. CURRIN: It may just be my general state of confusion, but I'm looking at the limiting factor here, which in our case would be snapper grouper permits. We've got to be real careful on how this is set up such that we're not limiting these permits, the availability of them solely to people you have to have a snapper grouper permit.

If the intent is you have this or this or this or this, what permit do you get, then? Do you get a cobia endorsement or do you get a king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, cobia, reef fish, snapper grouper permit? We've got to be careful about how this –

MR. HARTIG: No, the intent is just if you have a snapper grouper permit, if you have a king mackerel permit, if you have a Spanish mackerel permit, you would be able to sell cobia without doing a new permit. That was the rationale for doing it this way. You kill one permit in the process since there aren't any full-time cobia fishermen that I know of.

MR. CURRIN: And that makes some sense to me, Ben, because the other fear I have is with a separate new permit for cobia, then we invite a bunch of speculators to an open access thing for fear that they may be worth some money one day. It doesn't cost them anything and we'd have a lot of them floating around, I'm sure, and then we have to get them back at some point in the future, perhaps.

MR. PHILLIPS: Is there a reason you're leaving out the dolphin and wahoo permit?

DR. CRABTREE: I had the same question as Charlie. There is a commercial dolphin and wahoo permit. It seems to me if you're going to recognize – either you need to explain why you're only going to recognize these permits or you ought to recognize all of them.

MR. HARTIG: I think it is easier just add dolphin and wahoo. Is this becoming more cumbersome than just doing a cobia permit? I'm trying to save you some work here.

DR. CRABTREE: Well, I don't know that it saves – I don't know that we would issue many more Spanish mackerel/cobia permits than we do, but I'm not on your committee.

MR. HARTIG: I know but I wanted to hear what you had to say.

DR. CRABTREE: Well, I haven't thought about it. This is just kind of coming out of nowhere. I know the last time we tried to go this path I think was with – didn't we do this with dolphin and wahoo at some point.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Yes.

DR. CRABTREE: And that was disapproved, I think. I think it was but I have to remember. I think you could do it this way. You just have to be careful. If someone has an HMS permit, why wouldn't we recognize that? I think you just have to explain why this makes sense. Maybe it does.

MR. WAUGH: And remember the intent here is to identify commercial cobia activity and to help ensure that the ACL is not exceeded. I see how you do that with creating a single commercial cobia permit; and then if you allow all those with Spanish mackerel permits, it's a larger universe, and now you're creating yet a larger universe with this other alternative. I'm just not sure we're achieving what we're after.

DR. CRABTREE: I'm not sure I see the connection between the permit and the ACL at all because the quota monitoring program and the dealer reports will keep up with the commercial catches. I think the issue has been that we have a separate commercial ACL and recreational ACL, so we need some way to know who is a commercial fisherman and who is not by giving them a permit, right? I don't think having the permit and how you do the permit is going to affect our ability to track the quota because that's going to come from the dealer reports.

MR. WAUGH: And, certainly, that's a primary way, but certainly under ACCSP they like a dual system to where you would have some ability to track it with not just the dealer. But, yes, you're right, the intent of this was to separate commercial from recreational. I guess Option 4 would do that.

MR. HARTIG: Yes, because all of those permits; all they do is allow you to exceed the bag limit. Okay, have I confused everybody enough now? Right, all we're doing is adding another option to go to scoping. I'm seeing consensus that this is okay to go to scoping with, so moving right along.

MR. WAUGH: The next item is Action 2, which is potential no sale provisions. We've got the no action alternative. Option 2 would prohibit the sale of recreationally caught fish; include all those under the Coastal Migratory Pelagics FMP. Option 3 would only address king and Spanish mackerel. Option 4 we're recommending changing an endorsement to a commercial vessel cobia permit.

Option 5, dropping the endorsement and just leaving the permit. Option 6, prohibit the sale of bag limit caught coastal migratory pelagic species except for allowing for-hire that possess the necessary state and federal permits. Option 7 would require tournament organizers to obtain a federal permit to sell coastal migratory pelagic fish or prohibit sale of tournament-caught fish. Option 8 would create a set-aside from the recreation ACL for tournament sales.

MR. HARTIG: Everybody good with those? All right, I don't see any discussion so we'll move on.

MR. WAUGH: Action 3 would deal with future participation in commercial king and Spanish mackerel fisheries. The group deals with elimination of latent permits; 3.1.1 in the Gulf Group King Mackerel Gill Net Sector. It lays out some alternatives in the Gulf; direct the staff to add another alternative that would – this would be filled in after public input at the scoping stage, but we've got the other alternatives. Again, this is for Gulf Group King Mackerel Gill Net Sector.

MR. HARTIG: And that's all Gulf considerations and we're not dealing with that part of it.

MR. WAUGH: Next, 3.1.2 is in the king mackerel hook-and-line sector. Option 1 is no action. Option 2 would renew king mackerel permits of average landings who met the threshold under various time periods. Again, one that would potentially broaden the time period based on scoping input.

MR. HARTIG: Yes, and I think we had some numbers in there before. I think the X's are better actually. We can go to scoping and get some information from the public on what they think those qualifiers may be.

MR. WAUGH: Okay, Action 4 deals with federal regulatory compliance. Option 1 is no action; all vessels with federal commercial king and/or Spanish mackerel permits as well as coastal migratory pelagic charter permits are subject to applicable federal coastal migratory pelagic regulations when fishing in the EEZ and are subject to applicable state coastal migratory pelagic regulations when fishing in state waters.

Option 2 would have all vessels with federal commercial king and/or Spanish mackerel as well as coastal migratory pelagic charter permits must comply with the more restrictive of state or federal. The note in there is modify to delete "and/or for-hire" because the charter already includes cobia. It covers all coastal migratory pelagic species.

MR. HARTIG: Seeing no discussion on that, we'll move right along.

MR. WAUGH: Okay, Action 5 is to modify or eliminate income requirements for Gulf and South Atlantic commercial coastal migratory pelagic permits. Option 1 is the no action, and we're just adding in "and South Atlantic" to make sure it's clear that the no action maintains the existing income requirements.

Option 2 would establish an income requirement for a commercial vessel permit for cobia if a cobia permit is established that is consistent with requirements for king and Spanish mackerel permits. Here is where we get to the issue that Monica raised about the income requirements applying. Option 3 would eliminate the income requirements.

Option 4 would replace the current income requirements with the coastal migratory pelagic landings requirements such that in one of two years preceding the applications landings must be greater than 500, 1,000, 5,000 or 10,000, and it would include king, Spanish and cobia. Option 5

would modify the current income requirements to allow Gulf or South Atlantic Council to suspend the renewal requirements by passage of a motion specifying either; A, the event of condition triggering the suspension; B, the duration of the suspension; and, C, the criteria establishing who is eligible for the suspension. Those are the five options included now.

MR. HARTIG: Are you all clear on those? Any discussion on that? Seeing none, we'll move on.

MR. WAUGH: Action 6 is a Spanish mackerel gill net endorsement. This would establish a Spanish mackerel gill net endorsement with qualifying poundage for a commercial gill net endorsement based on the new control dates and average landings during the most recent five, ten or fifteen years prior to these control dates. The control dates are March 31, 2010, for Gulf Group Spanish Mackerel and September 17, 2010, for Atlantic Group Spanish Mackerel. The options are 30,000 pounds, 20,000 pounds and 10,000 pounds.

DR. DUVAL: Just to note that North Carolina has an exemption north of Cape Lookout for gill net caught fish.

MR. WAUGH: We'll make sure that gets added to the no action alternative.

DR. DUVAL: And to follow up, I'm sorry, just for king, so disregard that remark since we're talking about Spanish.

MR. HARTIG: Anything else on this one? All right, I think we good, Gregg. Okay, now we need a motion to approve the document for public hearing. So moved by Duane Harris; seconded by Mac Currin. Anymore discussion on moving this to public hearing or scoping? Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: Gregg, all of the actions seem to have an Option 1, no action, explains no action except Action 6. It seems that it ought to have that to be consistent.

MR. WAUGH: I agree and we'll make sure one gets added.

MR. HARTIG: Thanks, Roy, for keeping us straight and keeping us consistent.

MR. WAUGH: And just to make sure, this is to approve the Amendment 19 Scoping Document with the changes.

MR. HARTIG: Is that all right with the maker of the motion and the seconder? Okay, the maker of the motion said that was good to add with changes for scoping, the changes that have been made in the document by the IPT. All right, is there any objection to the motion? Seeing none, **that motion is approved.** Next we'll do Amendment 20.

MR. WAUGH: And this is Attachment 4B in your Briefing Book. Again, we've got an updated document with a few edits and that's the one that I'll walk you through and point out the changes. The first action deals with consider modifications to the existing commercial fishery

boundary line between the Gulf Group King Mackerel Eastern Zone and Western Zone, which is currently set at the Alabama/Florida Boarder, with potential corresponding changes to the commercial allocations and trip limits.

Again, this is a Gulf action, so I'm just going to show you where the changes are. Option 1 we dropped "remains" and added "and the quotas and trip limits for each zone and subzone". Option A just modified dropping this as constituted. Option 2, some clarification, adding southern zone. All of this will be edited by the staffs and the IPT before it goes out to scoping. Option 3, there are a few changes suggested there as well; Option 4, the same thing. Again, this is just Gulf Group, so I think we can skip over that to the next one unless anybody has any suggested changes.

Okay, Action 2 is to change, a slight modification in the wording, the opening date of the Gulf Group King Mackerel season for the western zone. Currently the opening date is July 1. Option 2 would change that to September 1; Option 3 to October 1; Option 4 to November 1. Again, this is just Gulf Group King Mackerel and western zone so it doesn't affect our eastern zone.

Action 3 would establish a transit provision for fish harvested in the EEZ off Monroe County when the rest of the west coast of Florida is closed. This would affect some of our fishermen. Option 1, no action, would not establish a transit provision. Option 2 would establish a transit provision for fish harvested in the EEZ off Monroe County when the rest of the west coast of Florida is closed.

MR. HARTIG: Any discussion on that one? All right.

MR. WAUGH: Action 4 is the requirement to identify commercial Gulf Group King Mackerel fishing zones in which a vessel is fishing. No action would not require that. Option 2 would require that prior to the beginning of the year each owner of a permitted commercial king mackerel hook-and-line vessel must identify the zone and subzone in which the vessel will fish during the upcoming fishing year – that's the western zone and the Florida east coast subzone, so this does affect our fishermen – the Florida west coast, southern subzone or Florida west coast northern subzone.

Option 3 would require that prior to the beginning of the fishing year each owner of a permitted commercial king mackerel hook-and-line vessel must identify no more than two of the zones or subzones in which they would fish.

MR. HARTIG: Does everybody understand that one? All right, Gregg.

MR. WAUGH: Action 5 would establish commercial Gulf Group King Mackerel fishing endorsements by zones in which a vessel will be fishing. Option 1, no action, do not establish the fishing endorsements by zone. Option 2 is reworded slightly to read, "Require an endorsement to fish in a particular zone or subzone. Only one endorsement is allowed at any one time and it is not transferable during the year." Option 3 would require an endorsement to fish in a particular zone or subzone. No more than two endorsements are allowed at any one time and they are not transferable during that year.

MR. HARTIG: Everybody clear on that? You did get the endorsements. I see, Bob, you did get those in there; nice job.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, I did talk to the chairman of the South Atlantic Mackerel Committee and he suggested it was a great idea.

MR. WAUGH: Okay, next Action 6, and this is one that we've put in there. It would establish state-by-state or regional quotas for Atlantic Migratory Group King Mackerel, Spanish mackerel and cobia. Option 1, no action, would retain one commercial quota each for Atlantic Migratory Group King Mackerel, Spanish mackerel and cobia. That's where we are now.

Option 2 would establish commercial quotas for each South Atlantic state for Atlantic Migratory Group of king mackerel, Spanish mackerel and cobia. Option 3 would establish commercial quotas for two regions; North Carolina and South Carolina combined and Georgia/Florida combined for Atlantic Migratory Group of king mackerel, Spanish mackerel and cobia.

I might just mention the next action we deal with talks about setting up subzones for cobia because we've got an issue where biologically the stock assessment is being done differently than our management areas that we have. Once we come back from scoping, we may need to modify these alternatives some as they apply to cobia.

DR. DUVAL: Just based on some of the discussion that we've had about state-by-state quotas and maybe different states' abilities to do something like that, I'm wondering if we – as Gregg has indicated these might need to be changed after scoping, but I'm wondering if we just want to go ahead and add in an option at this time that would establish just a North Carolina state allocation if we're going to be the only ones that might be able to administer that.

MR. MUNDEN: Mr. Chairman, under Action 6 I don't see any reference to the Mid-Atlantic states; and if you do decide to bring in the Mid-Atlantic states, we go may go back what we were talking about several years ago about snapper grouper where you establish a Mid-Atlantic region which would include North Carolina and the states north of that. **Mr. Chairman, I would make that as motion that the Mid-Atlantic states be provided for by an additional option; all three, king, Spanish and cobia.**

MR. HARTIG: Michelle, is your option for just king mackerel or for all three?

DR. DUVAL: I would say for all three.

MR. HARTIG: All right, we've got a couple of extra options on there. Is everybody comfortable with what we've got? Anymore discussion on that? It looks like we're okay. Actually the North Carolina thing will work functionally for the Florida commercial fisheries for Spanish and king, it could actually work. Is there anymore discussion on Red's motion? Okay, we need a second by Mac Currin. Is there anymore discussion on that motion? Is there any objection to that motion? Seeing none, **that motion is approved.**

MR. WAUGH: Okay, for Action 7, this is something we put in just before the Gulf Council meeting to account for what appeared to be a likely outcome of the SEDAR stock assessment. If you remember in Amendment 18 we set the council boundary as the boundary for Gulf and Atlantic Migratory Groups of Cobia.

The determination thus far in the stock assessment that is currently underway is that biologically the boundary should be at the Florida/Georgia Line. We're going to get stock assessment results that cover Georgia north through the Mid-Atlantic area and the entire state of Florida is included in the Gulf Group.

The question is how do we deal with that and what we provided to the Gulf Council is this action to establish an eastern zone within the Gulf Migratory Group of cobia and modify the framework to provide that the South Atlantic Council is to set regulations within this zone; in addition, establish a southern subzone within the Atlantic Migratory Group of cobia.

This would follow exactly how we manage Gulf Migratory Group King Mackerel where the Gulf Council allocates a portion of the ACL to the Florida east coast and then the South Atlantic Council manages those fish to ensure that those quotas and that ACL is not exceeded. We've got Option 1, no action, the boundary between migratory groups of cobia is the council boundary.

In Options 2 and 3, the part about creating – and I don't know that we need to keep Option 2 anymore. At the stage we developed this, the stock assessment wasn't clear whether they were going to use Cape Canaveral or the Florida/Georgia Line. I don't know if we have any further clarification.

My understanding where we are with the SEDAR stock assessment is they're going to recommend using the Florida/Georgia Line, but we want for scoping just leave this in here. So, creating this eastern subzone within the Gulf Migratory Group to include the Florida east coast south of Canaveral and the Atlantic side of the Keys in Option 2.

And then Option 3 is establish an eastern subzone within the Gulf Migratory Group to include the Florida east coast and Atlantic side of the Keys. That seems pretty straightforward. The question then that is less clear in our minds, and we need some guidance for you, is how to handle the Atlantic side then.

Do we then establish a zone within the Atlantic Migratory Groups that is from whatever line we're using here? In Option 2 it would be Cape Canaveral north or Option 3 that we create a zone to deal with that portion of our area of authority that is not reflected in the stock assessment. It's clear on the Gulf side; I can't get my mind quite wrapped around the right wording to suggest for how we modify the Atlantic side.

MR. HARTIG: Well, essentially we'd have two migratory groups. We'd have the group between the Florida border and the council boundary that we would be managing, and then we'd have the Florida/Georgia border to the rest of the cobia range, which goes through a number of northern states. You'd have two groups to manage, correct?

MR. WAUGH: Yes.

MR. HARTIG: Okay, we'd have to barter with the Gulf to see how many cobia they're going to give us. We count on you, Bob.

MR. WAUGH: So maybe just recognize that the IPT will take another shot at this and try and come up with some way, because I don't think we want to go back and revisit each council's area of authority that was sorted out in Amendment 18. What we want to be able to do is just deal with the stock assessment results and create a situation where the Gulf Council will then – just like they do for Gulf kings – allocate a portion of the Gulf Group of cobia to us and we will manage it on the Florida east coast. We'll come up with the right wording to handle that Atlantic portion of the discussion.

MR. CURRIN: Either in a dream or some scientific literature that I think I'm familiar with from way, way back, I seem to recall evidence of cobia migrating from the coast of North Carolina into the Florida Keys, which is quite different than what I'm seeing now and I presume is recognized as the best acceptable science at this point regarding cobia distribution and migration. Has something fundamentally changed or was that truly a dream that I had many, many years ago?

MR. HARTIG: Now, they actually looked at all of the tagging information, all the tagging information from a number of different people who had done it over time, and they put it all together. We had one group of information that showed us that it looked like it was going to be Cape Canaveral, and then we got another study that came in late and then that showed it was more the Florida/Georgia Border was more appropriate.

That's how it came out of the data workshop. Sorry you haven't gotten my paper yet; I haven't been able to write, but stay tuned, I'll get it to you so you will be apprised of how this was done. I think one thing we might do in Option 2 instead of leaving it just Cape Canaveral, maybe have Cape Canaveral – because we don't know what they're going to decide at the assessment workshop that may actually change things based on the way they look at it.

Sometimes they do that, they'll make a change, so for the public to be able to comment, Cape Canaveral or Florida/Georgia Border or somehow be able to explain to the public in there that those were the two different ways that they were being looked at.

MR. WAUGH: That's what 3 does; Florida/Georgia.

MR. HARTIG: Three does it, okay. All right, three incorporates that so we're good there. That's the last option we have in Amendment 20. **I'll need a motion to approve the document for scoping. Moved by Michelle; seconded by Duane. Anymore discussion? Any objection to the motion of moving it along to scoping? Seeing none, that motion is approved.** Timing and task; you've got that covered?

MR. WAUGH: The Executive Finance Committee is going to be talking about our priorities and timing and approving our activities schedules, so if the Mackerel Committee wants to provide

some guidance on, one how we handle these scoping meetings – the Gulf is doing one in Key West. They've got their dates already laid out in March. The last one is April 2nd.

They're doing one in Key West on March 26th. What is the feeling from the state folks or individual committee members on whether we need to do face-to-face scoping for this? During the I&E Committee meeting we're going to be talking about how the Gulf does some scoping in addition to face to face.

They're doing YouTube video, staff presentations and then doing webinars and taking public input. We don't have another round of scoping scheduled; so if you all feel we need to have face-to-face scoping meetings, then we want to get some guidance from you to feed into the Executive Finance Committee when they meet later this afternoon to decide what we're working on this year. A number of these items have been scoped previously and talked about quite a bit and some are new.

DR. DUVAL: Gregg, maybe just a question; sort of staff's recommendation in terms of an overall timeline to then take these out to actual public comment. Obviously, that's dependent somewhat on when we decide to take these out for scoping, but I'm just wondering if council staff has some recommendations in that regard for a timeline for completion for these things.

MR. WAUGH: What we have discussed with the Gulf Council staff and at the IPT level is Amendment 19 deals with the sale issue so that's clarifying how fish are counted. Amendment 20 would have a provision in there for us to deal with the stock assessment results that we will get for cobia.

Those are the sort of two driving issues as well as being able to identify commercial cobia fishermen and get that separation. The cobia commercial ACL is approximately 125,712 pounds, so that is going to filled relatively quickly. It's sort of up to you all. In looking at our draft activities schedule that we put together for the consideration by the Executive Finance Committee, we've got a series of public hearings scheduled for August.

The hope was that you would approve preferred alternatives to go out to public hearings at June, do the hearings in August and then finalize in September or December. We did the Ecosystem Committee this morning and you all know what the priorities were sort of laid out there. It's going to be up to the Executive Finance to lay it out.

We have concerns if we have to go out and do a whole nother round of face-to-face scoping meetings before June. We're also going to be talking about five workshops to deal with speckled hind and Warsaw. That's why we were hoping that we could perhaps use this virtual process for scoping since some of these issues have been scoped before. It's entirely up to you.

MR. HAYMANS: If participation is minimal through the virtual meeting, is there an opportunity to come back to some face to face at that point; I mean, if it just flounders?

MR. WAUGH: Well, we have face to face at this meeting. There are two opportunities for the public to comment here, the informal session on Wednesday and then we have a hearing

scheduled for Thursday, so there would be that opportunity at each public hearing. If the intent is to approve at June to go out to public hearing, then, no, there wouldn't be an opportunity.

MR. CURRIN: I guess we'll hear more about it during the I&E Committee, but can you quickly, Gregg, give us a synopsis of the Gulf Council's or the, Bob, the Gulf Council's experience with that.

MR. WAUGH: Sure, I'll touch on it and Bob may want to expand on it as well, but the presentation staff would give at a scoping meeting is done as a video and that is posted on YouTube and as I understand it hung off of their website, and you publicize that. Then you hold a webinar where again you can give another presentation and take questions and answers, and then people can e-mail in comments.

MR. GILL: And that's exactly right; and our experience in the first several where you were talking about several hundred folks that responded, which were shocking to me again and the newness of the concept, et cetera. We did it for our Generic ACL/AM Amendment. I think we did it for Amendment 32, gag grouper. The response was surprisingly robust, particularly given the opposite side of that equation for public hearings and public testimonies around the Gulf when nobody comes to them. It was very encouraging.

MR. CURRIN: A followup for you, Bob; on the other side of the coin have you heard any negative comments from folks who felt like they were excluded because they don't know anything about Facebook and YouTube and all this other stuff?

MR. GILL: I guess I would say, of course, there are always those folks that do feel excluded, and I don't know that we can every satisfy a hundred percent of the population out there. We were encouraged given the great increase in folks that did participate compared to the older methods that we had. I expect Emily, when she comes to talk, will say more about it, but, yes, there were some negatives but there were a whole lot more positives than negatives that I'm aware of.

MR. CURRIN: So I guess the bottom line is then you guys were encourage enough that you plan to continue with that sort of approach and that you feel it's beneficial?

MR. GILL: Correct.

MR. HARTIG: Any other comments on that? It may be a natural one to start with going down this path. I'm heartened to hear the Gulf Council's success; that's pretty cool. I guess that's the way we'll proceed. I have one other presenter who actually showed up here, Terry Adkins from Bluewater Productions. He had a tournament sales presentation to make. Terry, do you want to come on up?

MR. ADKINS: As he said, my name is Terry Adkins. I'm with Bluewater Promotions. We are an independent tournament promoter. I know that earlier in the day you heard from Jack Holmes representing SKA. I'm a tournament promoter and most tournaments are sanctioned by SKA. My SKA number is 7, so I've been around since the beginning.

Through 18 years of promoting tournaments I've run hundreds of tournaments. From the beginning of our tournament promotion business, we set one standard that the fish that we brought in would be put to good use. No fish would be discarded and under no circumstances would we allow them to be sold for profit. We would make sure that they were sold for charity.

We do collect fish at our tournaments. The King Mackerel Industry is a take-type tournament in most scenarios. In every scenario of our tournaments we partner with a local non-profit organization and we secure a permit if required such as in North Carolina. We secure the permit on behalf of the non-profit and then we partner with an established, licensed seafood wholesaler.

Much like in Georgia, my partner is Charlie, we make sure that the fish are cared for and then that 100 percent of the proceeds go to a charitable organization which we partner with. Now, our tournament plan is a little different than some others, but that is how we conduct ours. We think that's the best use of tournament-caught fish. I would urge you to allow tournament promoters whether they be truly non-profits such as the local fishing club or a Rotary Club or me working through a non-profit organization that we partner with; make sure that you allow those fish to be put to good use.

I would strongly urge you to capture that data. We've supplied – Doug Haymans caught while I was on a boat asked me to provide a few years. It's a simple excel spreadsheet for us. We provided three years rather quickly. We've got it nailed down to the exact weight of every fish prorated over three years, over every tournament.

Going forward I would hope that you would utilize that data as you analyze the condition of our fishery but also understand that we're putting something back and that we're willing to help. It's a pretty easy task today particularly if you have a licensing procedure that is pretty well set up in North Carolina. I'd urge each of the states that participate in this council to adopt a program like that, that ensures that the fish are taken of well and the proceeds go back to a local non-profit organization. With that, I'll take any questions and I appreciate your time. I apologize for being on time but obviously late. I started driving from St. Mary's when you started this portion of the program.

MR. HAYMANS: Terry, do you address in our tournament rules handling the fish on the boat? Is there some quantify of ice, some method to take care of the fish?

MR. ADKINS: We have written into our rules that they must be fresh and in edible fashion. What we have determined is most of the competitive anglers are so adamant about taking care of their fish so that there is no weight loss, they're usually better cared for than any recreational angler. They come well iced. They're usually in a tournament-style bag stuffed with ice.

They usually look better than any of the local ramp guys that just go king mackerel fishing for the day. We've always checked our fish and we make sure that they're not glassy-eyed, the gills aren't milked out and that they're in good shape. Over these years our licensed handlers have never returned a fish to me saying it was not of edible fashion. I think our tournament anglers do a remarkably good job, maybe even zealously good job.

MR. HARRIS: Terry, thanks for being here; sorry we rushed you a little bit on your trip up from St. Mary's.

MR. ADKINS: It was remarkable that you're ahead of schedule.

MR. HARRIS: I had two committees so it's just natural that we'd be ahead of schedule.

MR. ADKINS: You run a tight ship, Duane.

MR. HARRIS: Do you have a number in mind as to what you think would be an appropriate set-aside from the recreational quota ACL for tournament sales?

MR. ADKINS: I don't think I'm prepared to answer for all tournaments. We've run as many as eleven in a year and that kind of mirrors the recent economic unpleasantness, so we're down a few as we go forward. I think statistically you could probably look forward and say we expect this many boats; therefore, we think we will have this many pounds.

At Doug's prompting, I looked back at the last three years. I would have thought fish were bigger – I mean, they all seemed big to me at the time – but as it turns out they average 21.8 to 22 pounds per fish. Most king mackerel anglers tell you they all catch forties, by the way, but I think probably we could look forward and come up with a logical number on what to expect.

I don't think that number would significantly impact the recreational amount; or even if it went into the commercial, I don't think it would dramatically impact. The number is not that large. I think the key is making sure that – this is an economic impact. I think right now the last thing we need to do is take away some economic impact.

Allowing tournaments to proceed and allowing them to be take tournaments – and our statistics show that we don't actually take that many fish. If there is anything that we could do going forward, I will just state it again, we don't mind regulations because we hope that they will help. It would be great if it was required for tournaments to submit their data. Every tournament should have some mechanism of counting for the fish that are being caught. It also would be a great way for us to know the economic impact. The number of anglers out there on the water would be a great thing for you to know. The amount of money they spend would be a great thing for you to know. I think it would be an easy way for us to help.

MR. HARRIS: Just to follow up, we need a right number if we go down this road of a set-aside for tournament sales, so it's going to be critical I think that you and Jack and the folks that run these tournaments get together and kind of come up with something that is a reasonable set-aside number for the council to plug into an amendment to a plan.

MR. ADKINS: If I could address having a set-aside, you're talking about a broad scope of tournaments. Our little tag line on our side is the tournament professional. Some days I feel like a professional and sometimes I feel like an outright amateur, but there are a lot of true amateur club tournaments that just get together. That's a certain number of take out of the fishery.

I'm not sure of the mechanism that you would want to put or maybe the threshold of what qualifies as a tournament; but if it's ten guys getting together and that they just suddenly feel challenged to see who can catch the largest fish, is that a tournament or is it something where a draw a hundred-plus boats? Maybe there is a threshold of a reporting that would enter into that.

MR. HARTIG: Any other questions for Terry? Seeing none, thank you, Terry, I appreciate that. Any other business to come before the Mackerel Committee? We have got our timing and task done, right?

MR. WAUGH: Yes.

MR. HARTIG: Okay, we're adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 3:10 o'clock p.m., March 6, 2012.)

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2011 - 2012 Council Membership

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MACKEREL COMMITTEE MEETING
March 6, 2012
Savannah, GA 31401

P.O. BOX/STREET
CITY, STATE & ZIP

EMAIL
ADDRESS

AREA CODE &
PHONE NUMBER

NAME &
ORGANIZATION

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