

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

MACKEREL COBIA ADVISORY PANEL

Webinar

April 6, 2021

Transcript

AP Members

Tom Roller, Vice Chair
Steve English
Charles Locke
Paul Rudershausen

Keith Bowen
Rusty Hudson
Thomas Newman
Stephen Swann

Council Members

Mel Bell
Steve Poland

Chris Conklin

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Myra Brouwer
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Julia Byrd
Dr. Chip Collier
Kathleen Howington
Kim Iverson
Dr. Mike Schmidtke

Attendees and Invited Participants

Rick DeVactor

Other attendees and invited participants attached.

The Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened via webinar on April 6, 2021 and was called to order by Mr. Tom Roller.

MR. ROLLER: Are we ready?

MS. WIEGAND: We are going to get rolling. I will pull up the agenda for everyone. It looks like Approval of the Agenda will be your first order of business, Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Okay, and so, as we call to order the April 2021 Mackerel Cobia Advisory meeting, the first order of business is the Approval of the Agenda, if we could get a motion for that from anybody.

MS. WIEGAND: We don't need a formal motion, so long as no one has anything to add, and we can approve that by consensus.

MR. ROLLER: All right. Let's approve by consensus then. I'm operating on different rules here, but that's good. Just guide me to where I need to go.

MS. WIEGAND: I'm sorry, and I'm probably jumping ahead right away, because I'm -- This AP has now met via webinar a couple of times, but I should go over some logistics, real fast, just to make sure everyone is on the same page. Just in case you guys need a refresher, how we run these meetings, using the webinar, is that, if you have a question, want to make a motion, want to second a motion, things like that, you can go ahead and raise your hand using this little raise-hand icon that's on your webinar control panel.

If it is red, that means your hand is raised, and, of course, we've already done mic checks, and it seems like you guys are pretty well-versed at the mute/unmute button, but, again, that's on your control panel. If it's orange, you're muted. If it's green, you're unmuted, and everyone can hear you, and, of course, as we're going through the meetings, if you have any technical issues, if you use the question box -- You can type something in there for staff, and there will be people on the line, and Myra Brouwer and Cindy Chaya are helping us out today as support staff, and so, if something goes wrong, just message one of them, and they will be able to walk you through it. When you raise your hand, it will pop up here, in this hand-raise list, and that will allow Tom to call on you, as you raise your hand. Sorry, Tom, and I should have gone over all that first, but I will now turn it back over to you, to see if anyone has anything to add to the agenda.

MR. ROLLER: As we look to approve this agenda by consensus, does anyone have anything to add? I see no comments, and so I guess we can approve the agenda.

MS. WIEGAND: Then next up would be Approval of the November 2020 Minutes.

MR. ROLLER: I'm sure everybody has seen the minutes, and we'll go ahead and approve our November 2020 meeting minutes by consensus, unless anyone has any corrections or anything to add. Seeing none, we can approve those minutes by consensus.

MS. WIEGAND: Excellent. Then, if it's all right with you, Tom, I thought now would be an appropriate time to sort of do some introductions, and I can go ahead and call on the AP members

that we've gone on the webinar, and if they could just go ahead and state their name and where they're from and how they're involved in the fishery, I think that would be helpful for everyone else on the webinar.

MR. ROLLER: Absolutely, and would you mind calling on the people?

MS. WIEGAND: I wouldn't mind. Would you like to go ahead and go first, since you already have the mic?

MR. ROLLER: Absolutely. My name is Tom Roller, and I'm a for-hire fisherman in North Carolina, and I've been on this AP I think for four or five years now. I was elected Vice Chair at the last meeting, and, with Ira unable to make today's meeting, I will be chairing today, as they have stated several times. I did speak with Ira this morning, and he wanted me to reiterate to everybody his apologies, but he had something come up that he could not miss, and we all know that he's one of the most dedicated people in federal fisheries, and so he's allowed an absence every once in a while, and so that's it.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Next on my list, I've got Charlie Locke, if you want to introduce yourself.

MR. LOCKE: This is Charlie Locke, and I'm from Wanchese, North Carolina, and I'm a full-time commercial fisherman. I mostly participate in a lot of different gillnet fisheries, and a lot of snapper grouper and other species as well, but I mainly gillnet fish in North Carolina here.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Charlie. Keith Bowen, I see you just hopped on. I've got you unmuted, if you want to go ahead and introduce yourself the group.

MR. BOWEN: Hello. I'm Keith Bowen, and I'm a commercial king mackerel fisherman out of Sebastian, Florida.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Moving on down my list, Paul Ruderhausen.

MR. RUDERHAUSEN: My name is Paul Ruderhausen, and I am a biologist for North Carolina State University's Department of Applied Ecology. I work out of Morehead City, North Carolina, and I have dabbled into a little bit of discard mortality research recently, and I have taken over -- For a student that's moved out to the west coast, I've taken over his project looking at stock structure of cobia in the southeastern United States.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you, Paul. Next up, I've got Rusty Hudson.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you. Rusty Hudson, and I'm a consultant with Directed Sustainable Fisheries, and I've been representing the king mackerel commercial boats since they asked me in November of 2006, and I've been involved, and there's a lot of road behind us now, between science and management, but I think we're in a good place. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you, Rusty. Next up, I've got Steve English.

MR. ENGLISH: This is Steve English. I'm from Port Salerno, Florida. I've been a commercial fisherman for forty-five years, gillnet and hook-and-line. I've done a little bit of everything up and down the coast. I'm here and can answer any questions you need.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you, Steve. Next up, I've got Steve Swann.

MR. SWANN: I'm Steve Swann, and I'm a recreational fisherman out of Jacksonville, Florida, primarily, fishing out of the St. Johns at Mayport. Thanks.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Steve. Thomas Newman.

MR. NEWMAN: I'm Thomas Newman, a commercial fisherman out of North Carolina. I mostly gillnet.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Thank you, guys. That looks like all of the AP members we have online right now, but we've also got a couple of council members that I will let go ahead and briefly introduce themselves, starting with Chris Conklin.

MR. CONKLIN: I'm Chris Conklin, and I've been on the South Atlantic Council for nine years, and I've been a fish dealer in South Carolina for twenty-five, and I have a retail and a wholesale business, and I own a fleet of snapper grouper boats, and we do some king mackerel fishing as well, whenever they swim through.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Chris. Next up, we've got Chair Mel Bell.

MR. BELL: Good afternoon. This is Mel Bell, and I'm the South Carolina state representative, and I work for South Carolina DNR, and I really appreciate you all being here and investing your time in this today, and so thanks.

MS. WIEGAND: Last, but certainly not least, we've got Vice Chair Steve Poland.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Christina. Good afternoon, everyone. Steve Poland, North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries, and I'm the North Carolina state rep on the council, as well as the chair of the council's Mackerel Cobia Committee. I just wanted to tell everyone how much I appreciate everyone signing-on today, and I look forward to discussion and feedback from the AP.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. That's everyone that I've got on the list. Tom, I think now would be a good time to see if anyone would like to make a public comment, before we move into Steve's report.

MR. HUDSON: Christina, I had raised my hand, because, with regard to the introductions, I have a question for you. I'm looking at the February 19, 2021 advisory panel list, and I wanted to ask about the status of eight AP members, versus this list, and is it okay if I mention their names right now?

MS. WIEGAND: I guess I'm unsure as to what context -- Are you referring to the AP members that are not currently online?

MR. HUDSON: Correct, besides Ira, and he's the only one that you identified as not being online, but my questions had to deal with like Stephen Donalson from Florida, Skip Feller from Virginia, Aaron Kelly from North Carolina, Robert Olsen from South Carolina, Greg Peralta from South Carolina, Brad Phillips from North Carolina, and Gary Robinson from Florida. That's it. That's all I needed to know, was just get an idea. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Rusty. Those are indeed advisory panel members, and they are not on the webinar as of right now, and it's possible that some of them hop on later, and, if they do, I will be sure to let the group now that additional AP members have hopped on and will be joining the discussion.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Rusty. With that, Tom, if you would like to ask for public comment.

MR. ROLLER: Is there anybody from the public in attendance who would like to make a public comment? We will hopefully also have time at the end of the meeting as well, and so, if there is anyone from the public, please raise your hand, and I will call on you. Seeing none, I think it's time for us to move on to the report from the council's Mackerel Cobia Committee Chair, and so take it away.

MR. POLAND: All right. Thank you, Chairman Roller. Good afternoon, again, everyone. I have already introduced myself. I'm Steve Poland, Chair of the Mackerel Cobia Committee. I appreciate everyone joining us this afternoon. Hopefully, the next time we meet, it can be in person, hopefully in Charleston, and I hate to hear that Ira can't join us, but I do appreciate Tom for stepping up and chairing this meeting.

We've had two council committee meetings since the last time the AP met, and I will go over those two meetings briefly, and, really, we talked about similar topics at both meetings, King Mackerel Framework Amendment 10, which eventually morphed into Amendment 34, and CMP Amendment 32, and this is the Gulf cobia amendment, or the Florida east coast cobia amendment, as well as a discussion on the Mackerel Advisory Panel participation and structure and what have you.

Getting ready for my comments, and I'm going to just put this on the record for Christina and staff, because I don't know why I haven't thought of this before, but I am referring back to committee reports from the previous two Mackerel Cobia Committee meetings, and, just thinking forward, this might be good briefing materials to include for your next AP meeting, or just have -- Every time you all meet as an advisory panel body, have the previous committee reports available for your reference, because these committee reports are really the summary of our discussions and actions at the table, and they pretty concisely capture discussions that we had, actions that were taken, and some of that rationale. Maybe, in the future, we can provide these to you.

I won't go into too much detail on the council's specific discussions on the items that the AP will discuss today, and I'm here, as well as Mel and Chris, to answer any questions or provide any context for that, but, really, at the last AP meeting, the AP provided some very useful comments, on king mackerel especially, and the council had just received the updated stock assessment, and we hadn't even met to discuss potential actions for an amendment.

Initially, we were going to do a framework amendment, just to update the ABCs and ACLs and take care of a few management issues, but, over the course of the discussion with the public, as well as feedback received from the AP, this has been elevated to CMP Amendment 34, where the council is not only going to take action to update the ABC and ACL, but we'll also look at sector allocations as well as some other management issues that have cropped up from public comment and AP feedback, such as dealing with issues with depredation by sharks and allocations, and so, a lot of what you see in Amendment 34, we really leaned heavily on the feedback we received from the AP, and I look forward, as well as the rest of the council looks forward, to the AP's continued discussion on that amendment and those actions today.

CMP Amendment 32, this is an amendment -- Since Gulf cobia are managed jointly on the east coast of Florida, this is an amendment that the South Atlantic Council has begun work on to just codify those management measures for Gulf group cobia on the east coast of Florida. We did have a fair amount of discussion on this at the last two committee meetings, and some of the actions that we are moving forward, on the South Atlantic side, differ slightly than the Gulf side, based off of feedback from stakeholders as well as AP and Florida representation on the council, and so this action -- I do look forward to hearing the AP's input, especially input from folks that have kind of boots-on-the-ground, or boat-in-the-water, experience down there off the east coast of Florida.

Then, lastly, we spent a considerable amount of time, at the last meeting, talking about the structure of the advisory panel, and this is an attempt by the council to just ensure that we're getting good feedback and representative feedback throughout the entire range of the management plan, and so the CMP management plan goes through the Mid-Atlantic region, and we've heard feedback, over the last couple of years, from the fishermen and stakeholders, and the AP, through fishery performance reports, that it does seem like the abundance of mackerel, both king and Spanish, appear to be increasing north of North Carolina, in that Mid-Atlantic region.

We want to ensure that we have good and fair representation from all areas of the managed regions, and so Christina will be providing a white paper and a summary of the discussion and comments that the council had at the last meeting, and so, with that, I really do look forward to the AP's perspective on that, because this is directly impacting the structure and function of the AP.

Lastly, fishery performance reports, and I feel like, for the Mackerel AP, this is more of an annual thing, and I think that's very prudent, just given the input that we've received from stakeholders for these years of changes in the mackerel fishery. These fishery performance reports, the council leans heavily on, because, in essence, it's a direct report of what fishermen and anglers are actually seeing on the water and experiencing on the water, and it does help us put management actions and management considerations into better context, and so I look forward to that discussion.

With that, I don't have anything else to summarize at this point, but I just thank you again for joining us this afternoon, and, on behalf of the council, I'm excited, and I look forward to hearing your discussion today, and I will be here for the entire meeting. With that, I will turn it back over to you, Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you for that, Steve. I really appreciate your commitment, and you are a great council member. Christina, would it be appropriate to move on to the next agenda item?

MS. WIEGAND: Absolutely. I'm ready.

MR. ROLLER: I'm ready.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. With that, I'll jump into a summary of CMP Amendment 34, which is the king mackerel amendment. You guys will remember, back when we met in November, this amendment sort of didn't really exist in any form, and the council had provided direction for staff to move forward to address the new assessment, and they thought it would be prudent to sort of immediately come to the AP and get your feedback, before we even started developing sort of a concrete document.

Just as a quick refresher, this amendment is based on the updated SEDAR 38 assessment, which indicated that Atlantic king mackerel was not overfished, nor was it experiencing overfishing. In fact, thanks to a number of good years of excellent recruitment, the ABC recommendations from the SSC have actually increased quite substantially, but an important thing to remember, as we move forward, is that these ABC recommendations are not directly comparable to the previous ABC and ACL, because this new assessment updated the catch level recommendations to incorporate the revised recreational catch estimates from the new MRIP survey design, and so it's -- Sort of comparing the past ABC to the new ABC is a bit like comparing apples and oranges, and so that will be something to keep in mind as we discuss the actions that are in this amendment.

There are now six actions in this amendment that the council has requested, based on public comment as well as input from this advisory panel, like Steve said, and I'm going to go over each of those individually to discuss with you guys.

Here's the tentative timing for that amendment. Because it is a full plan amendment, it does also have to be approved by the Gulf Council, and the reason this is a full plan amendment is because we are addressing sector allocations, and that requires this to be a full plan amendment, which then thus requires the Gulf Council to approve it as well, but this amendment does only focus on Atlantic king mackerel.

There was a Gulf king mackerel assessment, and that will also be addressed through a full plan amendment, but it will be done separately from this amendment, and the Gulf Council is set to pick up work on that at a later date, and so, right now, this is only addressing Atlantic king mackerel, and so everything from the Mid-Atlantic region all the way down to that Miami-Dade-Monroe County line.

The council reviewed this at their March meeting, and they approved the actions and alternatives they would like to see analyzed, which is what I'm going to go over with you today, and then, at the June meeting, they will be reviewing the input from this meeting and selecting preferred alternatives and then considering approval for public hearings, and so that's sort of where we are on the amendment timeline.

I will go ahead and jump into the purpose and need statement. The purpose of this amendment is to revise the annual catch limits for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel, to revise recreational and commercial allocations for Atlantic migratory king mackerel, and to revise or establish management measures for Atlantic migratory group king and Spanish mackerel.

The need for this amendment is to ensure that annual catch limits are based on the best scientific information available and to ensure overfishing does not occur in the Atlantic migratory group king and Spanish mackerel fisheries, which increasing social and economic benefits through sustainable and profitable harvest of Atlantic migratory group king and Spanish mackerel.

Now, you will notice that I said this amendment focused on king mackerel, but Spanish mackerel is mentioned in the purpose and need, and that is because the council did decide to include an action in here that would look at the provisions for landing cut and damaged fish, and, right now, those provisions affect both king and Spanish mackerel, and so Spanish mackerel is included as an option for that action, and I will talk about that in more detail when we get there, but that's why you see Spanish mackerel listed here in this purpose and need statement. I'm going to take a brief pause here, before I dive into the specific actions and alternatives, to see if anyone has any questions about sort of why this amendment got started and what timeline it's on.

I am seeing no hands pop up right away, and so I'm going to assume that, thus far, I am being clear, but, as we go through this, please don't hesitate to ask questions if something I have said seems confusing or unclear.

Jumping into Action 1, this action looks at revising the total annual catch limit for Atlantic migratory king mackerel to reflect the updated acceptable biological catch level, and so Alternative 1 would be the no action alternative. It would keep the ABC at its current level, which is 12.7 million pounds, and, of course, is not really a viable alternative, because it doesn't represent the best scientific information available.

Alternative 2 would set the total annual catch limit equal to the ABC level, and then Alternative 3 and Alternative 4 propose a buffer, and this was something that the advisory panel recommended at your November meeting. Alternative 3 would set the ACL equal to 95 percent of the updated ABC, and Alternative 4 would set the ACL to 90 percent of the updated ABC, and so a buffer of 5 percent and 10 percent, respectively.

You can see what those actual ACLs would equal out to here, in Table 2, and, again, these aren't really directly comparable to the current ACL in place, because they're using a different metric, and so I will go ahead and pause there and open it up for questions or any discussion the AP would like to have and any recommendations you all would like to make to the council.

MR. ROLLER: Any comments from anybody?

MR. SWANN: Do any of these alternatives impact the potential for the season to be closed at any time during the year, based on prior history?

MS. WIEGAND: That analysis is something that staff is currently working on now, and we should have that to present to the council at their June meeting. I will say that, even considering the switch to the new MRIP numbers, this is a fairly substantial increase in the ABC and ACL, and, in recent years, neither the commercial nor the recreational sector have come close to reaching their ACL. Of course, we're looking at new metrics, with those new MRIP numbers, and we are currently conducting those analyses.

MR. SWANN: All right. Thanks. Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: My question was for either the AP or the council members. This seems to be -- The new ACLs seem to be relying really heavily on the MRIP new survey type that's going into the assessment, to come up with these new figures, and what kind of reliability do we have that the new MRIP assessment, the new MRIP survey method, is more reliable than the old one, and are we putting too much trust into the new MRIP methods, compared to the old ones, and coming up with these new figures?

MS. WIEGAND: Well, you addressed that to council members, and so, Steve, Mel, or Chris, please feel free to jump in here, but I will say that the MRIP survey has been extensively reviewed by the council's Scientific and Statistical Committee, and it has been considered best scientific information available. There's a lot more into the nitty-gritty that we could get into, but it does seem to be a significant improvement upon the CHTS.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: I certainly honor that, and it might be more reliable, but this is an absolutely tremendous -- In my mind, this is a tremendous increase, or not in my mind, and we can just do the raw math, but this is a tremendous increase in the proposed ACL compared to the old MRIP survey method that was used to partially construct the old ACL, and so I would just urge caution in considering these changes, because this is a dramatic change in the figures, compared to using the old MRIP survey style.

MS. WIEGAND: It definitely is, and I will say that this assessment -- It wasn't just updating to the new MRIP-FES numbers, and it was also updating the entire assessment, and so this increase in ABC that you're seeing is not only a reflection of a switch to that new MRIP methodology, but, also, it is reflective of things like a number of years of good recruitment, and I see that Dr. Chip Collier has his hand raised, and he's much more of an expert on stock assessments than I, and so I'm going to go ahead and let him provide a bit more detail.

DR. COLLIER: I don't know if I would consider myself an expert on this, but thanks for the question, Paul, and, in all the reviews that have gone on in regard to the new estimation methods for MRIP, it's definitely an indication that the new methods are an improvement over the old methods, and there is still going to be some uncertainty associated with these numbers, and there's always going to be uncertainty associated with numbers coming out of a survey. However, there is less bias associated with this survey design, the way it's being constructed, and, also, they're getting much better returns, as far as on the effort side of things, and so they're feeling more comfortable there.

Just to put a little bit of an aside on this, if you're thinking about the change in the FES numbers going up, that's not only -- It's not only going up in the past, but it's going up in the future too, and so, as we're tracking the new ACLs, it's going to be tracking based on these higher estimates that are being observed in MRIP, and so it's really just a scaling factor, and it shifts everything up. It's not necessarily just moving the historical piece, and so it's going to be -- The new catches are going to be at a higher level too, and so they're going to be reaching the ACL at a faster rate.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you, Chip. Thomas, I'm going to skip over you, real fast, and go to Mel and then Steve, because I believe they're going to address this MRIP discussion we're having.

MR. BELL: I don't need to weigh-in on this, and Chip did a fine job of explaining it. One way to think of this is the assessment itself was done in the new currency, if you will, and so you need to use the new currency, the same currency that the assessment was done in, in moving forward, and, yes, I do believe that the shifting from the former Coastal Household Telephone Survey over to this part did improve the data, and so Chip covered it.

MS. WIEGAND: Go ahead, Steve.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Christina, and thanks for the question, Paul. It's certainly a question that the council has asked, and we spent I feel like an inordinate amount of time discussing MRIP and the new survey methodology. The council did have a special workshop, and I think it was back in August of 2019, with the council's SSC, as well as invited state partners, and it was a two-and-a-half-day workshop, where the SSC reviewed the new methodology and reviewed kind of the implications for council-managed species and assessments moving forward, and, basically, the take-home message from that process was that, yes, the methodology is an improvement over the old methodology, for numerous reasons that are included in that report, and that assessment results in the future will undoubtedly be impacted.

Basically, it's you're realizing that, for fisheries that have recreational components to it, that there were more removals, and, under the assessment population framework, if there are, historically, more removals, then that means that there had to be more fish, especially if life history characteristics hold true, and that's a very gross oversimplification of it, but that report is out there, and I don't think that you were involved with the council process at that time, and so we can certainly provide that report to you, Paul, and you can certainly reach out to me, and we can talk offline as well, because I sat there through that entire meeting, as well as many of the council staff and people on this call, and we have vivid memories of the discussions.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Steve. Paul, did that help address the questions you had?

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Yes, it did help. Thank you. I'm still not convinced that the dramatic increase we're seeing in these alternatives are warranted, but the explanation was clear. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Then I'm going to -- Thanks for being patient. Go ahead, Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: I just wanted to say that it might be good to have a 5 percent buffer, especially with the new numbers coming in for the new year, and, also, I would like to see, and I know it's in the report, the shorter size limit, and that might also affect the numbers coming in, and so a little buffer, especially on the recreational side, would probably be a good thing.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Go ahead, Keith.

MR. BOWEN: I like where the MRIP is going from here on, but I'm just a little concerned on how they -- I don't know if I should say assumed, but got the numbers going back ten years or whatever, and how do you -- That's where I'm concerned with. Anyway, I just wanted to throw that out there, and it's kind of hard to grasp that idea, is all.

MS. WIEGAND: Chip, I hope you don't mind if I put you on the spot, but would it be possible for you to explain a little bit how they go about sort of back-calculating and taking landings from previous years and putting them into the FES currency?

DR. COLLIER: I will do my best.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you for letting me put you on the spot.

DR. COLLIER: There was a team of scientists, data people, that they put together, and I believe they included some fishermen on the panel as well, but what they did was they had a comparison study for three years running, in order to really look at some important variables, in order to estimate the catch going backwards, and so they had three years of data. Then they also included information such as the number of people with smartphones, and also the advent of caller ID, because they were noticing that people were starting to use caller ID to filter phone calls, and the old survey was based on people calling and then getting the fisherman, hopefully the fisherman, on the line.

They had several different factors that they incorporated into the modeling exercise, in order to estimate catch going backwards, and all that information was compiled and put in there, and different factors were developed. I believe it was done over two years, in order to come up with these estimates, and so it's pretty thoroughly reviewed, but, as you go back in time, the impact of cellphones definitely goes down, and so you're seeing some of the expectations that you would hopefully see in a model like that, and, like Paul said, or like Steve said, if you would like to see additional information on how it was actually set up, we can definitely send it to you. It's a pretty well-laid-out program on how they did it.

MR. NEWMAN: Okay. I appreciate that. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Go ahead, Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I just want to make a brief comment here. I feel like I've had this conversation, regarding the increased MRIP numbers and the new FES guidelines a million different times, and that's because we're having this conversation basically on every level of fisheries management. We're having it on the North Carolina state commission side of things, and we're seeing it in here in the federal council, and I don't want to make a gross generalization, but I'm willing to bet that people are calling -- They're seeing this basically in any managed recreational fishery in the country, and I don't know if that's going to make anybody feel any better, but it's not like it is simply in this fishery that we're calling that into question, right, and so, if anybody has concerns, I will tell you that I think it's being discussed just about everywhere in the United States, when it comes to managed fisheries, and so I'll just leave it at that.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I'm seeing no hands raised at the moment, but, before we move on, I'm going to scroll back up to the actions and alternatives and see if there were any recommendations that you all would like to make to the council. I believe I heard someone say a 5 percent buffer, which would be Alternative 3, seems appropriate, but I wanted to open that up, to see if there was any more discussion that you all would like to have, in terms of making a recommendation to the council. Paul, go ahead.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: I won't beat a dead horse, but, for the reasons I've outlined before, I think this is a tremendous increase, and I don't think anybody, either sector, is going to be slighted in their new ACLs, and so I would vote for a -- I think the 10 percent buffer is warranted, in this case.

MS. WIEGAND: Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: I would tend to agree with Paul. I think our advisory panel, at the last meeting, also felt that we had enough room for a buffer. Now, albeit that the recreational gets a whole bunch of an increase, both in their past catch levels and the future allocations, and yet we're getting the benefit of the stock assessment on the commercial side, but, by the time we get to the fifth year, we're back at where we're at currently in the commercial, but the recreational is a higher level, and herein lies the problem.

We're a census, and so you know exactly what we're catching in the commercial, but this recreational component has not only the two-month waves, and they never went to the one-month wave, and this new currency, and then, the more years you get under your belt with this, the more you can compare the apple with the orange of the past.

What I guess I'm trying to say about this recreational situation is that we won't know Year 1 catch for the recreational until we're well into Year 2, and we haven't even started using this allocation yet, and so, by the time we play out to the fifth year and be anchored down, on the commercial, at the level that we're maxed out at now, it's going to be interesting to see, because you're only going to have three extra years of data through this FES, and there is concerns at the Florida state level, and other levels, about not only king mackerel, but numerous other fishes, like they're saying that this new currency is being applied to, and it's potentially going to affect some of our past data streams in a way that maybe we don't know the answer to, but we will in three to five years. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Keith.

MR. BOWEN: I think that Alternative 3 would be what I would like to see, or whatever, and, also, to Rusty, the one thing I was wondering -- With the recreational side, they went back to get the numbers for the recreational side of this, but, on the commercial side, we've been restricted very heavily, and we were at probably fifty head for a long time, and so we would have undoubtedly been able to catch a lot more, but we've been one of the most heavily restricted areas in the whole entire, I guess, U.S. I mean, the only place with a head limit. I'm just throwing that out there, and if there's a way that you could possibly take the same data and look at what -- Go back on the commercial side as well, for some other projections, I guess. Anyway, I was just throwing that out there, and it's something that I was thinking about.

MS. WIEGAND: Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: The other comment I might have added, or should have added, a couple of minutes ago, was that I know assessment, formal assessment, is its own branch of biased statistical science. With that said, we can look at some of these alternatives here with Action 1 as in the framework of an oversimplified statistical model. In many statistical models, if you have a coefficient of variation, and that is the standard deviation divided by the mean value, of 0.4, or 40

percent or less, you're really batting a home run, and you're really doing good in explaining the variability about your model.

In this case, what we're proposing, or considering, in one of these alternatives, where you've got a 10 percent buffer -- That's really -- In the whole scheme of things, that's not a lot of buffer, or wiggle room, and so, again, if you evaluate it in the context of a statistical model, we're saying that we really have, in the assessment process, nailed down what we think the ABC is, and the 10 percent buffer really isn't a high buffer rate, in my opinion, if you look at it, again, through the lens of statistical modeling and coefficients of variation.

MS. WIEGAND: Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: Some of the adjustments that we've made, and Keith is well aware of this, is a March 1 date is now our beginning, and March is not our end, and that's the Lent, and that's the best demand for king mackerel over on this coast, and he's right that the numbers of fish -- All the other fisheries are in pounds and trip limits and stuff like that, but we had been ratcheted down by a variety of regulations that we have spent several years now changing them, and several amendments and stuff, and that's all good stuff, because I think we've got it where we almost want it. There might be a couple of tweaks we can do on a commercial level.

Back to this recreational, that PSE issue is something that crops up once it's above 30 percent in that MRIP new currency, and so it's going to be interesting to see the future numbers, and also other problems that would come up in other fisheries, where they kind of have to deal with those numbers that can't quite be believed, and so several of us seem to have an issue about this estimate with the recreational and then it being a year-and-a-half or two years removed before you even know what it is, and, commercially, you already know that you're doing real-time monitoring, and so that's the best I can say. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: I just wanted to reiterate about the MRIP stuff, and I was hoping to talk about it later, but I've been to several meetings in the past few months, and it's becoming a recurring theme. The MRIP numbers come in, and then it shows the recreational caught more fish, and we get a bigger ACL, and then they take allocations from the commercial side and get to the recreational side, and it's getting to be a hard thing to watch, because it's just again and again and again, and, like Keith was mentioning, we had a lot of opportunity to harvest fish in the past where we didn't, or seasons were cut short, or some regulation or something happened, where we didn't get to harvest our true potential, and I just don't want to see this happen again in king mackerel or Spanish mackerel. I don't want to see, all of a sudden, this extra quota just get taken and gobbled right back up by the recreational sector.

I just wanted to mention as well too that everybody is saying that 10 percent or higher could be a better -- It isn't that big of a buffer, but, if you're going to use the new currency in the recreational fishery, I just think everybody needs to remember that the catch rates are going to triple, and so, theoretically, you're going to catch the fish three-times faster, and so you might not want to give yourselves too big of a buffer, because you might catch up, and the recreational season might get cut shorter. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Go ahead, Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: We can't forget that we've built in carryover from Season 1. For the last couple of years, where we had the ability to carry that over, 400,000 pounds, approximately, each year, in the Southern Zone. Then we wound up having -- It started the year before last, with Hurricane Dorian in late August, and then, last year, in the middle of September, and it affects a lot of our boats, on this Atlantic side in particular, for the size of the boat, the bad weather, and so, the last two falls and winters, we've left a lot of fish on the table that, had the weather been better -- The prices have been pretty decent, overall, too, and so there's a lot of things that could go right.

For the commercial, we may actually benefit from the increased allocations, because we may actually come closer to catching an allocation, and I think it's only happened like once in more recent memory, and that loused us up to where we lost the month of March, the best time of the year to sell. That's why we shifted to a March beginning instead of an end, and so I just wanted to bring these factors to bear, because it's affecting all of our commercial harvest ability, and it's affecting a lot of the recreational ability to get out there and fish too in the fall and winter.

MS. WIEGAND: Keith.

MR. BOWEN: One of our concerns, on the commercial side of it, is, if we get a lower percentage, and then the data assessment changes, which they always change going forward, we might get cut out of what we need to make it through the year, and that was one of our biggest concerns up and down the coast here, and so I was just putting that out there.

MS. WIEGAND: Go ahead, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you. I did want to point out one thing, that, in development of an ABC that comes from the SSC, they take the scientific uncertainty that comes out of the stock assessment and they drop down from the overfishing limit. If you kind of think about that in a long-term yield sense, that's trying to get at MSY on an annual basis, and so it's already being dropped down a little bit from the OFL, the overfishing limit, and then the SSC provides the scientific uncertainty coming from the assessment and reduces that catch level.

Then this is going to be -- Dropping from the ABC to the ACL is the management uncertainty that comes in, and so that can be a tolerance that the council is adjusting for, and that's what you guys are recommending here, and I just wanted to lay out the framework on how these things are developed.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you, Chip. I'm not seeing any other hands up. We've had sort of quite a bit of discussion on sort of whether or not to have a buffer and what that represents. The next action is going to talk about sector allocations, and so we will get into that a little bit more. Steve, I guess I'm going to look to you. Given that we've got a small number of AP members on, would you prefer the AP have a formal motion to make a recommendation, or are you comfortable with sort of the discussion that's been had and having that detail to the council?

MR. POLAND: No, I think the discussion has been very clear, and it's, honestly, very similar to the discussion that the council has had, not only over this action, but similar actions in all of our

FMPs, and so I'm clear on the position of the AP on this one, and so I don't think we need a formal motion.

MS. WIEGAND: Okay. Thank you, Steve. Then I won't sort of push you guys to have a formal motion, but I guess are there any other questions or comments on Action 1 before I move us on to Action 2?

MR. ROLLER: Christina, just a question. Off of Steve's comments, going forward, do we want to do motions for any of these alternatives, or do we just want to have discussion for each one? I think everyone would like some clarity.

MS. WIEGAND: That is sort of up to the AP and not up to me. It depends on if someone feels very strongly about making a very specific recommendation to the council. Then I would recommend making a motion that this AP can then vote on. Otherwise, all of the discussion that you guys have will be summarized in the AP meeting report, which will be presented to the council, and, of course, you've got Steve, Mel, and Chris who are listening in to the conversation as well. Rusty, I see you've got your hand up.

MR. HUDSON: As far as the discussion goes, we're in scoping, correct, Christina?

MS. WIEGAND: This amendment was scoped at the March council meeting, and so we've completed scoping. The council has approved these actions and alternatives for analysis, which is what staff is currently working on, and then, in June, they will be looking at approving for public hearings, and we'll be moving into the public hearing stage then.

MR. HUDSON: Okay, because I remember that this was a framework, and then, because of what the Gulf did with their amendment, we also then went to a full amendment reassignment, but I believe that we were hoping that we weren't going to have to have much delay at all, and I like what Chip had to say about the OFL not equal to the ABC, and the ABC is not equal to the ACL, and then you can always set an ACT for either/or sector. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: You're reading my mind, Rusty. There's an action for the ACT in here, and so we're going to get to that in just a second. Go ahead, Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Just real quick, guys, I just wanted to say that, as we discuss any of these, the Chair will entertain a motion for any of these alternatives if anybody feels strongly about them, just to be very clear.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you, Tom. I am not seeing any other hands pop up, and I am going to scroll us on down to Action 2. Action 2 looks at revising the sector allocations and the sector annual catch limits for king mackerel. There are some tables in here, and an important thing that I want to note is that these actions are iterative, in the sense that the poundage that results from any sector allocation depends on which alternative is selected as a preferred in Alternative 2, because those sector allocations are then based on the ACL.

Right now, when I scroll down to the table that you'll see here in a minute, it's based on Alternative 2 in Action 1, which assumes there is no buffer between ABC and ACL. Now, once the council has picked a preferred, we'll update the numbers here, but I just want to make that clear, and so, if

the council were to choose Alternative 3 or Alternative 4 in Action 1, the poundages resulting from the sector allocations would decrease a little bit, because the total stock ACL would decrease a little bit based on the buffer that was put in between ABC and ACL.

This action is still a bit under development, and we have Alternative 1, no action, which would retain the current recreational and commercial sector allocations, which are 62.9 percent for the recreational sector and 37.1 percent to the commercial sector, and it would apply those to the revised total annual catch limit for Atlantic king mackerel. Those percentages were set in Amendment 1 to the CMP FMP, and they are based on the proportion of recreational landings from 1979 to 1983.

Under Alternative 2, and this one is a little bit complicated, and so bear with me as I try to explain it. It would allocate 78.44 percent to the recreational sector and 21.56 percent to the commercial sector, and those percentages are based on ensuring that the commercial sector does not experience an ACL lower than what their current poundage is, and, because the king mackerel ABC and ACL decreases each year, we made sure that the current poundage that the commercial sector is experiencing right now in this season is the same sector, or the same poundage, that they would be experiencing in the 2026/2027 fishing season, and so it's never lower than that number.

Then the council has requested that the IPT develop additional alternatives for this action. There was an alternative in here originally that looked at sort of maintaining the historical allocations and just updating the numbers for the 1979 to 1983 time series, but data that far back is no longer supported. We received guidance from the Science Center, during the council meeting, that landings that far back are no longer supported, and so what the council has asked staff to do is to go back and look at longer time series of data to see when the -- Depending on how far you go back, when the total allowable catch or the ACL had been restrictive to either the commercial or recreational sector and look at which sort of long-term time series, a short-term time series, or a mix of both could be appropriate for setting sector allocations.

That is something that the IPT is currently working on, and, when this comes to the council in June, there will likely be additional alternatives underneath this action, and so, with that, I will scroll down, briefly, to Table 2, which, again, shows you the poundages you would receive, given the allocation percentages in Alternative 1 and Alternative 2, and, again, this is based on assuming that the council does not put a buffer in between ABC and ACL in Action 1. If they do, these numbers will change.

At this point, I would sort of encourage you to think, theoretically or hypothetically, about what these allocations mean, in terms of how they're calculated, as opposed to look at these specific poundages, if that makes sense. I know that was a lot of information, and so I'm going to go ahead and pause here and see if anyone has any questions about what I have just gone over, and I'm happy to explain it again, and I know it's a little bit of a complicated system. Tom, go ahead.

MR. ROLLER: A little bit of a rhetorical question, or comment, but, just to be clear, we heard some comments in the last note, the last alternative, regarding new MRIP estimates that end up reallocating to the commercial side, and I just want to be clear here that, even though the percentage allocations may change, the poundage to the commercial sector either stays the same or goes up, and is that correct?

MS. WIEGAND: It depends on the alternative, and so you are correct that, under Alternative 2, the council's goal with this was to hold the commercial sector at the same poundage, and so, regardless of what the percentages look like, they wanted to ensure that the poundage that was allocated to the commercial sector was never lower than what they're experiencing now. So, in the 2026/2027 season, it would be at the same level it is now, and then, as you move sort of back in time, it would slowly increase, and that's because the ABC recommendations for king mackerel decrease over time, and so, in order to make sure that the commercial sector is never lower than where they are now, we had to start at the 2026/2027 season and work backwards.

MR. ROLLER: Okay. Good. Thank you for that explanation.

MS. WIEGAND: Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: I just wanted to comment on what Tom said. I have noticed that, when they reallocate this quota back to the recreational, we're losing a percentage. We're keeping our poundage, currently, but we're losing a percentage, and fish numbers change, and what most of the commercial guys are worried about in the future, in the next five, ten, twenty years, when the ACLs get lowered, is these percentages are going to completely shut us out. I mean, you start taking away -- Well, for instance, cobia went from 8 percent commercial to 4 percent commercial, during a recent reallocation.

Now, ten years from now, when that quota -- When the ACL goes down, and we only have 4 percent of the total ACL, we're not going to be able to afford to leave the dock, and it's going to be really important when this happens to king mackerel and Spanish mackerel. If our allocation is only a very small percentage number, and the ACL gets shut down, what are we going to do? I mean, we're not going to be able to go spend \$500 worth of fuel to go out there and catch \$250 worth of fish. It just doesn't make any sense. We're not out there for fun, and we're out there to harvest a product.

If there's a way that we can be guaranteed the number of poundage, through the next fifty, a hundred, 200 years, yes, that's great, but that percentage, if it shuts our fisheries down, to where we can't harvest enough fish to make our business profitable, we're going to lose even more allocation down the road, because they're going to say, hey, you guys didn't catch anything this year, because nobody went, and so, I mean, there's a lot more to this than just keeping us at the same poundage with a smaller percentage. I mean, this right here is just trying to turn everything in a gamefish, from what I see. I mean, it's getting ridiculous to take half and two-thirds and a quarter of our quota and percentage. You all are just saying it's a percentage, and we're keeping the same poundage, but it's not. We're eventually going to lose a lot of fish if these ACLs get lower in the future.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Thomas, and that brings up an important point, and, Tom, if you will permit, I would like to sort of elaborate on something that I think is important for the AP to consider.

MR. ROLLER: Absolutely, Christina. Go ahead.

MS. WIEGAND: So Thomas is correct that, yes, once these percentages are in place, those percentages are codified, and they stay the same moving forward, unless the council chooses to go

back and look at them and then revise them again. Last year, I believe it was last year, one of the things this council did was put together their allocation trigger policy, and, essentially, what this does is it sets certain points in time where the council will sort of consider what the current sector allocations are and decide whether or not revisions are necessary, and one of those triggers is an updated stock assessment, along with a number of other things, but that does mean that, should a new stock assessment be done for king mackerel, say five years from now, ten years from now, thirty years from now, whenever, the council would look at sector allocations and make a decision then on whether they feel they need to be revised.

Of course, they're in no way mandated to change them, but it's just something that they would then look at, and so these percentages would stay in place until the council chose to revise them, and they will be reviewing them regularly, and so that's just to add a little bit in about that trigger policy. Up next, we've got Charlie.

MR. LOCKE: Christina, can I just comment back just one second? I just wanted to comment back that, with these MRIP numbers being so new, and all this data still coming out, we still don't know how fast the recreational quota is going to get filled, and why can't we just leave like a transfer, instead of going ahead and setting these percentages hard and concrete?

Why can't we just say, hey, halfway through the season, if the recreational have caught 75 percent of their quota, and the commercial has three-times what we think they're going to use, we can transfer some quota from the commercial side to the recreational side, and I don't see any harm in that for the next five to ten years, until we really nail down what MRIP is going to do, because they threw all this other data that they've had for thirty years out in the street, I mean cold turkey, for the new MRIP numbers, and what says they're not going to do the same thing with MRIP in five to ten years?

I mean, we could transfer some quota and just let the commercial guys have a chance, before you go set this in concrete, because we're doing this what I feel like is overnight, and, I mean, I know it's not that, and I know we've been working with the MRIP numbers for two or three or four years, but it feels like, all of a sudden, it's just snapping a finger, and we're just losing all these percentages, and there is no sense in it. I mean, we can -- There is other ways around letting the recreational have a little bit of extra quota without giving it to them hard and fast. Let's give them some sort quota, and let's not just give them hardcore percentages for the next five, ten, twenty years, until the next stock assessment comes up, because, like I said -- Well, I'll leave it.

MS. WIEGAND: I will say that I don't believe any of the council species are managed like this right now. There has been discussion in the past for different species about whether or not there could be an allocation structure that would put together say a common pool allocation that then both the commercial and recreational sector could draw from in addition to sector allocations, and there could be discussion of removing sector allocations entirely, and certainly the council is not required to have sector allocations, and it can be one stock.

I will say that doing that would -- If that's something that this AP thinks the council should consider, they are certainly more than welcome to make that recommendation. Some of the things you may want to consider, when discussing sort of different allocation structures, is that it would likely slow development of this amendment down, because it would require a lot more council discussion, which, if it's something the AP feels is appropriate, that might not be a deal breaker.

It also may require some changes to how the commercial system is done.

Right now, we have area allocations for the commercial sector as well as seasonal allocations in the Southern Zone, and so changing the allocation structure would also necessitate some changing to that, and so I'm no way discouraging you from sort of requesting that the council look at some of these maybe different or innovative ways to manage sector allocations, and those are just some things that the AP might want to consider when discussing that. With that, I'm going to go ahead and move on to Charlie. Go ahead. Charlie, we'll see if we can see what's going on with your sound, and I will move next to Steve English.

MR. ENGLISH: I have a huge problem with them trying to change this from the current allocations from the commercial to the recreational. Alternative 1 has to be the alternative that the commercial sector goes for. All you have to do is look at the past, the entire past, history of the commercial sector.

Any time we lose fish, we do not get them back. Any percentage they take, they take forever, and we'll play heck with ever getting 2 percent of it back, and so I am dead set against changing the allocations. I think the allocations ought to stay just like they are. There is no reason that all the increases can go to the recreational sector. The commercial sector should benefit as well, which means the people of the United States that eat fish benefit as well, and so, with that said, I'm for Alternative 1, and that's that on that.

If you do nothing but just look at the Spanish mackerel and what we did there, we took a million pounds out of the five-million-pound quota, 20 percent of the fish, and gave them to the recreational sector thirty years ago, and they never used one pound of it, but we were shut down year after year, because we didn't have those fish to fish on, and that will happen on this king fishery. It's proven, and it won't change. That is exactly what will happen if you change our allocation, and I am dead set against changing it, and I think we ought to keep it just like it is, and that's my comment on it.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Steve. Charlie, I'm going to go back to you. It looks like you're self-muted, and so, if you unmute on your end, if you unmute your phone, we should be able to hear you, but you're unmuted on our end. It looks like we're still having trouble. Cindy, if you could send Charlie a message and see what we can do to get him unmuted on his end. Next up, Keith Bowen.

MR. BOWEN: I just want to say that I agree with everything that Steve and Thomas was saying earlier, and we're very concerned with changing the allocation and getting the lower percentage. It's just very concerning. The data assessments, like I said earlier, change, and things change. Everything changes, and so participation changes, and everything about it, and so it's definitely - - It's very concerning, and I agree with what Steve was saying, to keep it Alternative 1, if we can.

MR. LOCKE: Can you guys hear me?

MS. WIEGAND: Now we can hear you, Charlie. Go right on ahead.

MR. LOCKE: Okay. I'm about like Thomas on this one, because that cobia thing chapped my butt. I mean, that was a bad deal, and we went over our -- They lowered our quota to 4 percent, and then, in the meantime, we went over the quota that they had left us by about 11,000 pounds, give or take, but I will say this, that I agree with -- I don't know if it was Keith that said something earlier about all the years we were shut down in the king mackerel fishery because the MRIP data is now showing that there was way more stock than there way, and I remember that I traveled to Florida and kingfished a lot of winters, and I remember that it would go to seventy-five head in February, and the quota would shut down, and I would have to come all the way back to North Carolina until April 1 and then go back down and start mackerel fishing again, and I would lose sometimes a month, or a month and a week, of fishing, and on a reduced head limit at that.

Where I grew up in Ponce Inlet, we used to fish on 3,500 pounds, and then all that stuff changed, and this whole thing has changed, but I say reallocate to the commercial, to make up for all the years that we lost out by being closed down early because the MRIP data is showing the stock was healthier. I mean, if this works one way, it's got to work both ways, and this is where I'm getting at with this.

We just did this with flounder in North Carolina. They went from a major commercial allocation, and now they went 50/50 to the recreational, because the recreational is upset because they're not going to get no flounder to catch, because now we're on a reduced quota. I mean, this is -- It makes me -- My face is red, and I can't hardly speak, because it gets me so pumped up about how unfair this is going, when I start to see a reallocation in a fishery that we've been hamstrung by low headcounts and then shortened seasons, because of the quota, and, if you really look at the respective term of the new MRIP data, it looks like they were the ones that were overfishing the resource, and they're going to get rewarded for it.

That's the thing that they used to complain about us about, that the commercial were overfishing, and why would they get rewarded with more quota, and so I'm going to say, right now, that that's going to not sit well with most commercial fishermen I know, if you start reallocating. Then I will say this too, and it's probably been tossed in the back room, because this is what they did with cobia.

When the cobia stock assessment came out, and they saw that we were going to get 144,000, and it went from whatever our northern quota was on cobia to 144,000, and the CCA crowd and all the sporties started saying, oh my gosh, that's a windfall for the commercial guys, that's a windfall for the commercial guys, but what you all have got to understand is, for almost four falls in North Carolina, in our king mackerel gillnet fishery in Hatteras, we had to discard cobia, and not only cobia, but jumbo Spanish mackerel out of our five-inch, because not only was cobia shut down, but the Spanish were shut down premature.

This reallocation thing, when I've had to throw fish back for four falls, cobia, and then lose half my quota, when I told the guys at the cobia -- I said, look, we need this quota, and give us a couple of years to see what we catch on it, and it's just like Thomas was saying. Why rush into reallocation? We don't even know what this MRIP stuff is doing.

Everybody is like betting the bank on this MRIP data, and, just like you said, you just took everything that we've been doing for thirty years and threw it on the porch. It's like -- It's not going to sit well with me if you start reallocating again and again and again to the recreational side

and taking away from commercial guys that have had to -- You know, we've lost, over the years. If anything, let's reallocate back to us. Let's give us more quota to make up for the years that we were shut down, and that's how I feel about it. I don't mean to be so like emotional about it, but it is a really emotional thing for most fishermen, when we've lost so much already, and that's all I've got to say. I appreciate it.

MS. WIEGAND: Paul, go ahead.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: I will just piggyback on the previous commenters and just say that, all of a sudden, we're throwing out these years and years of MRIP data, through the 1980s and 1990s and 2000s, or whenever this previous survey type started for MRIP, and we assumed it was the gold standard, and now the gold standard has been tossed for this new gold standard that we're putting a lot of blind trust into.

I thought that Thomas had an excellent suggestion of moving forward, and I know it's probably not fodder for today's discussion, given the time and just given the potentially rather abrupt nature of it, but I thought that Tom had an excellent suggestion to consider a soft quota, and that's something that the council will hopefully pick up some consideration for in the future, and none of the documents that I have perused in preparation for this meeting had any illusion, potentially understandably, for this soft quota idea that Thomas raised, but I thought that, moving forward, and given the uncertainty in the MRIP numbers, that was an excellent suggestion.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve Swann.

MR. SWANN: Correct me if I'm wrong, but Alternative 2 isn't truly reallocating fish, and it's just better reflecting the reality of what's been historically -- What historically has been the take in the recreational sector that is now better tracked by MRIP, and isn't that the case?

MS. WIEGAND: You could say that. It is, in a sense, just sort of holding the commercial sector at their current allocation and assuming that the rest of the increase is a function of the switch to the MRIP-FES numbers.

MR. SWANN: Right, and so it's not truly, per se, an increase in allocation to the recreational sector, but it's just a reflection of what historically has been happening all along.

MS. WIEGAND: In a sense, yes, but, also, keep in mind that these numbers are coming off the backs of an assessment as well, and so the new ABC reflects both a switch to the MRIP-FES numbers and an updated assessment, and so there are sort of two things that have been updated in this assessment that are then being reflected in the ABC.

MR. SWANN: You're right, and it does make it really difficult to compare apples and oranges. That's it. Thanks.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Go ahead, Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I just wanted to -- Actually, Steve made a lot of the comments that I was going to make, and I can just piggyback off of his, but I understand -- I understand the commercial sector's representatives being concerned about this, but I would point out that the no action actually results

in a reallocation to the commercial sector, and quite a big windfall, and, despite the fact that people are really upset, I mean, neither sector -- If I'm not mistaken, neither sector is reaching its ACL, currently, and so I guess I just wanted to point that out, and so I'll leave it at that.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve English.

MR. ENGLISH: Correct me if I'm wrong, but the recreational sector -- We just raised them from two to three fish, and we had a big discussion about that, and the recreational even agreed that that was the way to go, and they didn't even tell them they didn't want to, and we did that because they weren't catching their quota, and there was all the room in the world for them to go to three fish and try and catch more fish, because they weren't catching it, and here we are trying to pit the commercial and recreational sector against one another, and it will happen.

Every time we get an increase in the fish stock, where we all sacrificed, the commercial sector especially, who bring these stocks back, and, every time we get an increase, we want to make sure the commercial sector gets none of it, even though the recreational sector doesn't use it. It's wrong, and it's the wrong way to go. We should do exactly what we were talking about in the Spanish mackerel sector, and we should take X amount of the stock and put it in a fund, and then whichever sector needs it can pull out of that fund for that year, and that's how it should be done. That's the only fair way it can be done, but, yes, we need to keep our allocations the same. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Keith.

MR. BOWEN: I am just letting Tom know that the commercial sector has reached its limits, its commercial allocations, and that was also heavily restricted. We have also shut down weeks, multiple weeks, to try to make it last through the whole winter, and I was just letting you know that. The commercial sector has been actually caught, whereas the recreational hasn't even been close, and I just wanted to point that out.

MS. WIEGAND: Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: I think he's right on all that, because, in the past, with the old way of doing the MRFSS and the estimates, the recreational catch were leaving roughly half of their allocations each year, for a couple of decades, if I'm reflecting on some of the number that I saw right. There was one year where we had our year that ended at the end of March, and we lost that March, because we had a really exceptional year, and it may have been around 2010 or thereabouts.

Until you have some portion of the private and for-hire recreational putting real-time numbers out each week, like the commercial, or each day, if they had to, versus being two years before we'll know what 2021 is going to do -- Come 2023, we might have something, and that's a little concerning. This is probably the greatest heartburn action you have in this, is reallocating percentages, and the commercial worried that, five or ten years from now, that they're going to be thrown under the bus, and, meanwhile, you don't have a real census for the recreational, and you have an estimate that is just in a different currency, and it's just mind-boggling that that couldn't have been fixed, instead of going this route, for all these years for this MRIP stuff. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Go ahead, Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I heard a comment that the commercial sector doesn't reach its ACL every year, and I would like to see data on that, because what I have in front of me would indicate that they don't reach it every year. Spanish is, obviously, another issue.

MS. WIEGAND: I will say, again, one of the things the council has directed staff to look at is sort of exactly that, when the ACL has been restrictive to the commercial sector and when it's been restrictive to the recreational sector, back in time, and I believe we're requested our data analysts to go all the way back to 2000, to look at when the ACL may have been restrictive. It's a little complicated to do, given the changes that have occurred in the commercial sector, in terms of sort of we used to have this shifting mixing zone, which we don't have anymore, but, again, it's something that the council is acutely aware of, and they've asked staff to pull that data, so that it can be considered when they're discussing this action. Charlie, I see you've got your hand up. Go ahead.

MR. LOCKE: Tom, you just happened to use the same term I said, "windfall for commercial", if we take no action, and I can't believe you said it, but you did it, and you need to understand that you're in the northern sector here in North Carolina, and we may not have closed, but you have the East Coast Sub-Zone, which I have fished on, and Rusty will tell you that it has closed numerous times when the quota has been caught, and that's on a really reduced trip limit, fifty head, and then it goes to seventy-five head at the end, and that's how it used to be structured, and it's different now, but it's not a windfall.

It's not a windfall, and I think that term should be stricken, because our numbers are hard data, and we have trip tickets and logbooks. Just like somebody said, this MRIP stuff is pie-in-the-sky, and we're bound to what we catch. Everybody knows, to the pound, what we catch, and so, anytime we get more allocation, whether it's a no action more allocation, that's not a windfall. That's us being managed and us doing our part to be managed and getting a reward for reaping the benefit of that rebuilding of a stock, and so that "windfall" term just doesn't sit well with me.

MS. WIEGAND: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I just want to thank Charlie for his comments, and they are well taken and understood, and I recognize the complexity of the king mackerel fishery, or the commercial fishery, particularly when it comes to Florida, one that I am not acutely aware with, but my comment is regarding the entire ACL, the entire east coast, and so I just want to be very clear there.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I am not seeing any other hands up at the moment, but I'm going to pause, to make sure that there's no other discussion or anything that anyone would like to have under this action, before I move forward. Steve English, I see you've got your hand up.

MR. ENGLISH: **I would like -- I don't know if it's the appropriate time, but I would like to make a motion that Alternative 1 is the action that we approve.**

MR. ROLLER: The Chair recognizes that motion and would ask if -- Once you're finished, let us know, and, if the wording is good, we can call for a second.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve, can you see the wording that I have on the board? If that is appropriate, could you read it into the record?

MR. ENGLISH: Yes. **Recommend the council select Alternative 1, no action, as the preferred.**

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you. Then I believe Tom called for a second, to see if anyone seconds this motion, and, if you do, feel free to just go ahead and unmute yourself and --

UNIDENTIFIED: I second it.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Tom, I will turn it back over to you for any discussion.

MR. ROLLER: Now that we have a second, is there any further discussion or comments that AP members would like to make?

MS. WIEGAND: Steve Swann.

MR. SWANN: I will just reiterate that Alternative 1 just doesn't really make any sense to me, and that's all.

MS. WIEGAND: Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: Do we have the analysis, or do you still have to work up the analysis, to see what the allocations would be, because, like I said, with the MRIP stuff being virtually two years out of sync, before you really can reflect back on what occurred with these estimates -- I am just trying to figure if there's a way to sort of step up to these higher levels, but think in terms of maybe the commercial could benefit, because maybe both sectors haven't been catching their stuff, and, in the old MRFSS, and then the commercial, they had a census, and so there was only certain times and certain areas that they either had got restricted or got closed, and so there could be a little room here for compromise, to be able to try to ease into it, instead of just have everybody looking down the barrel there at the 2026 and seeing that.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Rusty, and so analysis for the entire amendment, actually Action 1 and Action 2 and all of the subsequent actions that we'll go over, we're currently working on that. Council staff and staff at the region are working on putting together an analysis to bring to the council in June for all of these actions. I will note, additionally, that the IPT is developing additional alternatives to go under this action to present to the council in June as well that would look at sort of different time series and what percentages would result from looking at different time series, both in the short and long term.

MR. HUDSON: So, in the short term, we're looking at the public hearings as being the source, after the council decides on if and what, that we would see whatever finalization of the numbers, potentially.

MS. WIEGAND: That's correct, Rusty. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I just want to say that I really appreciate Rusty's comments there, and I think they're well said, and they should be given some further consideration and further discussion, and hopefully the council will discuss some of that. Obviously, you know, Alternative 1 really doesn't

make any sense to me, given the arguments we're heard, but, that being said, as MRIP has been -
- As we've gotten the new information, I think we need to have this conversation, bigger picture, to see what the recreational sector might want their fishery to look like, given -- I hate to use this term, but being that so many fish were left on the table in years past, whether that could be a different size limit, which I know is something else that's being discussed here, or other various things, but I would like to see this conversation as part of a bigger picture of management.

MS. WIEGAND: Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: I just wanted to say that this is just crazy, going to from 37 percent to 21 percent, and I don't see any other alternatives. All the alternatives are always just a less percentage, but, if the recreational wants an increase, it seems like you all find all sort of weird formulas to justify an allocation, a reallocation, to the recreational side. The bluefish, the other day, they had data from 1968 to 2019, and then they had an inside dataset of like 2010 to 2019, basing the reallocations on, and I would be okay with reallocating to the smaller percentage if you would guarantee the commercial side could somehow have a -- Their quota would be no less than the average of your last twenty years of our hard data.

That way, whatever poundage we've been traditionally harvesting, we don't go below it, because we've been playing by the rules, and we've been doing all the right things, but, if our quota was two-and-a-half million pounds, it averaged two-and-a-half million pounds for the last ten years, let us keep that two-and-a-half million pounds, and don't penalize us because the recreational side didn't have correct data.

We don't want these smaller percentages, because, like Rusty said earlier, we're never going to get them back. We're not, and, if we lose -- If we lose this whatever it is, 16 percent, we would have to fight tooth and nail just to get 8 back, and I don't think we would ever get it, and so there needs to be some sort of safeguard that says, in the future, that commercial are still going to have enough quota to be able to make our jobs profitable.

If the recreational season gets closed, they can still go catch and release, and I can't go out there and catch and release. If I don't put something on my boat, I can't pay bills, and I can't support my family, and I can't make payments on a boat, and I can't make payments on a house. I need some sort of something that guarantees that I can go to work in the future, and, if I don't have a guarantee that I can go to work in the future, I'm not going to sign up for Alternative 2, because Alternative 2 is going to end up cutting our throat, eventually. It might not be five years, and it might not be ten years, but it's going to cut our throat, somewhere down the road.

MS. WIEGAND: Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: I was going to say the thing about the bluefish, when I wear the other hat, to try and deal with that. In Florida, we tried to increase the commercial yield, year after year after year, and we were doing pretty decent with it, and then, suddenly, we're looking at operating under a greatly reduced commercial allocation, because it's predominantly recreational up and down the coast, but it just didn't pass the smell test for a lot of people, when they knew that a lot of these people only want to keep a couple in the recreational, whether it's bluefish or whether it's king mackerel, and it seems to be a similar tendency.

Of course, you can give them three or five animals, and they could have an action here, versus the two that they have in our one zone here, that everybody else is at three on king mackerel, and that then becomes a choice if you want to keep the extra fish or not, or let it go, but, if you catch them after they release them, you're going to have gill issues, and you're going to have flesh broken on the necks and stuff like that, and all that's just going to be shark food.

Whether it's -- Anything that this ends up being applied to right now is not entirely seamless down the eastern seaboard and in the Gulf of Mexico, and I don't think we're going to get it mastered for another couple of years, because there is no census on the recreational, and there's only this best estimate.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve English.

MR. ENGLISH: I guess what I kind of want to put in here is we're supposed to be an AP, and we're supposed to make recommendations based on what we see, and the numbers we have, the hard numbers, are commercial, and we have hard commercial numbers. The recreational numbers are MRIP numbers, which we know are imaginary and whatever they could come up with, and they might be, and they might be off by half, and we don't know what those numbers are, but we know the commercial numbers.

We take the numbers that we know, and we know have been accurate for fifty or sixty years, and so, to justify changing them, we could just do away with what we've had in the past and based our numbers on, and we just go, well, in the past, we used this, but that doesn't fit our narrative now, and so we're going to do away with this and come up with a different train of thought, and we're playing politics. We're not sitting here working on numbers and coming up with real solutions for both fisheries, for everybody. We're sitting here going, we want this, and the other side is going, we want that, and we're getting nothing done, and now we're going to leave it to the council to make the decision, and so we're useless when we do this.

If we sit here and look at the numbers and go by the numbers that are in front of us, and the hard numbers we know, and the best thing we could is push hard numbers on the recreational side, and then we could sit there and go, okay, now we have it exact, and now we know, but, since we don't have both sides exact -- Like I said, the pool is the way to go, if you want to do anything. Put some of the fish in a pool that both sides could pull from, and that's the only other way that you can do it and get it right, but, other than that, we're playing politics, and I don't see any reason to sit here and play politics when we're not going to do what we need to do, based on the numbers and the way things are. That's all I have to say.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, and I'm going to jump in here, real quick, and note -- You guys will need to dispense with this motion first, but you have talked -- A couple of you have talked about this idea of a common pool allocation, which is something that was considered for Spanish mackerel back in 2014, or 2015, I believe, and you've talked about this idea of setting a firm poundage for the commercial sector, as opposed to a percentage, and there's a couple of things that have been discussed, and you are welcome to make a formal recommendation to the council to consider those in this amendment, if that's something that you all see fit, and so I just wanted to note that. Next, I'm going to go to Charlie.

MR. LOCKE: I just want to say that Thomas hit it on the head, for me. If you could guarantee -- I don't mean to come off emotional, guys, and I swear that my blood gets boiling about this, because it's not just this, and it's been -- Like Rusty said, it's bluefish, and it's flounder, and it's one thing after another, cobia, but, if you could guarantee the commercial sector that they will not get below their average twenty-year historical landings or something, no matter what happens, then you can start talking about a reallocation or whatever you want to do, but it's exactly like Thomas said.

We have to run a business, and you have to run a business on what you think you can harvest in a year's time, and there's a lot of other factors, but it's just so much up in the air. Like you said, you reduce our allocation to twenty-one-and-a-half percent, and then the new MRIP data comes out in ten years, if that's what we're all of a sudden using, because it's the holy grail, and, all of a sudden, the quota is cut in half, or the ACL is cut in half, and now we're down to we can't make a living.

I would say this, that I'm for Alternative 1, no action, but to say, like Steve said, to try and get some consensus, where we can move forward and everybody agree on something, because there seems to be a lot of disagreement on this, I would say you have to guarantee the commercial sector doesn't lose any more, because we have stuck by the rules, and the MRIP data -- Like you said, it seems like they're the ones catching the majority of the fish, and we're having to quit fishing, a lot of times, to get to where we're at to get a better stock, and so I don't know how you do that, and I don't know if that's an action or if that's some motion, but, for me, as a commercial fisherman, as a commercial representative, you've got to guarantee that I'm not going to lose any more than I have right now going forward, if you're talking about reallocation, and that's how I feel about it.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Go ahead, Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: My concern with the common pool is it's more of a payback function for the recreational. In other words, if they had overrun their allocation, their ACT -- In bluefish, we did have transfers that went from recreational, as an example, over to commercial, but, down here in Florida, we wound up never taking any of those allocations for commercial, and we were able to stay within the confines of our commercial allocation and actually gave allocation up the line of some of the other states, and so there's a mechanism that I think is going to take -- It might extend this whole amendment out longer, to implement the changes, because we're trying to do some of these new ideas, and then to go to a public hearing and have the council weigh-in in June, and, also, does the SSC review any of this, coming up in late April? Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Hi, Rusty. No, the SSC does not review this specific amendment at their April meeting. We do usually give them an update on all active amendments that are going through the council, but they don't get in-depth on this one, specifically. You are correct that, should the council decide to consider some of these different ways of allocations that you all discussed, it would likely delay this amendment a little bit. The IPT would need some time to develop actions and alternatives, to see how we could get that to work for the council, and so that's just something to consider. That's not to say that delaying it is a positive or negative thing, but it's just up to the AP on what you feel is most appropriate for the fishery.

Steve English, I see you've got your hand up. I am going to note that we've got about four more actions to go in this amendment, plus three additional things on the agenda, and so I don't want to

discourage discussion, but we've also got a slew of other things we need to get through, and so, Steve English, go right on ahead.

MR. ENGLISH: I just want to add one thing in for the commercial guys, because they are just seeming to think that, if they stay at the number that they're at and don't lose anything, we're okay, and that's -- That won't work, fellas. There is 1,700 kingfish permits out there. There is not that many people fishing right now. They're buying them every day, and so, if you stay at what you're at, and you double the number of fishermen in it, and you will, and it's coming, you're going to be at half of what you're at, and so keep that in mind when you tell these folks just keep me at what I'm at and I'll be happy, because they will gladly keep you at what you're at.

When we have more fish than what they've told us we've had for so long, we should get a portion of those fish, and that's just all I'm saying. If we need to change it down the road, once we understand what the true numbers are, and have hard numbers, I'm fine with that. The way it is right now, we need to keep our options open to have more fish when our industry -- When they allow that many more people in our industry, and we have to compete with them, and so keep that in mind you're making your comments.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I'm going to pause for a second and see if any other hands pop up. Rusty, go right on ahead.

MR. HUDSON: I just wanted to reinforce what Steve just said. From Texas to Massachusetts, it's the same permit. There is nothing prohibiting anybody from Texas or Massachusetts from showing up in Florida and taking the opportunity, and so, as we're looking at it, that's another obstacle down the road, commercially, and so I understand that the food producers that sell to the public -- They want to have a sustainable supply, and they want to be able to market under the best conditions, and that is what we have fought so hard, since 2007, when I got involved, to be able to accomplish.

We've been through several science assessments, and I believe that we're in a good spot for both sectors, all three sectors, if you look at the for-hire as separate from the recreational private, and so thank you. I just wanted to throw that out there about the permit, because we haven't solved that, but it's not an open access, and it's just that it's a single permit.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Rusty. I see no more hands up, but I'm going to pause, just for a brief second, to make sure that no one else has any more comments on the motion. All right. I am seeing no other hands raised. Tom, I think now might be the time to call for the vote. My guess is that this isn't going to be one that can be approved by consensus, and so, Myra, if you wouldn't mind running through the voting table that we have, so we can make sure that we can get an accurate count of who is voting which way, and I would appreciate that. If it's easier to just run through all the names, I can pipe up and say not in attendance when you hit someone that's not currently attending the meeting.

MS. BROUWER: Sounds good. I'm ready when Tom gives me the go-ahead.

MR. ROLLER: Go ahead.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. Steve Swann.

MR. SWANN: Nay.

MS. BROUWER: Steve Donalson.

MS. WIEGAND: Not in attendance.

MS. BROUWER: Steve English.

MR. ENGLISH: Yes.

MS. BROUWER: Skip Feller.

MS. WIEGAND: Not in attendance.

MS. BROUWER: Ryan Howard.

MS. WIEGAND: Not in attendance.

MS. BROUWER: Keith Bowen.

MR. BOWEN: Yes.

MS. BROUWER: Robert Olsen.

MS. WIEGAND: Not in attendance.

MS. BROUWER: Greg Peralta.

MS. WIEGAND: Not in attendance.

MS. BROUWER: Gary Robinson.

MS. WIEGAND: Not in attendance.

MS. BROUWER: Rusty Hudson.

MR. HUDSON: Sorry. I had to step aside for a moment. Am I supposed to vote?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, please.

MR. HUDSON: We're voting for the recommend selection of Alternative 1, no action, as the preferred? I will concur with that.

MS. BROUWER: So that's a yes.

MR. HUDSON: It is.

MS. BROUWER: Aaron Kelly.

MS. WIEGAND: Not in attendance.

MS. BROUWER: John Mallette.

MS. WIEGAND: Not in attendance.

MS. BROUWER: Brad Phillips.

MS. WIEGAND: Not in attendance.

MS. BROUWER: Thomas Newman.

MR. NEWMAN: Yes.

MS. BROUWER: Charlie Locke.

MR. LOCKE: Yes. Alternative 1, no action.

MS. BROUWER: Paul Ruderhausen.

MR. RUDERHAUSEN: Yes.

MS. BROUWER: **We've got six yes and one no and nine that are not in attendance. I guess that would be ten, with Ira.**

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you, Myra. I appreciate that.

MS. BROUWER: You're welcome.

MR. ROLLER: Just note that the Chair did not vote on that, just to be clear.

MS. WIEGAND: Yes. All right. Is there any other comments about this action, before I move us on to Action 3? I am seeing no hands pop up, and so we'll present this motion to the council, along with the recommendations of the AP and all the discussion that you guys have had.

Moving us forward here to Action 3, Action 3 looks at revising the recreational annual catch target for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel. Alternative 1 would not update the annual catch target, and it would continue to be based on the previous ABC, which, of course, is not really a viable option, because it no longer represents the best scientific information available. Alternative 2 would revise the recreational annual catch target to reflect the updated ABC, and it would use the equation that is currently in place, which is the ACL times one minus the PSE, or 0.5, whichever is greater.

Alternative 3 would set the ACT at 90 percent of the recreational sector ACL, and Alternative 4 would place the ACT at 85 percent of the sector ACL, and so there is currently no commercial annual catch target, which is why this action looks at only revising the recreational annual catch

target, and, in case you're curious what the recreational annual catch target does, it's included in the council's accountability measures for Atlantic migratory group king mackerel, and the recreational sector AM notes that, if the sum of the commercial and the recreational landings exceeds the stock ACL, then the Regional Administrator can reduce the bag limit by the amount necessary to ensure that recreational landings achieve the recreational ACT, but do not exceed the recreational ACL in the following fishing year.

That's how the ACT is currently used, the recreational ACT is currently used, for king mackerel, and so it's used sort of as a management metric, as what we're hoping the sector can achieve, and so are there any questions about this action? I am seeing no hands pop up.

Just to give a little context, for those of you that follow other amendments that the council is going through, you will note that the council has considered removing ACTs in other FMPs, and so I just wanted to note that the reason the council isn't considering that here is because the king mackerel ACT is tied to that accountability measure, and so, in order to remove the ACT, we would also have to revise the accountability measures, and so the council felt, at this point in time, it was best to go ahead and just keep the ACT in the FMP. I am seeing no hands raised or questions about this, and so I guess -- I'm sorry. Steve Swann, go right on ahead.

MR. SWANN: From a science perspective, what makes the most sense, just moving it to Alternative 2, because the 90 percent and the 85 percent of the sector ACL, that's just not really based on science, right? I mean, what makes the most sense, from you all's perspective?

MS. WIEGAND: I mean, I can let council members what makes sense from their perspective, but my understanding is that the ACT is just sort of used as a metric to address any uncertainty within management. Like I said, we don't manage to the ACT. We still manage to the ACL, but the ACT is just used sort of as a metric.

MR. SWANN: Got you. All right. Thanks.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I am seeing no other hands pop up, and so let's scroll down to Action 4. This action looks at increasing the recreational bag and possession limit for Atlantic king mackerel in the EEZ off of Florida. Currently, the bag limit off the east coast of Florida is two fish per person, and Alternative 2 proposes to raise that to three fish per person, which would allow them to have a matching bag limit to everywhere north of them, which is also at three fish per person, as well as throughout the Gulf, which is at three fish per person, and so the purpose of this action is just to make the east coast of Florida consistent with elsewhere along the coast. With that, is there any questions or discussion related to Action 4? Rusty Hudson, go right on ahead.

MR. HUDSON: As far as Action 4, I believe that it would be prudent for our recreational charter boats, at the very minimum, as well as the private recreational in Florida, to have the choice of three fish, king mackerel, per person, because everybody else has got that choice, and I think it would be simpler, and, if a captain, no matter where he's at, wants to just keep them to two per person, or one per person, that's their choice, but they know they can't exceed three, and so that would be the choice, would be Alternative 2.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve English.

MR. ENGLISH: I was under the impression that the AP had already recommended going to three fish per person in Florida, to stay the same as everything else. We had that discussion, and the commercial sector supported the recreational sector -- That was the point that we were agreeing on.

MS. WIEGAND: You're correct, Steve. The AP did discuss this, and they recommended to the council that they consider it, which is why it's been included in this amendment here. Charlie, go ahead.

MR. LOCKE: I think they should have three fish per person. I'm from central Florida, originally, and I charter fished with my dad for years, and I don't think they should have anything different than everybody else has. They should have three fish per person.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Are there any other comments on this action? All right. I am seeing no hands jump up, and so I'm going to scroll us on down to Action 5. I'm sorry. Tom, did you have a question?

MR. ROLLER: Just really quick, I just want to -- I know Steve English pointed out that we had this discussion before, and I think that it's important to point out that we had, and, given the lack of recreational and for-hire attendance in today's meeting, and I just wanted to point out that we don't have a lot of rec guys on today, and it would have been nice to have a little bit more, but I think the AP has discussed this at-length before.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Thanks, Tom, and I will make a note, when this report is put together and presented to the council, on which advisory panel members were in attendance and which weren't, so the council can take that into consideration when they're reviewing the report. All right.

Moving us along, Action 5 looks at reducing the minimum size limit for recreational and commercial harvest of Atlantic migratory group king mackerel, and, again, this was based on a recommendation from this AP at their November meeting. We've got, under Alternative 1, the no action alternative. The current minimum size limit is twenty-four inches fork length.

Alternative 2 considers a twenty-two-inch fork length, and Alternative 3 considers a twenty-inch fork length, and then Alternative 4 considers removing the minimum size for commercial and recreational harvest altogether. With that, I'll open it up for questions and discussions. Rusty, I see you've got your hand up.

MR. HUDSON: I was asked to request Alternative 1 for the commercial dealers that buy king mackerel, the twenty-four inches. They're afraid that, if they get twenty-two, or twenty, they're going to have a lower value and other issues, and so they did want that to be known, that, with the 5 percent variance that allows for a little bit of undersized animals, they just really don't want to have that small of an animal on the market, and they just felt like it would complicate things. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Keith.

MR. BOWEN: I agree with Rusty, and, also, we have like really giant knots of these smaller-sized fish, and they're normally left alone, and we target bigger fish, but I think everything has worked for so long, and what's the sense of putting more pressure on the smaller ones, and, also, it may also play into the Spanish mackerel fleet inshore, and I don't know. It has worked for this long, and I'm not sure why it would be a good thing to change it, and, also, both of the big buyers, like Rusty was saying, down in our area definitely do not want small kingfish, and I think all of the buyers, but especially the big two down here do not want the small kingfish.

MS. WIEGAND: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I'm glad to see this point being raised, and I know I've had this discussion at the AP level with Spanish mackerel several times, and I can speak from my experience up here in North Carolina, specifically. Now, I understand the commercial comments regarding the size of marketable fish, but I wish we were having this discussion in a little bit of separation between the two, like what does the commercial sector need, and what does the recreational sector need?

Up here, I'm not really aware of anybody targeting small king mackerel. We catch small king mackerel doing other things, king mackerel fishing or trolling for Spanish mackerel, and now one issue, and it has been brought up, particularly with both of those species, is they are very fragile, and whether or not -- No matter what gear you use, whether it's live bait with treble hooks or a single-hook Clark or drone spoon, a good proportion of those fish end up as discards, and so I see a fair -- Not a lot, but we do see two fish here, or three fish here, on the Spanish mackerel trips, or twenty-two or twenty-three or twenty-one inches, usually right around that twenty-inch range, that are going back as dead discards.

I would really like to see more data, from the recreational side of things, what lowering the size limit would look like in potentially increasing harvest. Like, from where I am up in North Carolina, I'm not seeing a lot of these fish being targeted, and I'm just seeing them caught incidentally, and I would like to see if it would be raising the catch a lot if we did it over the entire South Atlantic range, but I think it's a worthy discussion to have, at least for the recreational community, and I think particularly since most of us actually want to eat smaller king mackerel, as opposed to the big ones, and there might be considerable support for lowering that size limit.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve Swann.

MR. SWANN: Speaking from the perspective of a northeast Florida king fisherman, we don't really see kingfish under twenty-four inches, and so it's kind of a moot point around here, I think, just to comment.

MS. WIEGAND: Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: Christina, one of the pieces of information you had in your data was the twenty-two-inch female maturity at 50 percent, a one-year-old, roughly. I like the idea of protecting the females. That's the future. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Keith.

MR. BOWEN: I just wanted to come back to -- Down here, through the wintertime, we see really big marks, and those will be exploited. Where there is no pressure now, they will be targeted, and so I'm just saying that I don't know if that's a great idea, as well as the other things we talked about, and I guess -- Recreationally, to me, if you can go catch one that's twenty, thirty, fifty pounds, I'm not sure why you would want to target a twenty-two-inch kingfish, but that's neither here nor there, but, anyway, that was my two-cents.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Keith. All right. Are there any other comments or discussion or recommendations for the council on Action 5? All right. Rusty, go ahead.

MR. HUDSON: **Can I make a motion for Alternative 1, at least for the commercial harvest?**

MR. ROLLER: Sure.

MS. WIEGAND: Absolutely. Let me get something up on the board for you. You would like this to be specific to the commercial sector?

MR. HUDSON: As long as that's okay with the recreational, if they want to do the same. I like the idea of splitting the action, just because of -- You know, an A and a B, or something, just so that they can have a choice. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, Rusty. Does what I have on the board match what you are trying to make a motion for?

MR. HUDSON: Yes, it appears to, as long as I have a second.

MS. WIEGAND: If anyone would like to second this motion, they can just shout it out.

MR. ENGLISH: I will second.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you. All right. **So the motion reads: Recommend the council select Alternative 1, no action, as their preferred for the commercial sector. Recommend splitting the action by sector.** With that, Tom, I will turn it over to you to lead the discussion.

MR. ROLLER: Is there any discussion on this? I would just start off by saying that I appreciate this only including the commercial side of things, given that we don't have a lot of recreational attendance to discuss this issue today.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Rusty, I see your hand is up. Did you have something else to add here?

MR. HUDSON: No. You never took it down.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Tom, I'm not seeing any other hands up for discussion.

MR. ROLLER: Do you think this is worthy of seeing if it can be called by consensus?

MS. WIEGAND: I think it is. You could request, if anybody does not support the action, they could choose to raise their hand now.

MR. ROLLER: I agree with that. There's no need of saying it twice. **Any dissention?**

MS. WIEGAND: **I am not seeing any hands raised, and so we can consider this approved by consensus.** All right. That brings us to the last action in this amendment, which is Action 6, and it looks at modifying the recreational requirement for CMP species to be landed with heads and fins intact.

Currently, cutoff or damaged king mackerel that are caught under the recreational bag limit cannot be possessed or landed, and this is different from the commercial sector. The commercial sector does have a provision, and Alternative 2 looks at applying that same provision to the recreational sector, and so it would allow fish that are cut or damaged that comply with minimum size limits that are caught under the recreational bag limit to be possessed and landed, and then there are sub-alternatives to allow this for king mackerel or for Spanish mackerel, and, again, this action was added to the amendment based on a recommendation from this advisory panel back in November, specifically related to concerns about shark depredation and that it would be beneficial for recreational fishermen to have the same cutoff and damaged fish provision that the commercial sector has. With that, I will turn it back over for any questions, comments, and discussion. Steve Swann.

MR. SWANN: This is one of these actions that just makes sense, just makes commonsense, to me, and Alternative 2 makes perfect sense, for both king and Spanish, at least from a recreational perspective. That's all I've got to say about that.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I feel pretty strongly about this issue, personally, and I know it's a big issue up my way, and not just for sharks, but also with barracuda, and it happens to me, over the course of the year, targeting mackerel, a lot, where I have to throw fish that meet minimum size limits back into the water, and I know a lot of other people in my for-hire industry choose to bring those back to the dock, where there is also confusion on the enforcement of it. Given how it's worded, I am hopeful that we can remedy this and do this, because, as Steve said, I mean, this just makes perfect sense, and we should have done it long ago.

MS. WIEGAND: Keith.

MR. BOWEN: I would also support Alternative 2. I know the sharks are ridiculous down here in Florida, down south, the Cape and everywhere. Instead of just keep throwing them back over and getting another one bit, you might as well be able to keep it, if it's a decent-sized one. Anyway, that's just my opinion, but I would definitely be for Alternative 2.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve Swann.

MR. SWANN: **I would like to make a motion to recommend Alternative 2 and include both king and Spanish mackerel.**

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Steve. Could you read what I have on the board, and, if it matches your motion, if you could read it into the record for me.

MR. SWANN: **Recommend the council select Alternatives 2a and 2b as their preferred.** Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. If there's a second to that, you can just call it out.

UNIDENTIFIED: I would second it.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you. Tom, I'll turn it over to you for discussion.

MR. ROLLER: Is there any discussion on it? Please raise your hand.

MS. WIEGAND: I see Rusty. Go right on ahead.

MR. HUDSON: I would recommend, when you go out to public hearing, that you change the Action 6 so that it reads Spanish and king up there and not coastal migratory pelagics, so I don't feel like I need to throw my cobia in there.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I am not seeing any other hands raised. Tom, if it's all right with you, if you want to call the vote, and I think this one can probably also be done by consensus.

MR. ROLLER: Okay. Well, we'll call the vote, and, if anybody has any disagreement with this, please raise your hand right now. If not, we can call it by consensus. Do you see any disagreement? If not, the motion passes.

MS. WIEGAND: I am not seeing any hands pop up.

MR. ROLLER: Okay. **The motion passes by consensus.**

MS. WIEGAND: All right. That brings us to the end of CMP Amendment 34. We've been at this for about two-and-a-half hours, and we are about, I guess I would say, about a half-hour behind my mentally-envisioned schedule, and so, Tom, I will turn it over to you, as Chair, if you would like to take a brief break before we jump into the cobia amendment.

MR. ROLLER: I do want to stay on schedule, and I know people have a lot of things to do, but it's probably appropriate to take a short break, if some people need to use the facilities or grab some water or whatnot, and what do you think is appropriate? Do you think it's appropriate to take a five-minute break or a ten-minute break?

MS. WIEGAND: We've been at this for two-and-a-half hours, and I think it's appropriate to take a break at this point and then try to barrel through the rest of the agenda items.

MR. ROLLER: What do you recommend as a break time?

MS. WIEGAND: Let's give everyone a quick ten-minute break, if we could be back at 3:35, and we will be starting promptly at 3:35 and moving into a cobia discussion.

MR. ROLLER: Okay. Break until 3:35.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. WIEGAND: I've got 3:35 on my clock. What about you, Tom?

MR. ROLLER: 3:35 on mine. I'm ready to go if you are.

MS. WIEGAND: I sure am. Next up on the agenda is Amendment 32. Are you good with me diving right in?

MR. ROLLER: Let's dive in.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so Amendment 32 addresses modifications to the Gulf of Mexico migratory group cobia catch limits, possession limits, size limits, as well as the CMP framework procedure. Before we really dig into this amendment, I want to note that this addresses Gulf cobia only and not Atlantic cobia, which, as you all know, is now managed by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.

I'm going to be referring to sort of three different things when I talk about this, and so Gulf group cobia, or Gulf migratory group cobia, refers to the entire stock, which is all of the Gulf Council's region as well as the east coast of Florida, and then there are two zones within that one stock. There is the Florida East Coast Zone, which includes, as one might guess, the east coast of Florida, from that Florida/Georgia line all the way through to the east coast side of the Florida Keys, and then the Gulf Zone refers to everything that is within the Gulf Council's jurisdiction, and so I will try to be very explicit when I'm going through it, but this amendment only addresses Gulf migratory group cobia, and it does not affect Atlantic cobia, which we no longer manage.

Similar to king mackerel, you're going to see a lot of similar actions in this amendment. It's addressing an updated stock assessment. The update to SEDAR 28 determined that Gulf migratory group king mackerel is undergoing overfishing, but is not overfished, and so we do need to take management action to stop overfishing.

The ABC recommended by the SSC is seen here in Table 1. I do want to note that this is different from king mackerel, in that it has an increasing yield stream over time, and so we start with 2.3 million pounds in 2021, and that then increases for the 2022 and 2023 fishing year, going forward. There are seven actions in this amendment right now, and I'm going to go over each of those, and here's the tentative timing for this amendment. This amendment is a priority for the Gulf Council, and so they are trying to wrap it up as soon as is reasonably possible, getting all the necessary input.

The Gulf AP reviewed it at their meeting just a few weeks ago, and you all are reviewing it now. The Gulf Council is going to see it again in April, and then both councils will see it at their respective meetings in June, and they will be looking at selecting preferred alternatives and approving for public hearings then, tentatively, depending on what comes out of the Gulf's April meeting.

I will scroll on down to the purpose and need, and I'm not going to read this one out to you. It's on the screen and in your briefing materials, but I will pause here for a second, to see if anyone has any questions about the focus of this amendment or the tentative timeline for this amendment. All right. I am not seeing any hands pop up, and so we'll scroll right into Action 1, which looks at modifying the Gulf migratory group overfishing level, ABC, and ACL.

Alternative 1 would, of course, retain the Gulf cobia stock catch levels that were implemented back in Amendment 20B, and, as we discussed with king mackerel, this isn't really a viable alternative, because it wouldn't be based on the updated stock assessment or the best scientific information available.

There are two alternatives. The Gulf Council's and South Atlantic Council's current preferred alternative would update the OFL, ABC, and ACL, as you see in this table, and it would not put a buffer between the ABC and the ACL, and so the ABC and the ACL would be set equal to each other.

Alternative 3 would modify the ABC and ACL to be a constant catch value, and so it would set it at the level you see for 2021, and it would not have that increasing yield stream that you see under Alternative 2. It would just be at that 2.3 million pounds from the 2021 season moving forward, and so I will pause briefly here, to see if there's any questions, comments, or discussion that the AP would like to have on Action 1. Tom Roller, go right on ahead.

MR. ROLLER: This is not so much a comment as opposed to encouraging any of our Florida members, in particular, to speak up, as this issue is definitely outside the wheelhouse of many of us on the advisory panel, and so, if you have anything to say, please bring it to the table.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I'm not seeing any other hands pop up at this moment, and so I'm going to move on to Action 2. This looks at modifying the apportionment between the Gulf Zone and the Florida East Coast Zone, and so this is essentially what you guys think of as regional allocations. There is an ACL that's set for the entire Gulf migratory group, and then a portion of that is allocated to the Gulf Zone, and a portion of that is allocated to the Florida East Coast Zone, and then each council manages their side.

Action 1 would retain the current ACL apportionment, which is 64 percent to the Gulf Zone and 36 percent to the Florida East Coast Zone, and that's based on MRIP-CHTS landings from 1998 to 2012. Alternative 2 would retain the apportionment at 64 percent and 36 percent, but it would update the poundage to both zones, based on whatever ACL was chosen in Action 1, which, as you saw, was Alternative 2.

Then we have the current Gulf Council and South Atlantic Council preferred, and this would modify the stock apportionment to be 63 percent to the Gulf Zone and 37 percent to the Florida East Coast Zone, and that's based on the average landings for Gulf cobia between 1998 and 2012, and then you've got Alternative 4, which would be 62 percent to the Gulf Zone and 38 percent to the east coast of Florida, and that's based on a landings stream of 2001 to 2015, and then Alternative 5 would be 59 percent to the Gulf Zone and 41 percent to the East Coast Zone, and, again, that's based on years from 2003 to 2019, and so a series of different landings streams for Alternatives 3 through 5. Again, I'm going to pause here. Steve Swann, I see you've got your hand up.

MR. SWANN: I don't claim to understand this one real one. Can you comment on the landings streams and the reason for the variability in the years?

MS. WIEGAND: It's just the proportion of landings that each sector has seen through those years, and so we'll say, on average, for Alternative 3, between 1998 and 2012, if you average the number of landings the Gulf Zone had and the number of landings the Florida East Coast Zone had, you result in those percentages, and I'm not sure I'm explaining that --

MR. SWANN: No, I get that, but I'm just looking at Alternatives 4 and 5, and, in Alternative 4, from 2001 to 2015, and Alternative from 2003 to 2019, are they just arbitrary, or is there a reason those particular years were chosen?

MS. WIEGAND: They're meant to represent different time periods. If you see that 1998 to 2012, it's the same as the original apportionment, and so, prior to the stock assessment, we used that fifteen-year period to set the allocations, and so Preferred Alternative 3 just updates those years with the new FES landings, and then, for Alternative 4 and Alternative 5, we also used a fifteen-year yield stream, but we just sort of moved it forward in time, you could say, and so it's really whether you want to consider past landings or more current landings when setting allocations, and so they're all fifteen-year periods, but Alternative 3 considers a time period that's further back, prior to 2012, prior to, for example, annual catch limits being implemented for cobia, and then Alternative 4 and Alternative 5 each consider a more recent time period.

MR. SWANN: Gotcha. Any comment on why the Gulf and the South Atlantic Council prefers Alternative 3?

MS. WIEGAND: I believe -- I'm actually going to turn to Steve Poland, and I must be blanking on the conversation that our council had regarding choosing Alternative 3, but I believe that part of the rationale was to make sure that we were considering a time period before annual catch limits were implemented, and so before there was a time when there would have been a catch limit that would have been restrictive on harvest, and so, if I'm recalling all of the past years correctly, I don't believe the Florida East Coast has experienced a cobia closure on the commercial or recreational side since 2012, but I believe that was some of the logic behind choosing Alternative 3.

MR. POLAND: Christina, that's my recollection, and, like Tom said earlier, this is mostly a Florida-centric issue for our council, and so it is kind of outside of my wheelhouse as well, but I believe that's correct, because that timeframe does line up with prior to ACL establishment.

MR. SWANN: Thanks. That makes sense.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Are there any other comments, questions, or discussion on Action 2? All right. I am seeing no hands pop up, and so I'm going to scroll on down to Action 3, which, as you can see, has no alternatives under it right now, and so Action 3 is a request from the council, because, just like we talked about with king mackerel, the MRIP-FES numbers were used in this updated assessment, and the council needs to consider whether or not they would like to make changes to the commercial and recreational sector allocations for the Florida East Coast Zone.

This isn't being considered for the Gulf Zone, because they don't currently have sector allocations over there, and it's just a stock ACL, and so that's why revising allocations is only being considered for the Florida east coast, and the IPT is currently developing actions and alternatives for these actions. Those actions and alternatives are going to go to the Gulf Council at their April meeting and our council at their June meeting, but the council did direct staff to add allocation alternatives that would update the current percentages based on the FES numbers as well as to look at other time periods for allocating to each sector, and so there aren't any alternatives under this right now, but the IPT is currently development them for a presentation to the Gulf Council in April.

I will pause here to see if there are any questions, comments, or discussion. I will say that you are likely to see allocation alternatives under this action that are similar to what you saw for king mackerel. Of course, they will have different percentages, but they'll have a similar logic to them. I am seeing no hands raised, and so, with that, I guess I will scroll through to Action 4, and I know that we've got a limited number of Florida AP members on right now, and so I appreciate those of you that are from Florida who have been speaking up.

Action 4 looks at, again, updating or establishing annual catch targets for Gulf cobia zones, and, again, these actions are iterative, in that Action 1 impacts Action 2, which then impacts Action 3, which, of course, then impacts us here at Action 4, and so Alternative 1 would maintain the current ACTs for the Gulf Zone at 90 percent of their ACL, and that's based on the Gulf Zone's ACL/ACT Control Rule. For Florida, it's the same as it was for king mackerel, and that ACL multiplied by one minus the PSE, or proportional standard error, of the Florida landings.

Alternative 2 would use the Gulf Council's ACL/ACT Control Rule to calculate ACTs for both the Gulf Zone and the recreational sector for Florida, and then Alternative 3 would consider establishing an ACT for the commercial sector in the Florida Zone, which does not currently exist. I will see if there are any questions, comments, or concerns here. All right. I see no hands popping up, and so let's move on down to Action 5.

This action looks at modifying Gulf cobia possession limits and establishing a trip limit, and the council has selected preferred alternatives here. One of the things they've asked us to do is to sort of revise this action, and maybe split it out into two separate actions to address each zone, or the Gulf Zone and the Florida Zone, separately, or to look at possession limits and trip limits separately, but one of the goals with this action is to make sure that regulations for Gulf cobia and Florida East Coast cobia are consistent in federal waters, at the very least, and then, of course, we also get input from our Florida representatives, who are on both councils, but the goal is to try to create some consistency here, since, right now, regulations for cobia are pretty inconsistent, depending on whether you're fishing in federal waters or state waters and on which side of Florida you're fishing, and so one of the goals is to sort of ease some of that confusion.

The council has selected an alternative here as their preferred that would reduce the recreational and commercial daily possession limit to one fish per person, as well as create a commercial and recreational daily trip limit of two fish per person, or I'm sorry. Two fish per trip, and so per vessel. Keith, I see you've got your hand up. Go ahead.

MR. BOWEN: We've been able to catch two per boat for the commercial sector of it, and we've never actually caught the whole entire quota, and so would it be -- I guess would it be bad to keep

it how it is, if we've never caught it? I mean, it's just bycatch for us, but it is nice, and it helps out with fuel and whatever when we do catch it, and maybe I would feel a little differently if we were catching the quotas, but, anyway, that's just my input on it.

MS. WIEGAND: One of the things to keep in mind here is that Gulf cobia is undergoing overfishing, and so the ABC/ACLs have been reduced, and we do need to sort of reduce cobia mortality, in order to end overfishing of the stock, and so this is less of an issue -- Again, we're sort of in one of those situations where we can't compare apples to oranges, because the previous assessment didn't use the MRIP-FES numbers, whereas the new assessment does, and the new assessment also indicates that overfishing is occurring, and so part of the goal with these actions and alternatives is to reduce mortality. Are there any other questions, comments, or concerns? Tom, go ahead.

MR. ROLLER: I just kind of bring this up as a comment. Before I state it, I just want to be clear that I don't necessarily support this, but, at the ASMFC level, when it comes to the Atlantic, north Atlantic, cobia, they have a different boat possession limit for for-hire operators. Now, I'm not familiar with the Florida fishery, and I'm not familiar with how the for-hire industry relies upon these fish, or how important they are, and I'm just curious if there's been any discussion of having a different possession limit for for-hire vessels, like there is in the rest of the Atlantic, and I just offer it for discussion, and I don't support it one way or another.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve Swann.

MR. SWANN: Just for clarification, the trip limit is per person and not per boat, right?

MS. WIEGAND: The IPT has discussed it quite a bit, on how to properly write the language for these actions and alternatives, but, essentially, there would be a daily possession limit of one fish per person, and then there would be a two-fish per vessel limit, and one of the things we're trying to determine is is that a per-day limit or a per-trip limit, and that's something that the council will be discussing more at-length, but it's one fish per person, two per vessel.

MR. SWANN: Okay. Thanks.

MS. WIEGAND: Keith.

MR. BOWEN: I don't know like what Tom was saying, and this was just the kingfishing fleet, and, I mean, obviously, we catch them as bycatch, and I know that the charter fleet, which is actually pretty big, they actually target the cobia. I don't want to like step on people's toes, and I know that's what they like to do and whatever, but I'm just saying I don't know if there's a way to get some -- You know, pick their brains, possibly, to see if they would want to -- Or if there's a way to do like a split with the charter and the commercial, and I don't even know if that's possible, but, anyway, I'm just thinking out loud here.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Keith, and so that's absolutely something the councils could consider, if they wanted to. There's nothing that says the commercial and recreational bag limits have to be identical, and they could set separate possession limits for the commercial sector, and the recreational sector can also be broken out to set separate bag limits say for the for-hire sector, like Tom mentioned, and so it's certainly something that the councils can discuss and consider.

I am seeing no hands pop up, and so I'm going to scroll us down to Action 6, which looks at modifying the Gulf cobia minimum size limit. Currently, the minimum size limit in the Gulf Zone is thirty-six inches fork length, and, in the Florida East Coast Zone, it's thirty-three inches fork length. Alternative 2, which is the council's current preferred alternative, would raise the minimum size limit to thirty-six inches fork length in the Florida East Coast Zone, which would put it the same as the Gulf Zone.

Alternative 3 looks at increasing the minimum size limit to thirty-nine inches, and Alternative 4 looks at increasing the minimum size limit to forty-two inches. Again, I will pause here to see if there are any questions, comments, or discussion that the AP would like to have. Steve English, I see your hand has popped up.

MR. ENGLISH: We spoke of this at-length in the Gulf, when we were doing the cobia stuff, and, right here on the east coast of Florida, off of Stuart and all in this middle section right here, our fish run thirty-four or thirty-five inches, and so that will put us out of catching a pile of fish, and we'll take the brunt of the decrease in catch. I would at least like to see the East Coast stay at thirty-three inches.

I mean, if we go to thirty-six, then we just won't catch the fish. A lot of our fish are thirty-four to thirty-six inches. That's what we catch. That's what passes through here. Up further north, they catch bigger fish. Down south, they catch bigger fish, but this is what we catch in our area, and so you will hurt our area, is what you'll hurt, with this. We'll take the brunt of the decrease, again, and so I would at least like to say, at least on the record, leave it at thirty-three inches on the east coast, anyhow.

MS. WIEGAND: Paul, go ahead.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Regarding the proposed changes in the minimum size limits that we're discussing now, I think the briefing book made a really good point, and I will turn it back to the commercial and recreational fishermen that are on the AP here, but, if you've got a fish that's thirty-five inches, close to the new proposed minimum size limit change to thirty-six inches fork length, and you have a thirty-five-inch fish, what's the disposition of that fish, as you bring it on the boat? I mean, is the fisherman more likely to gaff the fish or to just sling it on the boat?

I can't see slinging a thirty-five-inch cobia on a boat to measure it. I understand that, a lot of times, you've got use a gaff to get that animal on the boat, and, again, I thought the briefing book made a good point, that, if you propose, or change, an increase in the minimum size limit of a really active species, like a cobia, then you're going to have this cryptic source of discard mortality, in the form of gaffing a fish. I could see, if you increase the minimum size limit here, that you might have a lot more gaffed animals that are sub-legal, those thirty-four to thirty-five-inch fish that are sub-legal fish that are experiencing discard mortality, regardless of the increase in the minimum size limit.

MS. WIEGAND: Tom, go ahead.

MR. ROLLER: I appreciate Paul bringing up that comment, and I think that is definitely an angler education issue, and a lot of discussion was had about that off of the Atlantic cobia zone, and I

know a lot of discussion was had about that in Virginia. I used to catch a lot of cobia up here, and I don't catch as many as I used to, and I know that happens, and it should be a concern, but we need to do better and to do more to encourage fishermen to not gaff these fish.

My personal experience with cobia is that they act worse when they're gaffed than if you bring them in the boat without gaffing them, and I bring a lot of them on the boat currently to measure, which are close to that minimum size limit here, and we don't really have that many issues with them, and so I don't know how serious we need to take that, but it's definitely an issue that should be discussed, moving forward.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve Swann.

MR. SWANN: Kind of echoing Paul's comments, it seems to me that -- I mean, I haven't seen the science, but it would seem to me that, raising the size limit of the fish, you're going to end up resulting in a higher mortality, with these smaller fish getting hurt, and it's hard to get a thirty-five-inch cobia in the boat and down and measure him without hurting the fish, I would think, or at least that's been my experience, but has it been shown that those fish can be released healthy and the mortality is not too high? I just don't know.

MS. WIEGAND: Paul, go ahead.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Steve, we've got evidence, in this cobia tagging program that NC State University has been conducting, that you can get high survival of large fish, and, when I say large, the thirty-six-inch-plus fork length fish, but it does require -- I mean, all the fish we process, I guess stating the obvious, had been boated not with gaffing, but with a large net, and so I think the point Tom Roller made a few minutes ago is that this would require -- For folks that are used to gaffing fish, to thinking of subduing them, and I understand it's effective way to bring an aggressive fish on the boat, so you don't break your line or break your terminal tackle or any of your equipment, but, at the same time, we have demonstrated that you can get a high survival of these big fish, as long as they're boated with some type of net.

Again, I respect the fact that a lot of folks might not be in the business of netting big fish, like big dolphinfish or big cobia, but that's how we've done it in our program, and we've got some electronic tagging evidence to show that the survival of these big fish, after they're netted, is quite high.

MR. SWANN: That's good to hear. I mean, I usually net a fish thirty-four or thirty-five inches anyhow, and I think a lot of people do, but as long as we don't have the unintended consequence of increasing our mortality by trying to release these sub-thirty-six-inch fish, but that's my only comment.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Do we have any other comments, questions, or discussion on Action 6? All right. I am seeing no hands pop up, and so I'm going to scroll us on down to Action 7, which is the last action in this amendment, and this looks at modifying the framework procedure.

Just to sort of give some background to this, as you guys know, the CMP FMP is a joint fishery management plan between the South Atlantic and Gulf Councils, and one of the things this framework procedure identifies is what actions can be taken unilaterally by a council, and so what

things can be changed just by the South Atlantic Council without approval of the Gulf Council, and vice versa. You guys are pretty familiar with this when we've worked on mackerel amendments. For example, a few years ago, we were working on changing trip limits for the commercial king mackerel sector, just for Atlantic king mackerel, and we did not have to take that amendment to the Gulf Council, because it was only affecting the Atlantic migratory stock of fish and not the Gulf migratory stock of fish.

With regard to cobia, right now, under Alternative 1, there's some language in there that specifies that the South Atlantic Council can only unilaterally set vessel trip limits, closed seasons or areas, or gear restrictions for the east coast of Florida zone of cobia, and so this means, say if the South Atlantic Council wanted to change the recreational bag limit for Florida East Coast cobia, they would not be able to do that without it being an amendment that goes through the Gulf Council as well, even though it would only affect Florida East Coast cobia.

Under Alternative 2, we're looking to modify the language so that the South Atlantic Council has the responsibility to specify management measures that affect only the east coast of Florida, including the Atlantic side of the Florida Keys, for Gulf migratory group cobia. That means we can change things like bag limits, size limits, possession limits, anything that would affect only the east coast of Florida group of cobia. If we wanted to do anything broader, such as make changes to an ACL, that then has to go through the Gulf Council as well, because it would also impact Gulf Zone cobia.

Of course, it also includes language in there that says, for stocks where a stock assessment indicates a different boundary between the Gulf and Atlantic migratory groups, a portion of the ACL can be apportioned to an area, which is what happened for cobia, but it also includes language in there that would allow things to maintain the way they are with king and Spanish mackerel, where the boundary is the Miami-Dade/Monroe County line, which is not the jurisdictional boundary, but the South Atlantic Council manages everything north of that line, and the Gulf Council manages everything south of that line.

What this is really doing is allowing the council to address anything that would only affect their migratory group of the species, or their zone, in the case of cobia, unilaterally. Anything that would affect both councils still has to go through both councils, and so hopefully I've explained that in a way that makes sense, but I know this is a bit of a confusing issue, and so, if you have questions, please feel free to ask me, and I will try to explain in a way that's a bit clearer.

I see that no one is raising their hands with questions, and you're all going to make me get a big ego, but are there any comments or discussions that anyone on the AP would like to have regarding this action? Steve Swann.

MR. SWANN: Is the council's preferred action Alternative 2?

MS. WIEGAND: The councils have not selected a preferred alternative on this action at this time.

MR. SWANN: Because Alternative 2 seems to make sense, to me, just so we don't lose control of the fish. That's my only comment.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Steve. Does anyone else have any questions or comments or concerns or discussion on Action 7 or -- This is the last action, and so anything else in Amendment 32? Keith.

MR. BOWEN: I was just going to say that I agree with Steve.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I'm not seeing anyone else. I know that we breezed through this amendment quite of quickly. If anyone, especially some of our Florida reps that are on the line, speak to anyone else, and they've looked through this document, and they have questions, or something is unclear, please feel free to let me know. I'm always happy to have conversations with anyone who might be confused as to what is going on in this amendment, and so please don't hesitate to pass people my way, if they have questions. I will pull back up the agenda, Tom. It looks like we're on structure of the Mackerel Cobia AP, if you're ready to move forward to the next item.

MR. ROLLER: I think we're ready to move forward and dive in, whenever you're ready.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I hope you guys aren't sick of hearing my voice. I'm going to talk you through one more document, and then we'll do the fishery performance reports, and I will turn it over to you guys to do some more of the talking. Here we go, the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel structure.

At their September and December meetings, the council talked quite a bit about the need to ensure that the Mackerel Cobia AP is really representative of the entire CMP fishery, and so that includes the Mid-Atlantic region, which we manage through, as well as making sure that we're still representing the cobia fishery, as well as accurately representing both of the mackerel fisheries, and so they requested that staff bring back a paper that discussed different options for how to restructure the AP, including an option to better collaborate with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, which does manage Spanish mackerel. They don't manage king mackerel. They do manage cobia, but we no longer manage cobia, at least Atlantic cobia, and so, really, the species overlap with ASMFC is Spanish mackerel, specifically.

One of the things we talked to the council about is how the current CMP FMP is set up, and most of you guys already know this, because you are actively working in the fishery every day, but, just as a quick overview, we do manage Florida East Coast cobia, and then management of king and Spanish mackerel is broken up into two zones, a Northern Zone and a Southern Zone, and that Northern Zone is everything north of the North Carolina/South Carolina line all the way through the Mid-Atlantic Council's jurisdiction, and so that includes New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia, as well as North Carolina. Then the Southern Zone is everything south of that North Carolina/South Carolina line all the way to the Miami-Dade/Monroe County line, and so it doesn't include the Keys. The Keys is part of the Gulf migratory group.

Currently, this AP does not have state or sector-specific seats. The council has made an effort to ensure that there is representation from all sectors and all states, but the seats aren't currently designated as such, except for one NGO seat.

This table right here just shows the summary of AP members by state and sector, as they sit right now, and, if you will remember, this is actually an issue -- The structure of the AP is an issue that

you all had brought up back at the November 2020 meeting, as well as a number of past meetings, the concern that we're making sure that the Mid-Atlantic region has representation, especially given that for-hire fishermen, as well as commercial fishermen, who target CMP species in that area are required to have permits, and there is evidence that landings are increasing further north, even as far north as New England.

It's also been noted, not at the November 2020 meeting, but at past AP meetings, that there is, particularly in terms of the commercial market, there's a relationship between Gulf fish and South Atlantic fish, and that it can be helpful to have perspectives from both the Gulf and the South Atlantic at the table when discussing some of these issues.

We presented a white paper to the council at their March 2021 meeting, and this what they recommended, and so, at this time, they felt that they couldn't currently support a member from the New England region, because we don't manage CMP species in that region. It is true that -- Anecdotal evidence is showing that landings are increasing in that area, and we have certainly heard from people, particularly related to king and Spanish mackerel, that there are landings occurring in the New England region.

If you will remember from the November meeting, Myra Brouwer presented some work that the council is doing some work related to scenario planning for climate change, and so it is something that the council is discussing, but, at this time, we don't manage the mackerel in the New England region, and so they didn't feel it was appropriate to have representation from that region on the AP.

They did express some concern about adding just one Gulf representative, because the fisheries in the Gulf are so diverse that it would be hard to find just one person to represent the entire CMP fishery in that area, but they did feel that perhaps the Chairs could attend one another's meetings, and it would just be important to ensure that the Gulf Council and the South Atlantic Council APs had a chance to discuss an issue in advance of either Chair going to the other council's AP meeting, to make sure that they were able to fully represent the breadth of the fishery and the issue that was being discussed. Additionally, joint AP meetings can be considered, on a case-by-case basis, and it's something that's been done in the past, and it's certainly something that can be done in the future, if needed.

They didn't feel like adding an additional representative for the Mid-Atlantic region was needed at this time, but they did feel like working with ASMFC could help with additional representation in that region, and one of the things that was recommended and discussed was starting to hold joint Mackerel Cobia and ASMFC Spanish Mackerel AP meetings, and so sort of an ad hoc AP, if you will, where members of this AP and members of the ASMFC Coastal Pelagics AP that participate in the Spanish mackerel fishery could get together and discuss issues. The Gulf Council would also be welcome to send representatives to that meeting, if they saw fit, and it would also help improve representation throughout the Mid-Atlantic region, including the New England states. ASMFC is in the process of populating their new Coastal Pelagics Board.

One of the things that the council did want to note was to make sure that any sort of structure that was set up was flexible enough to adjust to changing fisheries, since that's something we know we're all experiencing, and so that was a lot of information, but, really, the council's goal here is to sort of better work with all of the moving parts, the Gulf Council, the Atlantic States

Commission, and to make sure that we're really getting representation from all of these different areas that are involved in the CMP fishery. With that, I will pause and see what questions and discussion the AP has regarding the structure.

I am seeing no hands up at this time, and so I guess I might push a little bit harder and ask if you all feel comfortable with sort of the path forward that the council has laid out here. Tom Roller, I see your hand is up. Thank you.

MR. ROLLER: First of all, I really appreciate the council for their robust discussion here, and I personally feel comfortable with the logic that they're using, particularly as we're considering scenario planning or whatnot for climate change, in regards to the species, because, as we all know, and we all see it, whether it's social media or from people in the fishing industry, there is a lot more Spanish and king mackerel being caught up off of New England, up off of Cape Cod and whatnot, but I am comfortable with how this was presented here, and I think it is very, very thorough, in many regards, and I hope we hear some disagreement as well, but, for the most part, I like what I'm seeing.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Steve English.

MR. ENGLISH: I have pushing this whole time. If we don't have the ASMFC working with the Atlantic Council, then you can make all the rules in the world, and everybody does their own thing, and we have done nothing. We might as well not even have rules. The only way you'll get these mackerel straightened out, and they're a mess. Those of us who fish it know that the way it's set up now is a mess. That is for us to have meetings with the states and with the Atlantic Council to be able to come up with a uniform way of handling mackerel. Without that, then we're just peeing in the wind. Excuse my French, but that's the way I see it, and so, yes, I'm in favor of -- I think we should have an in-person meeting ASAP.

MS. WIEGAND: I think we've all got our fingers crossed for an in-person meeting sooner, as opposed to later. Thomas, go ahead.

MR. NEWMAN: I agree with Steve. I mean, I've seen -- (Part of Mr. Newman's comments are not audible on the recording.) North Carolina does a pretty good job of getting their landings out pretty quickly to the feds, but Virginia lagged I think almost six months in some of their stuff, and I know it was over two months, but the fish are moving north, and, like Steve said, we've got to start working, as these fish are moving further north, because, especially us in the north Spanish mackerel zone, we're going to cut short, as these other states are landing more fish, and we need more fish in our quota, and so being able to work with the Atlantic States would be a huge plus, and I don't know about the Gulf, but definitely working with New England needs to be a pretty big priority, I think.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Do we have any other questions or concerns or comments or discussion on this agenda item? All right. I am seeing none, and so, Tom, that leads us to the update for the fishery performance reports.

MR. ROLLER: I guess it's time to dive into that one, whenever you're ready.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Most of you guys are now old-hats at doing these fishery performance reports, but I know we've got one or two new people on here, and so, just briefly, one of the reasons we do these fishery performance reports with our APs is because you guys are the ones out there on the water fishing every day, and the information you have is incredibly valuable to the council and to SSC members and to stock assessment analysts. It can really provide some valuable insight into the fishery, and I think it's especially important this year, and one of the things the council members asked us specifically to talk about with you guys, are COVID impacts.

This has been a pretty unique year for commercial and recreational fishing, and we're lucky that, for the CMP fishery, since we only manage three species, we're able to update these fishery performance reports pretty regularly, and it's not the same for other FMPs, say snapper grouper, where you've got upwards of over fifty species that that FMP manages, but, for us, we try to update these pretty regularly, to make sure we're getting the most up-to-date information.

We've got about an hour left in the meeting, and I'm not sure that we're going to be able to get through all three species, and so, with that being the case, I think we should prioritize Atlantic Spanish mackerel, and the reason for that is that species also has an upcoming assessment, and we would like to have updated information provided by the AP available for that assessment, and so let's try to get through Spanish mackerel today.

If we have time, we can jump into king mackerel and Florida east coast cobia. If we don't end up having time at today's meeting, don't worry. We'll have another meeting, and we'll update them at that meeting, and so I don't want you to feel like, if we don't get through all three today, that we're just going to move on and not bother updating king mackerel and cobia. We absolutely will, but I just want to prioritize Atlantic Spanish mackerel right now, so that the information you all provide today can be made available for the upcoming stock assessment. Before I dive in, I will ask if there are any questions about the fishery performance reports. Otherwise, I'll let you guys do some talking.

I am seeing no hands pop up, and so, with that, let's get started and talk about Spanish mackerel catch level trends. These questions that I've got on the screen are identical to what was in your briefing book, and I have just put them in this PowerPoint form for ease, but if you all could provide us some information on when and where the fish are available in your area, if the size of the fish has changed, and what that trend is, and if there have been any effort shifts to or from Spanish mackerel, particularly in the last year or so, and, again, acknowledging that 2020 was a fairly unique year, and so, with that, we'll open it up to talk about catch level trends, and then we'll move on to some of the other question topic areas. Steve English, go right on ahead. It looks like you might be muted on your end, Steve. All right. We'll try to come back to Steve in a second. Tom, go ahead.

MR. ROLLER: I mean, I could talk about this forever, but I'll try to address all the three questions here, kind of in accordance with each other. As far as where and when these fish are available, I think I can comfortably say, here in North Carolina, they're arriving a little bit earlier, and they're staying a little bit later. This used to be a fish that we would start seeing showing up in the second week of May, in central North Carolina, or the third week of May, and, by showing up, I mean in like catchable, targetable numbers. There's always going to be a few before then.

Right now, I'm seeing fish being caught out of Wilmington. Last year, I saw some caught, in considerable numbers, the last week of March or the first week of April, and that's not something that I can ever remember seeing before, and, granted, last year was a warm spring, but it's become more prevalent over the last few years. We're also seeing them show up when the water is a little bit cooler, and we're seeing that with some of the other fish in the spring, like Atlantic bonito. We used to not expect to see them if the water was sixty-two or so degrees, and now they're showing up when it's fifty-nine, and maybe that's because that warm water is just that much closer behind them, and I don't have an answer for it, but they're also staying a little bit farther in the fall.

As far as has the size of the fish changed, I haven't seen any. I mean, we're catching small fish, and we're catching medium-sized fish. Now, I have always expressed personal concern, and there's a lot of targeting of the really large fish, these four to eight or nine-pound fish we catch in this area, but, honestly, the quality of the fishery for them seems to get better every year up here, and, every year, I seem to be catching even bigger fish, and my numbers stay consistent, as does that of a lot of my associates in the industry, as well as private anglers that I fish for.

To address effort shifts, I mean, I am personally really curious, and chomping at the bit, to see some of the new MRIP data from last year, and I know a lot of that has been delayed, due to issues with COVID, because I'm really curious to see who was fishing, because, from my perspective, boating effort was way up, but I can't say that fishing effort was up as much as boating effort is. I didn't have the problems at boat ramps that I had in years past, and it wasn't like it was that much busier, but it did seem to be that there were more people on the water.

What's interesting about Spanish is they're one of those fish that everybody targets, and not just your inshore anglers, but experienced anglers, and you just want to catch a few fish for dinner, and charter boat fishermen are kind of in the same boat, whether it's something to do really quickly or something to do with clients of just any level, and they're available, and so people target them, but I'm seeing people shift effort into all sorts of things, but I'm really curious to see what COVID did, because, from my perspective here, I saw a lot more resident anglers fishing, but we didn't have all the normal out-of-state anglers that we had, and so that data should be pretty fascinating, but that's all I've got.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Charlie, go ahead.

MR. LOCKE: I will say the same thing that Tom was saying. I will say that we catch scattered Spanish almost all winter, but they're usually really small fish. You get a little shot of warm water that comes into Hatteras, we'll catch eight or ten fish, but that's something we used to never see, and we kind of see that all winter long now, the last couple of years, but that's not like the migratory fish, and I don't know if it's just a few that stick offshore and then they come back to the beach when it gets warm, but I would say, last year, May 5, or May 6, was our first like measurable amount of fish, where we targeted them and actually caught a good amount of Spanish.

I would say, as far staying longer, when it closed last year, the northern quota, and we were on the 500-pound trip, and I think the state closes it on November 15, and maybe I'm wrong on that date, and I can't remember, but we still caught Spanish after that, and not in the large numbers, but they were still available, and we couldn't sell them at the time, and so they're definitely staying longer and showing up earlier.

The fish size, I would say it's the same size fish we've always caught, and we catch a lot of really big fish, and we actually target some bigger fish, at times, when they're on the shoals in the ocean, and it seems like, towards the early part of June is when we see this big -- You can actually see it, and they're real similar to what I would say of like a blue marlin or something. There will be fifteen or twenty little males, and you'll see a couple of great big old hog Spanish on the surface, and sometimes you'll see them swimming and splashing on their sides. I mean, they're definitely spawning when you catch those bigger fish at certain times, but that's not like a trend that's different. We see that every year, but it just happens to be the size of the fish we're encountering.

The big thing that I would want to say is the effort shift. We've had a lot of fisheries in the sound shut down, the flounder fishery, and the guys are really pinching the sound fisheries off to the gillnet guys, and you have seen a lot of these what I would consider guys that used to fish just on the inside now starting to come out along the beach and target the Spanish in the spring, summer, and fall, and it has added to -- Well, not only that, but we had a big sound fishery, and Thomas could tell you more about that, and I don't really fish for them in the sound. I pretty much don't fish in the sound. I fish in the ocean, pretty much strictly, but, for years, that's been a big float-net fishery in the sound, and, this year, even under our limited net -- They really curtailed the amount of yardage the guys could fish to 1,500 yards, which is really about twelve bundles, and we go by a bundle, but a bundle of net runs out to about 120 or 125 yards, the way we run it.

We stretch the webbing out, and so they were kind of limited to about twelve bundles, which a lot of guys were fishing up to thirty in years past, and, even on the limited amount of net, they caught a load of fish. I mean, we had a lot of fish this year. If you would have been able to fish like normal, I think we could have caught three-times what you saw the northern section catch this year, which we caught a million pounds, and, honestly, there was about the most amount of Spanish I've ever seen this year in the sound, and in the ocean, all year long.

Our fall, we were fishing one net, while we were spot fishing, and we were catching spots and sea mullet, and we would fish one 300-yard net and sometimes just set it for an hour and get our 500 pounds. We weren't trying to catch but so many, and so I would say there is more effort, and the fish are staying longer. There's people up north fishing for them, in the northern states, and Thomas Newman can talk more about that. He went up to Virginia and fished on them, the year before last, when we were closed down, before we had the 500-pound trip limit, once we reached the quota.

I'm having guys all the way to New York message me in different social media things and talking about Spanish. They've never caught Spanish up there, and they're catching them later than they've ever seen them, and so this is definitely something that you all are well aware of, that there's definitely more availability, and so there's a lot more fish available to be caught longer, and you know the dilemma we're in, with this really reduced quota, and it's really -- It's impacting us, and I will say two things about it, and I'll be honest with it.

It is impacting us so we can't catch fish like we used to catch. On the other hand, I have heard guys talk about the value has increased. Now, whether that's because of the limited amount, because we were restricted to the 500 pounds, and we kept the price up, and I'm not sure.

Steve Poland, I've talked to him about this, and he knows where I'm going with this. I'm not sure if that's just because of an availability issue, but guys were able to actually make -- They did pretty

well this fall, even on the 500-pound trip limit, and so that was a big win for us in North Carolina, with the council and everybody agreeing to let us fish under the 500 pounds, like Florida does, once we reach the quota, and that definitely saves us and the dilemma we're in, until we get an updated stock assessment and hopefully get a bigger quota, which is what we need, but I would say, like Tom Roller said, that our Spanish fishery every year just keeps improving.

Now, we've had storms and stuff in years past, hurricanes, that have affected that, but, the last couple of years, the trend has just really -- It's an unbelievable stock of fish, and we should have a good quota and be able to harvest it every year. That would be what I would want to see, if we could pull it out, and we need a million pounds. We need at least a million pounds in this northern section, and that's what we need.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Thanks, Charlie. Steve English, I'm going to come back to you and see if we've got you now.

MR. ENGLISH: I will just kind of go down the list here. When and where the fish are, down here in Florida, they've just been drastically changing, and I say that, and it's gone from Stuart, Martin County, up to off of Vero Beach, where the fish have headed in this year, and that's due to a number of things. It's the pressure on them from the sharks and the porpoises and the commercial boats and the recreational boats. It's just got out of hand down here, and the weather pattern.

The weather pattern stayed warm this year, and so the majority of our small fish bedded up off of Vero Beach in fifty feet of water, and they laid there all year long, and you could go out there, any day you could go fishing out there, and get 2,000 to 3,000 with a cast net, or 3,500, if you put your mind to it and stayed a little late. Well, those fish bedded up, and they were those that, if the guys throw a smaller-mesh net, they're catching the smaller fish out, and they're not throwing a bigger mesh to try and catch bigger fish. The majority of the quota caught here in Florida where your smaller fish, your pound fish, or pound-and-a-quarter fish, and, like I said, that's just shifted on account of the weather patterns and a lot of other things.

The size, of course, that's what I was saying, is that we caught a lot of small fish this year, and, well, nobody targeted the bigger fish, because they didn't have to. You would go out there and fill your boat full of the smaller fish, and you're going to get a small price for them anyhow, because you're catching so much volume, and there are so many boats involved, that the fish are freezer-price fish, and the value is just -- It's way down, fifty or sixty-cents a pound, and so that's been a big problem here.

One of the reasons for that, the reason everybody went to doing that, is -- It used to be that we had two buyers that bought down here, and, when the market would fill, and it would get too full, to where the price went down, the fish houses would close down for five, six, seven days, a week, whatever it took, to stabilize the market and clear the market and then take fish again.

Well, we got a third buyer in, and he's a freezer buyer, and so he'll buy fish from start to finish on the market, no what the market, and it doesn't matter how many you catch, and then, when the market does clear, they dump the freezer fish on the fresh market, and so our prices down here stay low the whole entire season, and I don't see any way of getting around that in the future, and so our fishery has totally changed, to where we're going to be targeting the smaller fish for freezer fish, with cast nets, and the larger fish, of course -- We'll catch a few of them when they come

inshore, and the hook-and-liners will catch them, but that's a total change from what it's been in the past on our fishery down here.

The effort shifts, I will just say that we've just got way too many people fishing in the Spanish mackerel fishery, and we should have done limited entry ten years ago, when we asked for it, and now we're in the boat that we're in, and I will say, like I always say, that we have a gillnet fishery down here, a small one, and it's twenty to twenty-five boats, and, if it expands, the way the other fishery has expanded, there won't be an inshore fishery, cast net fishery, because it will all get caught up before it gets there, and so I still -- I hope the council will really consider the limited entry in the gillnet fishery off the cape.

That's basically what we have down here now. Our fishery, in the last three years, has totally changed, and enforcement is a big problem on a lot of it too, and that's something we need to discuss with the state and law enforcement, and that's about what I have to say on it.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Steve. Let's move on. I've got Steve Swann up next.

MR. SWANN: I can't speak for commercial in northeast Florida, but, on the recreational side, Spanish has always traditionally been a spring fishery here. It's kind of the first fish that really show up in the springtime, and so everybody targets them pretty hard for three or four weeks, until the king mackerel show up a little bit farther offshore, and then everybody runs farther offshore and chases kingfish the rest of the summer.

This past spring, fishing was very good, medium-sized fish, and I don't know, and maybe thirteen to sixteen-inch average fish, something like that, nothing real big, for the most part, and a few fish hanging around all summer, and so, if you wanted to target Spanish, you could, but I don't think there's really that much recreational pressure on it, other than the first few weeks in April when they show up, but I will tell you that, with COVID, I have never seen the boat ramps as crowded in my life as they were last year. Probably every ramp close to the ocean was probably at 150 percent capacity, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, all spring and all summer long, and it's been pretty interesting, and that's about all I've got to add to it.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Thomas Newman, I've got you up next.

MR. NEWMAN: I just wanted to give a little brief report, but I myself was kind of messed up with COVID, COVID and a personal issue, moving and all kinds of mess, and I didn't really get to fish until September, but I know that, in North Carolina, the northern sector closed a month earlier in 2020 than it closed in 2019, and I think we closed August 24 in 2019, and, in 2020, we closed on July 22. That was with a reduced effort in the sound, and we were on a 1,500-yard limit in the sound, where most boats were fishing around 2,500 to 3,000 yards in the sound, and that probably accounts for about a third of our catch, and I don't have any hard data, but I would say about a third of our Spanish catch.

The fish are showing up earlier, and they're staying later, and I noticed that they're even staying after hurricanes. We're having small hurricanes coming through, but I think the fish are going so far north now that they're not just all running at one time as soon as a hurricane comes through, and there will actually be fish behind a hurricane, as long as it's not too bad, and I think the fish are trending a little bit bigger.

I know, when we went to the 500 pounds, a lot of the guys started using larger gillnet webbing, just so that all their 500 pounds were large, versus medium, where you had a little bit better price on the large versus medium, and it was just as easy to catch 500 pounds with a little bit larger net as it was a smaller net, but I don't think there was an increase in effort so much as in guys are starting to use different gear types. They are moving to different areas. A lot of guys left the sound this year, because they're kind of frustrated with the 1,500-yard rule limit, and, also, we had a 300-pound bluefish limit imposed somewhere along the first of August or the end of July, so we could conserve our bluefish quota and make it through the year.

Typically, there's a high bluefish bycatch in the Pamlico Sound during the summertime, and the guys just didn't want to discard a high number of bluefish, and so a lot of the guys moved out earlier, late summer or early fall, into the ocean, where they normally would have still been fishing in the sound waters, and I'm right there with Charlie. There's a lot of spawning fish in North Carolina, and the fish are spawning at a lot smaller size than what we have previously recorded, and I hope that maybe we can get some of that updated in this next stock assessment, and show that these smaller fish are also breeders as well. I think that's about it.

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

MR. CONKLIN: I had to pick up some kids, and I think one of my kids must have raised my hand for me, but that's it.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Are there any other comments related to catch level trends, or should we move on to the next section? I am seeing no hands jump up, and so next up is current management measures, and, of course, I know this AP has talked about different management measures that are needed for Spanish mackerel in the past, but we certainly wanted to -- This is something we always ask under fishery performance reports, and so I did want to go ahead and bring it up again and see if there are any new management measures you feel the council should be considering or new management measures that should be modified.

The council does intend to address taking sort of a holistic view of the Spanish mackerel fishery and looking at making modifications, once they've gotten results from the Spanish mackerel stock assessment, which is set to begin later this year, and I see we've got some hands popping up, and so, Thomas Newman, you're first up. Go right on ahead.

MR. NEWMAN: Well, I wanted to add a comment to the last section, but I will comment on the current management as well. I was kind of burnt out after the cobia presentation, and I was kind of out of it, but I was going to say too that we definitely need some more quota in the northern sector, and I think we have a little bit of room for fisheries to grow, but I think we need to grow it at a rate that we can control, kind of Steve English said, and not just make it open to everybody. I don't know about limited entry.

I'm not 100 percent behind that, but I don't want it to be everybody out there with a free-for-all, and I definitely think that -- Moving on to the current management measures, I do think that we need to start looking at some limited entry, especially in the Florida area, because I know I've talked to Steve English a lot about it, and it is crazy down there. Everybody with a boat can easily get a commercial license and just jump out there and really mess the market up and kind of just --

Like he said, he's just a free-for-all down there, and we need some control, and that's all I'm going to say about the current management. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Steve English, you're next up.

MR. ENGLISH: There is a lot of new management measures we should consider. Like I said, the problem is the council is really limited in what you can do. You can make a measure, but the state doesn't go along with it, and we need to get a uniform agreement between the states. The states have to get involved, or we'll never get any management that works. Just like with the 500, and one state will do it, and one state won't, and the other state will let it stay at 3,500, and you can't get anything done like that, and so we definitely need to get states involved.

Enforcement, that's a huge problem. You get over enforcement of silly things and no enforcement of the things that really need to be checked on, and, until you get something done with that on the state level, because that's where our fisheries occur, you're going to get nowhere, and you're just going to end up with what we have now, which is a nightmare scenario down here in Florida, for any of us who have commercial fished all our lives.

Yes, I think that, as soon as we can get the Atlantic Council involved with us and have some good meetings, I think we can come up with some really good management tools that the states could all agree on, and it will be different for each state. Florida's measures will be totally different than North Carolina's, because Florida is a mainly cast net and hook-and-line fishery in state waters, and North Carolina is strictly a gillnet and so it's going to be totally different measures, but we still need to come to agreement on them for the entire fishery. That's something that I am looking forward to, and I think, as soon as we get that in place, I think you're going to see some -- I think you're going to see some good things come out of that, and that's what I think is going with the management measures. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Tom Roller, I've got you up next.

MR. ROLLER: Okay. Just a couple of things here, and I don't want to step on any of the toes of the great commercial representation we have from North Carolina today, and so, you guys that are going to hear this comment, just understand that I kind of speak from the perspective of a manager in North Carolina, but, here in North Carolina, we're seeing a lot of issues with our inshore fisheries, and like southern flounder I know was brought up before, and there's a lot of concern that we're going to see effort shifts from fishermen in those fisheries to stuff like Spanish mackerel.

We've kind of heard that from other fishermen, and I just kind of wanted to reiterate that that's been a big discussion topic in North Carolina, and I'm not bearing judgment on it, but it's just what happens when you have some of these fisheries and fishermen shift from one to the other, and it's definitely been a big concern.

One of the other things that I wanted to bring up is, from a recreational standpoint, we have -- I've brought this up before, and we often don't -- We never really catch our ACL here, and I want to see the justification for the minimum size limit. Not that anybody I know wants to keep a smaller than twelve-inch Spanish mackerel, or even smaller than that, but, when we fish for them up here, and you're trolling things like small spoons and whatnot, you're going to catch these ten or eleven-inch fish, and they're almost always dead.

Their neck breaks, or they get hooked in the gills, and we're sitting and throwing these just barely fork-legal fish back, and so I would be curious to see if the council would consider reducing the size limit, or getting rid of the size limit, not because I think fishermen want to target these smaller fish, but just because I think that they're caught incidentally, and I would like to see what the data would look like there, and that's it.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Next up, I've got Charlie. Go ahead.

MR. LOCKE: Tom, if your recreational guys would get off of our backs and push us out of other fisheries, we wouldn't have to jump around so much. We're all going to be running six-pack charter boats and getting in your circle, and you're not going to want that.

On the management measures, I would say I just -- I say we address the elephant in the room, and Steve can tell more about this, but the shift of the three-million pounds, or whatever it was, way back when to the recreational sector from the commercial -- I say we need to shift that back right away. I don't think we need to wait for MRIP data, and I don't think we need to do anything. I think that needs to be the first thing that's addressed, because it seems like that's the trend in the recreational side of allocation shifts. I would say let's just get reallocated what was originally ours to begin with, and that would eliminate the early closures and the overages and all of that in the northern sector right away, without having to do any other management measures.

I'm not exact on the amount of fish that the recreational got that was in the commercial sector, but I know, when I was a kid in Florida growing up, one top boat down in Port Salerno would catch a million pounds, one crew, back in the day, and so one boat would catch more than our whole northern quota, and it's just -- This is a very healthy stock of fish, and everybody is agreeing on that, and it's a shame that we can't utilize one of the -- Everybody is trying to rebuild stocks, and we've got a good, healthy stock here, and it's frustrating, as a fisherman, to not be able to utilize that stock that's right in your backyard for six months out of the year.

One of the things I will say about -- Steve English mentioned about how do you regulate it, how do you do limited entry, how do you do a gillnet endorsement and all that, and I've fished for many years in the gillnet fishery out of the cape, all the way down to Fort Pierce, in federal waters, coming from North Carolina and going down there in the spring fishery, and that fishery varies.

Some years, there was ten boats, and some years -- Like he said, in the fall, they said there is up to fifty boats sometimes doing it, and there is a big fear from those guys down there that some of the guys will shift out there, and, obviously, you can catch a lot more fish, and I don't know how you address that.

For me, I've been a Spanish mackerel -- It's an open-access permit, and I've had a Spanish mackerel permit since I've had my boat, but they're non-transferable, and so I bought a snapper grouper permit, and I have leased this permit, and so I've swapped permits back and forth and just reapply for another Spanish mackerel permit, and so the question that comes to my mind is, if you do a limited entry on say a gillnet endorsement -- You know, I've gillnetted down there for many years and caught a lot of fish, out of the cape and, like I said, all the way to Fort Pierce, and I don't want to be shut out of that fishery, if I were to choose to go back down there and participate in that gillnet fishery again.

Then you have the problem in the State of North Carolina where you have state boats versus federal boats, and a lot of my buddies don't have federal Spanish mackerel permits, because they never go outside of three miles, and so a guy like myself, that's got a Spanish mackerel permit, I'm having to do a logbook, and I'm having to do all the stuff, the reporting requirements, that they don't have to do. Now, granted, the state is getting the reports, but I have to do a logbook on every Spanish I catch.

I don't know how you address the state -- Our fishery is 90 percent, or probably 95 percent, state waters. How do you address a federal fishery in state waters, just like you've got Florida with the cast-net skiffs and the hook-and-liners, and I guess maybe some of them have federal permits, Steve, and I don't know, but I think the balance is how do you manage a federal fishery that's happening in state waters, because even the gillnet restrictions, federally, is three-and-a-half-inch minimum stretch, and we use a lot of three-and-three-eighths, three-and-a-quarter, especially in the spring, when the fish are smaller, and so we're not even -- And we use more net. We fish a shorter piece of net, like a 300-yard net, but we may fish up to five nets on the beach, and spread our nets down the beach and just keep them fishing all day, until you're ready to go in and you crank all your nets on and go home.

I mean, we fish completely different than the federal rule already is established, but, to me, there's like no unified -- There is no unified management, state versus federal, and we only have the federal rule, and so it's -- Do you see where I'm getting at? It's just like it's all over the place, and so there's really like -- I don't know how you do that, and I don't want more restriction, and I don't want what the federal rule is, the 800 yards, and you can only have two nets on your boat, and they've got to be a quarter-inch different size. That rule was -- That's an antiquated rule from the 1980s, when they had roller rigs based down in south Florida in the wintertime.

I mean, these big strike net boats that caught 40,000 pounds in a net, our nets are designed to catch but -- I mean, my net is designed to catch 800 pounds, on a good set, or maybe a thousand pounds, and it will collapse. I mean, they're really small, and we've to put them on a net reel, and so it's a totally different -- I would say the rules that are in place for the Spanish mackerel fishery are antiquated, even in the gillnet fishery in the cape.

Steve will tell you this, and we've talked about this before, and, with the three-and-a-half-inch net, you will starve to death gillnet fishing outside the three miles, and I will go ahead and tell you. It's too big, and you need a smaller-mesh net, but you're fishing it differently, and it's like a -- You're fishing the net, and you set your two nets, and you fish one, and you go back to the next one, and you're jumping back and forth until you get your 500 pounds. That's antiquated, the 500 pounds, that you can't have more 500 pounds -- Once you reach 500 pounds, and you're directing on Spanish, then you can only have one net in the water, and it's got to be -- There's all these rules that don't even -- They're not even how the fishery is operated, and so I don't know where you go with that.

I am getting above my head with this, with down there with what Steve does in his area, but I see the management rules being all over the place for Spanish mackerel, because they've been managed in federal waters, but all these fish are being harvested in state waters, and I don't know you unify that, or get everybody on the same page, but it makes it difficult for somebody like myself, who say wants to go to Florida and knows I'm going to be fishing in federal waters, and

I'm going to have the marine patrol on my back every time I leave the dock in the State of Florida, and Steve says no enforcement, but, dude, I couldn't leave the dock without somebody checking me coming and going, and knowing, at the same time, that the way we're all fishing out there really technically wasn't three-and-a-half-inch net.

I'm not trying to get anybody in trouble, but I think these rules are like antiquated rules for a strike net fishery that happened back in the 1980s, and they need to be updated with what's really going on out there right now, and I will leave it at that, but Steve kind of knows where I'm going with this, but I think the management measures -- We need more quota, number one, and I don't know how you do that, but we need to get reallocated what was taken from us and given to the recreational, because they aren't using it, and we need it. I mean, I will end it with that.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Charlie. Before we move on, is there anyone else who would like to add anything to this discussion? Thomas Newman, I see you've got your hand up. Go right on ahead.

MR. NEWMAN: I just want to talk about Tom saying how the commercial fishermen switch from one fishery to the other, and that happened with our mackerel closure. If we could get some more quota, we wouldn't have to switch fisheries. The last two falls, when we ran out of mackerel quota, everybody switched over to catching spot, and spot is another species of concern, and mackerel is not, and so, if we could get some more mackerel quota in the Northern Zone, we wouldn't have to keep switching to other fisheries, and I just wanted to mention and make note of that.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Thanks, Thomas. I am seeing no other hands popping up, and so I'm going to roll us on to environmental conditions, and you all have talked a little bit about some of this in your earlier discussion, but just if you had anything else to add on environmental condition, such as any unique effects of things like temperature changes, and have you noticed changes in the timing or length of the spawning season? What about recruitment? Where are the large fish, the small fish, and has that changed?

Have you seen shifts in catch, either -- Not just north/south, but also inshore/offshore? Seasonal effects of sea conditions, any changes in catch depth or the bottom type you all are fishing on, and then, of course, have you noticed any changes in the species you're catching with Spanish mackerel? I know that was a number of questions, but, broad sweeping, how environmental conditions have been affecting Spanish mackerel over the last few years. I am not seeing any hands pop up, and so I know, in the past, you all have talked quite a bit about how temperature, for example, impacts when Spanish are available. There we go. Steve English. Go right on ahead.

MR. ENGLISH: I just want to make one observation that they need to know about, that they all really need to know, but the recruitment of small fish is astronomical. We're seeing just massive bunches of small fish, and so I'm very pleased with the recruitment, and it's -- It's getting better all the time, and so I think that you're going to see a big increase in the stock when you do the assessment, and I think a lot of the concerns about not having enough fish will be addressed when we do that. That's about it.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Steve. Is there anyone else who has any comments about how environmental conditions, or changes in environmental conditions, have impacted Spanish mackerel? Tom Roller, go right on ahead.

MR. ROLLER: I just want to say that I think a lot of us covered this with some of the previous motions, where we talked about seeing the fish earlier, and where we're seeing them, and I would just reiterate that. I think I covered this pretty good, and we can refer back to those comments.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Well, I am seeing no other hands pop up, and so let's move on to social and economic influences. This is talking about the species you target, how important they are to your overall business, how demand for things like charter and headboat trips have changed, how demand for commercially-caught species has changed, what communities are dependent on Spanish mackerel, do you know of any communities where Spanish mackerel has a really strong cultural or historical importance?

Then, really, how fishermen have adapted to sort of changes in the fishery, or changes in infrastructure, or fishing opportunities, and I know -- I think this would be the point, if there have been a lot of COVID-related impacts to your fishing businesses, or your recreational fishing opportunities, I think this would be a really good time for you all to sort of have that discussion, to give the council an idea of how you've been affected by the pandemic. Charlie, I see your hand has gone up. Go ahead.

MR. LOCKE: One thing, for myself, is I have always been like a really quality guy, like try to brine my fish and really take good care of my fish, and, here in North Carolina, in the past, there's -- You know, the quality can be all over the place, depending on how the guys are fishing and how they're taking care of their product, and I know, under the 500 pounds, I saw where guys were really actually taking care of their fish, some guys that didn't, and I hate to say that, and everybody, as a commercial fisherman, will tell you there's guys in the industry that -- There's the 10 percent that always make it bad for the 90.

I myself, I really egged some guys on that I knew weren't taking care of their fish, and said, hey, man, put some saltwater in your box and brine the things, and make them hard and firm, and it will help the market. As far as like how other fishermen have adapted, the 500 pounds, I think the guys got a little bit more aware of the quality, and I think that helps the price. Like I said, we made good money on the 500 pounds, because the price averaged \$1.50 on the mediums, and that helped out.

I think another thing too is that we have an eleven-inch Spanish in the pound net fishery up here, which I don't pound net, and I'm not in the sound, but I know what Tom Roller was saying about the little fish. I hear the charter boats up here at Oregon Inlet in the summertime, and they talk about that a lot. There's a lot of eleven-inch, eleven-and-a-half-inch, Spanish, and the necks are broke, and the same thing, and they catch them, and most of these half-day charters -- They're taking little kids out, and, man, that's a big deal to catch a little Spanish. It ain't nothing for a guy that's a seasoned fisherman, but, for a little kid, it's something, and they've got to bring it in there, and the neck is broke, and the gills are hanging out, and they throw it back overboard.

I don't know how you address that. The people that eat a Spanish, even a twelve-inch Spanish is really too small. Our smalls, we don't get any money for our smalls. A lot of times, the smalls -- I will pick my smalls out and sell them for marlin bait to the charter guys, if I can take good care of them, and I know there's a bit bait fishery in Florida, and I think Steve's son, little Steve, does

it, and, to be honest with you, these marlin guys, they want an eleven-inch Spanish. They want a small Spanish mackerel for that marlin bait. They use them on their teasers and stuff.

I don't know how that can play into management, but, value-wise, when I looked at the 500 pounds, I said, how can I make the most money off of this 500 pounds, as a fisherman, because it's business, and so then you start to think, well, what if I caught 500 pounds of twelve-inch fish and got five-dollars apiece for them for marlin bait, and I'm not saying I would do that, but it does make you think about how can I utilize -- How can I get the most money for the limited amount of fish that I'm given?

I am not saying that I want a commercial size limit change of under twelve inches, but it has made me think of -- Well, just like he said, a charter boat, can you keep an eleven-inch fish because it's dead anyway, because the neck is broke? I see a change in the way people look at the fishery and how they value the fish, and I don't know if you get what I'm saying, but trying to utilize the most dollars for what you're given, and there is a high value in that bait fishery for these marlin guys.

They have the big tournaments up here all summer long, and would I be better off catching these smaller ones and selling them for five apiece to marlin guys, versus trying to catch big ones and get \$1.50 a pounds for 500 pounds, and do you know what I'm saying? I mean, if you're looking at a half-pound fish that's twelve inches, or three-quarters, and there's a thousand fish in your 500 pounds, and so it's made me look at this fishery different and how I can utilize the most bang for the buck on the 500 pounds. That's what I've seen, as far as a change in the way people look at it up here.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Tom Roller, I've got you up next.

MR. ROLLER: There's a lot here. First of all, I really appreciate Charlie's comments there and reiterating the comments regarding the comments of the charter fleet. Same thing down here, and we get these days where you go out, and maybe it's tough fishing, but you will catch ten or twelve fish that are eleven inches long, fork length, and all the necks are broke, and so, again, it's nice to hear that brought up, because that is a relevant issue.

Among the species you target, how important are Spanish mackerel, and we've had some really good discussions of this at the AP in years past, and the Spanish mackerel may not be your sexiest fish, but they are one of the most important, recreationally and commercially, on the east coast, particularly in North Carolina. We do -- Even if they're not as appreciated as much as they are, we have a huge cultural tradition of fishing for these fish, and they are one of the -- I would say, up in my area, if you really want to see the really important fish to the locals, or the really important fish, see what the locals go fishing for after work, and Spanish are one of those fish, because it's something easy, and it's accessible.

That also bleeds into the charter and headboat trips. Now, from my own personal experience, and, again, this is going to be probably very different than the Florida guys, but, the way the pandemic affected our businesses last year is a lot of us saw a huge turndown in cancellations, particularly from out-of-state and vacationing customers, in April and May. Then, in June, things started to pick up, but it was very different. It was a lot more new clientele, and it was a lot of people from inside of North Carolina, within driving distance, and our charter fleet did very well last year.

Now, you can't make up for lost time, but, for the most part, everybody was busy, and you saw a lot of people, a lot of entry-level anglers, kids and families, just desperate to get outside, and what did they do? They targeted things like Spanish mackerel, and, as the pandemic affects things, one thing I that I can add on, in my area, and this is not necessarily related to this fishery, but people are a lot more mobile now, and we have a lot more people moving to this area, and real estate is at a huge premium, and that's leading into dock space issues.

I mean, we're having some big issues finding slips, or dock space, right now in my industry, and it's becoming an issue, and it's affecting just about everybody I know, to some capacity. A lot of buildings and properties have sold, and a lot of people have lost historic boat slip rental access and that sort of thing, but it's not that we're seeing any problems with this fishery, per se, but, granted, I think that really reiterates how important this fishery was.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Tom. Thomas Newman, I've got you up next. I'm sorry. Excuse me. Steve Poland. I did not mean to skip right over you, and I was not looking at the list, and I was looking at my hands-raised screen. Go ahead, Steve.

MR. POLAND: No, that's fine, Christina. I just wanted to follow-up on one thing, real quick, that Charlie had mentioned, and I think he had mentioned something about the pound net fishery here and the eleven or eleven-and-a-half-inch exemption for that fishery. That is something that is no longer in effect. The state didn't request that exemption, I believe last year, and so now the pound net fishery here is twelve inches and consistent with everything else.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Steve. I'm sorry about that, Thomas. You can go ahead now.

MR. NEWMAN: That's okay. I will go down the list, just to kind of make it simple. Spanish mackerel are my number-one most important fish, by far. I mean, some years, it's -- I only target Spanish from spring to fall, and, in the wintertime, I stay home with the kids. In the spring, I start rebuilding nets, or early winter, and I don't see how demand has really changed that much, but the communities here are very dependent on the Spanish mackerel fisheries. Hatteras is huge. I mean, six months out of the year, their gillnet fleet, that's what they focus on.

Ocracoke is the same way. There's not a lot of boats in Ocracoke, but they're 100 percent dependent on that, and it filters down through the community. In Ocracoke, every restaurant has Spanish mackerel tacos, and that's just a thing there. That's what they eat. Hatteras Village is very similar, and they eat a lot of those fresh fish. Wanchese is the same way. I am not really familiar with northeastern North Carolina, but Spanish mackerel has a very important historical and cultural importance in our area.

The changes in the infrastructure, I haven't seen that. Not in our area. Like Charlie said, the fishermen adapted to the 500 pounds, but part of the adaptation was to start branching out and having like a couple of spot nets on the boat, and one or two mackerel nets, or having some shark bycatch. I know that's what I did this fall, was I had -- That's what my bycatch was, and it was large coastals and spot, to go along with my Spanish mackerel, but definitely more large coastals than spot, in my personal experience, but every little bit helped when you were only allowed 500 pounds of Spanish mackerel, but we thank God to have those this year, because it definitely made a huge difference, and that's it.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Thomas. All right. I am not seeing any other hands up, and so I will move us to our next slide for this FPR, which is just other comments. Is there anything else that hasn't been brought up that you feel is important for the council to know or understand about the Spanish mackerel fishery? Paul, I see you've got your hand up. Go right on ahead.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: This just follows up on Tom Roller's comment before, and Tom and I live in the same neck of the woods here in coastal North Carolina, and there's just a tremendous increase in recreational fishery usage on the coast of families coming down, especially during the COVID, and enjoying saltwater opportunities, and I think that's going to be something that we should keep track of as both a recreational and commercial fishing community, tapping into this Spanish mackerel resource, moving forward.

That is, and Tom Roller hit on it a second ago, and that is discard percentages and dead discard percentages as a fraction of the entire catch of Spanish mackerel in our region, because those little short fish, as has been mentioned several times over the course of the afternoon, those short fish don't do well, as far as experiencing discard mortality is concerned, and so I think that's going to be something that's going to be interesting, moving forward, and looking towards the next assessment of this species in our region.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Paul. Thomas, go right on ahead.

MR. NEWMAN: I know I'm beating a dead horse, but I know we've got a stock assessment coming up for Spanish mackerel, and, it is very important, to me, to see some other alternatives, instead of reducing the commercial quota, when we start putting this MRIP data in. We have a lot more alternatives than just reducing the commercial quota percentage, because we, in the northern sector, have room to grow, and we need more quota, and we do not need a percentage taken away, and we don't need poundage taken away.

We need extra poundage, and we need extra percentage, and I want to see some different alternatives than what I've been seeing coming up in the past six months in all these other fisheries, because all the alternatives I've seen these councils present has been a reduction in commercial quota, and not just a small reduction, but it's been big, huge reductions, and I just want to give input and comment on that I want the council to read that, and I want to see some better alternatives when it comes to reallocations, when this comes up.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Thanks, Thomas. Charlie, go ahead.

MR. LOCKE: A term I learned in the cobia -- When we were trying to keep our 8 percent cobia quota, before we lost to it 4 percent, was the *de minimis* state, and I did not ever know that term before I was in that meeting, but I guess the *de minimis* states are the ones that don't really land a lot of fish, and they don't really have any regulations, and so, for me, I was surprised that there wasn't more -- I asked Steve Poland, several times, when we talked about this, as far as the northern sector goes.

I know, for a fact, that they are rigging up in Virginia more and more, especially in the float net fishery in the sound, and there's guys up in Chincoteague that were fishing for them in the ocean last year that never used to fish for them before. I can't really speak for that whole area up there, because I don't fish up there, but just what I'm hearing, and I've had guys reach out to me, through

social media, asking me what size net, how deep net am I fishing, because they are seeing these fish there where they never used to see them, and they're now realizing that they're valuable, and they're wanting to target them.

It's really important for the council to understand that this northern sector thing -- You know, we have complained about it. We complained about it a long time ago, and, I mean, I think it was when Michelle Duval was the state -- Me and her were talking about this a long time ago, about I knew we were going to run into this. I know this was coming, when I saw what we were given in the northern sector, and it just so happened that we had enough hurricanes, and things didn't work out, where we didn't really reach our quota for a couple of years when it first happened, but this isn't going away. It's going to get worse.

Like Thomas said, we closed a month earlier last year, and in July we closed, instead of August, and, like I said, we have 500 pounds, and that's the only reason probably the phone wasn't ringing off the hook, at the council level, of people complaining, and so I just think it's important for the council to understand that. I don't know what the *de minimis* states land, and I don't know what Virginia is landing, or Maryland, or New York, or -- I know these things are going up further than they've ever gone, and so keep an eye on what's being landed in other states, realize that there is people interested in getting into this fishery, which is a good thing.

I don't want people to look at that as a negative thing, because that's the problem, when people talk about -- Every time I ever get in any one of these meetings, it's always how do we cap participation, and it's always, well, we've got these -- Just like we were talking about before, and Florida has gotten out of hand, and I understand it, because Florida is a different dynamic, but I don't think it's bad, for some of these states that don't have a Spanish mackerel fishery, to develop a Spanish mackerel fishery, and I think it's a good thing, because it takes pressure off of other stocks that they may be fishing at that time of year.

Expansion of the fishery to the north is not a bad thing, and I'm not against it, but what I want to see is enough quota to let these fisheries grow. Like Thomas Newman said, I mean, we've got room to grow in this fishery in North Carolina. We have them here longer than we've ever had them, and the council needs to understand that, in that this -- I will go back to it. It's a healthy stock, and we shouldn't be where we're at on the quota.

The recreational -- I know that MRIP is going to come back and they're going to say that they're really harvesting that million-and-a-half pounds that they've been leaving on the table the last several years, but this should be a big quota. I know Florida has more effort, and they have more -- They have a more solid stock of fish down there, when they're wintering in the hole and down there along the beach, and they're easily accessible, and they catch a lot of fish quick, but they have two-and-a-half-million pounds, and we've got 660,000, and it's just -- I don't want to take anything from what they have. We just need more quota out of the whole, and I think the council needs to know that this is expanding north every year, and there's other people getting involved in it, and it needs to be like priority-one to get us more quota in the northern sector. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Thanks, Charlie. I'm not seeing any other hands up, and we've got four minutes left until 5:30, and I scheduled this meeting until 5:30, and I promised you all that we wouldn't go past that, and I would like to be respectful of everyone's time, and so I think we'll hold off on doing the king mackerel and cobia fishery performance reports until the next AP

meeting, and so don't worry. I know I've got some particularly king mackerel guys that have sat and listened to the whole Spanish mackerel discussion, and I promise, at the next meeting, we will get to updating those king mackerel fishery performance reports.

With that, I'm going to pull back up the agenda. Now that we've gotten through the main items, Tom, it might be time to ask for one more chance for public comment, if there's anyone who would like to make public comment.

MR. ROLLER: Yes. Absolutely. Is there anybody from the public who would like to make a comment? If so, please raise your hand.

MS. WIEGAND: I am not seeing any hands pop up, and I think I know most everyone who is on the webinar, and I don't think we have any members of the public left anymore, but I do see that, Keith, you've got your hand up, and so not a public comment, but go ahead.

MR. M. BOWEN: I am Keith's dad. Can I make a public comment?

MS. WIEGAND: Absolutely, Mason. Go right on ahead.

MR. M. BOWEN: You know, I might be the old man in the computer here, me and Steve English, but I've been doing this for an awful lot of years, and my father was a commercial fisherman, and so a long time we've been on the water. When I say this, I'm not trying to be disrespectful at all to marine biologists or new data. In fact, I would have to say that, recently, recreational participation is very high, but I can promise you this much, because I have fished up and down the east coast of Florida for many years, and, at the beginning of the decade, there was very little recreational participation.

That's just the way it is. From Sebastian north to Jacksonville, when the price of fuel got up to \$3.50 or \$4.00, or more, for a gallon of gas, the recreational participation went away, and so it's very concerning to me that you're going to go, particularly retroactively, on data that it's like how does all of this work out, and it's certainly not what I've seen, physically seen, on the water, and particularly going forward, because, I mean, I've been told the recreational -- I'm not against recreational fishermen by any means. I feel like they've invested money in their boats, and they should be able to catch fish, but this is an economically-driven participation, if that make sense to anymore.

The price of fuel goes high, and the economy gets tough, and, all of a sudden, people that are in \$200,000 boats aren't fishing as much, or just the hard-core recreational fishermen are fishing. This is reality, and it's not an opinion, and I feel like the other commercial fishermen and other people that are listening right now will agree with me, and so, going forward, and you're going to use this data to influence our datasets, and I am concerned about the emphasis of it, because I -- Whether -- You can tell me that you did all this research, and you came up with this diagram or that diagram, and it doesn't matter, to me. I can tell you that I have been up and down this coast, during those years, and the participation wasn't there. That's just the way it is, and so that's my comment, going forward, and I'm going to leave it at that.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you. Would you mind stating your name, for the record? I know you're a staple in the fishery, but it's helpful for us to have it on the record.

MR. M. BOWEN: My name is Mason Bowen.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you, Mason. All right. I'm not seeing any other hands up for public comment, and so, Tom, I will turn it back over to you, if there's any other business. If there's not, I would just like to say a few words before we adjourn for the day.

MR. ROLLER: Absolutely. I will call on -- If anybody from the AP has any other business they would like to bring up, and we are over time, and so, if so, please do it quickly, but, if you have anything, please raise your hand.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I am not seeing any hands pop up.

MR. ROLLER: All right. Well, then on to you, Christina, if you would like to say something.

MS. WIEGAND: I don't mean to end the meeting on a sad note, but I did want to let the advisory panel members know that Ryan Howard, who was an advisory panel member from Savannah, Georgia, passed away earlier in March, and so I just ask that you please keep his family and friends and loved ones in your thoughts. He was a valuable member of this AP, and certainly an important community leader in the Savannah charter industry, and so please be sending warm thoughts their way.

Then, on a lighter note, I just wanted to thank you all for attending yet another webinar meeting, and I know we're a year and change into this pandemic, and I heard from a number of you asking when we were going to be able to meet in person again, and I know we've all got our fingers crossed that that will be soon, and I really just wanted to take a moment to thank you all for taking time out of your day. I know, if you're sitting on a webinar, that means you're not out on the water, and the information that you provide during these meetings is so incredibly valuable to the council members, when they're making decisions, and so I wanted to express my thanks for you guys taking time to attend yet another webinar meeting, and hopefully we'll be able to go back to meeting in-person soon. That's all I had, and so I will just turn it back over to you, Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Wow. I'm very sad to hear about Ryan. He was a really good guy, and I didn't know, and so warm thoughts for him and his family. Thank you for all of that, Christina, and thank you, everyone, for attending today. Again, we always have such a robust discussion on these two really important fisheries, and, by that, I mean the mackerel, and that's not to say that cobia isn't important, and so, with all of that, I guess we can adjourn the meeting, unless we have anything else.

MS. WIEGAND: I think we're good to go, and I hope that everyone has a fantastic evening.

MR. ROLLER: Likewise. Thanks, everyone.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on April 6, 2021.)

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Mackerel Cobia

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Attendee Details

Attended	Last Name	First Name
Yes	BYRD	01JULIA
Yes	Bell	00Mel
Yes	Bowen	Keith
Yes	Brouwer	01Myra
Yes	Chaya	01Cindy
Yes	Conklin	00Chris
Yes	DeVictor	Rick
Yes	English	Stephen
Yes	Glasgow	Dawn
Yes	Guyas	Martha
Yes	Hadley	01John
Yes	Hart	Hannah
Yes	Howington	02Kathleen
Yes	Hudson	Rusty
Yes	Iberle	01Allie
Yes	Iverson	01Kim
Yes	Locke	Charlie
Yes	Mendez	Natasha
Yes	Newman	Thomas
Yes	O'Donnell	Kelli
Yes	Poland	00Steve
Yes	Prewitt	Brian
Yes	Rhodes	01Cameron
Yes	Roller	00Tom
Yes	Rudershasen	Paul
Yes	Schmidtke	01Michael
Yes	Seward	McLean
Yes	Swann	Steve
Yes	Sweetman	CJ
Yes	collier	01chip
Yes	vara	mary