

# **SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

## **MACKEREL COBIA ADVISORY PANEL**

**Webinar**

**November 2, 2020**

### **TRANSCRIPT**

#### **MACKEREL COBIA AP MEMBERS**

Ira Laks, Chair  
Steve Donalson  
Aaron Kelly  
Thomas Newman  
Tom Roller

Steve Swann, Vice Chair  
Rusty Hudson  
Charlie Locke  
Greg Peralta  
Paul Rudershausen

#### **COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Mel Bell  
Chris Conklin

Steve Poland  
Spud Woodward

#### **COUNCIL STAFF**

Allie Iberle  
Julia Byrd  
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Kim Iverson

Dr. Brian Chevront  
Myra Brouwer  
Dr. Chip Collier  
Cindy Chaya  
John Hadley

Other observers and participants attached.

The Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened via webinar on Monday, November 2, 2020, and was called to order by Chairman Ira Laks.

MS. WIEGAND: Ira, I think a few more people may hop on as we get rolling, but we've got a decent chunk of stuff to get through, and so we should probably go ahead and get started. If it's all right with you, I will run through just a few sort of technical introductory things, before I turn it over to you to get to the meat of the meeting.

MR. LAKS: Okay. Sounds good.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so welcome, everyone. Thank you for taking the time to be here for the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel meeting. First things first, and I want to go over just a couple of technical things related to the webinar, and there are a few buttons here that are going to be pretty important as we roll through this meeting.

The first button is going to be this microphone button, and that's how you're going to mute and unmute yourself, and it's important, if you're not talking, to please keep yourself muted, and that's going to cut down on any background noise that makes it hard to hear. If this little icon is orange, your microphone is muted. If it's green, your microphone is unmuted, and we can hear you and anything else that's going on around you.

The second important button is going to be this hand-raise button, and we're going to use this to indicate that you would like to speak, similar to all of us sitting around a table. If you were interested in making a comment, you would raise your hand, and Ira would call on you, and we're going to have a similar process here, and so will click on that to raise your hand. If the little arrow is green, your hand is down, and, if the arrow is red, then your hand is raised. During the Dolphin Wahoo meeting last week, they used red-right-return, and red equals raised.

Then there is also this little question box. If you can't see that question box, you're going to need to hit the orange arrow up here to pop this box out, and there you will be able to enter a question for staff, and so, if you are having any technical issues, for some reason, if you can't hear us, if you can't see the webinar screen, something is just not working, type a question in there, and let staff know, and we'll try to troubleshoot with you to get things worked out.

If you've been on a few of our meetings since the pandemic started, you will know that we're running our webinar meetings a little bit different now. Like I said, we're using this hand-raise button, and you're going to see, on the left-side of your screen, what we're calling the hand-raise document, and what will happen is you will raise your hand, using the button, and staff will type your name on this hands-raised list, and Ira will be able to see it, and then he will call on you guys in order, just like if we were actually sitting around a table in-person.

I have also got a couple of people helping me out today. Mike, who some of you guys may already know, and he came to us from ASMFC, where he was working on mackerel and cobia issues, and so he's already well-versed in everything we're going to be talking about today, and then Cindy is going to be serving as our tech support, and so, if you have any issues, you can also email one of the two of them, and we will try to get it worked out for you.

Then, last, but not least, motions. We have done a couple of webinar meetings for the Mackerel AP before, and we've tried different ways to do motions, some clunkier than others, and what we're going to do for this meeting is try to run things by consensus, and so, if a motion is posed, and a consensus is reached, it will just be approved. If there's anyone opposed to the motion, they will raise their hand to let us know that they're opposed, and then we will run through each individual's name and get their vote on the record. That is how we're going to be running things today, and does anyone have any questions at this point about how we're running the webinar?

I am not seeing any hands popped up, though I see that we've got a couple of other AP members that have joined, and so I'm going to make sure that they're unmuted as well, starting with Tom Roller, if you want to go ahead and test your sound, Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Can you hear me?

MS. WIEGAND: Loud and clear. Thank you so much. Next up is Greg Peralta. I see that you have joined.

MR. PERALTA: Yes, and I'm on.

MS. WIEGAND: We can hear you loud and clear. Thank you. Then, Chris Conklin, I see that you've joined, and I want to go ahead and get you unmuted, in case you want to add into the discussion at any point.

MR. CONKLIN: I'm right here. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you so much. All right. With that, I am going to go ahead and turn it over to you, Ira, to walk us through the agenda and meeting minutes and public comment.

MR. LAKS: Christina, do we want to have everyone introduce themselves?

MS. WIEGAND: Sure, and I think that would be a good idea. I think the easiest way to do that is, if you want to just call on someone, and then they can state their name, where they're from, and how they're involved in the fishery, and that would be fantastic.

MR. LAKS: Okay. Do you want me just to do the AP members?

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, and just the AP members would be great, and I have pulled up a list here, if that helps.

MR. LAKS: Okay. I guess we can start with Aaron.

MR. KELLY: This is Aaron Kelly. I run a charter boat out of Oregon Inlet Fishing Center, Rock Solid, and I basically just fish all year long, and I am just trying to help out and give some on-the-water insight.

MR. LAKS: Thank you. I guess we can go with Charlie next.

MR. LOCKE: My name is Charlie Locke, and I fish out of Wanchese, North Carolina, primarily gillnet, and I fish for Spanish mackerel, and I have fished on the east coast of Florida, Cape Canaveral, in the gillnet fishery as well, the federal water fishery, in the past, and I haven't been down there in the last six or seven years, but I'm pretty familiar with the Spanish mackerel fishery as a whole, down there and up here, and that's kind of the insight I can give. Thank you.

MR. LAKS: All right. Let's go with Greg.

MR. PERALTA: Good afternoon, everybody. This is Greg Peralta, and I'm based here in Charleston, South Carolina, and I am a recreational fisherman.

MR. LAKS: All right. Let's see. Who do we have next here? I see Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Good afternoon. I'm Paul Rudershausen, and I'm a research scientist with North Carolina State University's Department of Applied Ecology, and I have lived and worked out of Morehead City, North Carolina for the last eighteen or so years, and I have been researching cobia, or assisting researching cobia, in Dr. Jeff Buckel's lab for the last three to four years.

MR. LAKS: Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: Rusty Hudson, Directed Sustainable Fisheries, and I predominantly represent the king mackerel commercial fisheries, since 2007, and, by proxy, I also represent the recreational, private and for-hire, for all the management that we pay attention to. Thank you.

MR. LAKS: Steve Donalson.

MR. DONALSON: Good afternoon, everybody. I'm Steve Donalson from St. Augustine, Florida. I'm a recreational angler, and I've been on the panel for a few years now, and I'm a former professional SKA king fisherman, and I've got a little bit of marine science background in me, and so I'm just here to help. Let me know what I can do.

MR. LAKS: Steve Swann.

MR. SWANN: Hi, Ira. Hello, everybody. I'm Steve Swann, and I'm a recreational fisherman, a long-time fisherman, out of Mayport, up here in Jacksonville. Thanks.

MR. LAKS: Thomas Newman.

MR. NEWMAN: I'm Thomas Newman from North Carolina, and I'm a lifetime commercial fisherman. I also have a BS in biology, and I'm pretty familiar with the science and all that good stuff, and I'm just here to help represent my state and represent the fisheries from the commercial side. Thank you.

MR. LAKS: Tom Roller.

MR. ROLLER: Tom Roller, and I'm full-time for-hire operator out of Beaufort, North Carolina.

MR. LAKS: Did I miss anybody, Christina, or is that it?

MS. WIEGAND: I think you got through all of the AP members that are currently on the webinar.

MR. LAKS: Okay. I'm Ira Laks, and I'm a commercial and charter fisherman out of Jupiter, Florida. Do we want to have council members introduce themselves, or do we want to get started, Christina?

MS. WIEGAND: We can go ahead and have council members introduce themselves.

MR. LAKS: All right. Let's start with Steve Poland.

MR. POLAND: Hi, Ira. Good afternoon, everybody. I'm Steve Poland, Vice Chair of the council and Chair of the Mackerel Cobia Committee.

MR. LAKS: Chairman Bell.

MR. BELL: Hi, Ira. Thanks. Mel Bell, Chairman of the council, and I appreciate you all being here today.

MR. LAKS: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I'm Chris Conklin, and I'm a commercial representative from South Carolina.

MR. LAKS: Unless I'm missing something, that's it, right?

MS. WIEGAND: Last, but not least, we've got Spud Woodward.

MR. LAKS: I didn't see Spud. Spud, go ahead.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, Ira. This is Spud Woodward from Georgia. I'm retired Director of the Coastal Resource Division of the Georgia DNR, and I'm an avid angler.

MR. LAKS: Okay. Well, I think we are going to get started with the November 2, 2020 Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel. We need to approve the minutes from October 2019 meeting. Is there anyone who has any corrections? Go ahead, Steve.

MR. DONALSON: I'm just curious, but, with the number of people on the call, do we have a quorum?

MS. WIEGAND: We talked about this last time we had a webinar AP meeting, and we're definitely missing a chunk of the AP members, but I don't believe there's a set quorum in the AP guidelines, or the SOPPs for the council, and I'm going to look towards a couple of the people, staff, that I see on the webinar, if they know differently than me, and I see Chip has got his hand up, and he may be able to correct me if I'm wrong. Go ahead, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: That is correct. There is no quorum guidelines for any of the APs.

MR. DONALSON: Okay. I just wanted to make sure, in case we have a motion or something and we need to vote.

MS. WIEGAND: Wonderful. Thank you, Chip. Kim, I also see that you've got your hand up. Now it's down. All right. Continue on, Ira. Sorry.

MR. LAKS: Okay, and so, if there's no corrections, I would say we approve the minutes from the 2019 meeting. Is there any objections to that?

AP MEMBER: Motion to approve.

MR. LAKS: Would someone like to make a motion to approve?

AP MEMBER: I just did.

MR. LAKS: Do we need to make a motion to approve?

MS. WIEGAND: It can just be approved by consensus.

MR. LAKS: Okay. Well, I guess we're approved by consensus. I think we're going to go into the SEDAR 38 update now, and is that correct, Christina?

MS. WIEGAND: First, we need to do approval of the agenda, and then we're going to take public comment, and then I believe that Steve Poland is going to say a few words.

MR. LAKS: Okay. Do we have consensus for approval of the agenda? Any objections to the agenda?

MS. WIEGAND: I am seeing no hands.

MR. LAKS: All right. Then I will let Steve take it away.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Ira. Good afternoon, everybody. Again, I'm Steve Poland, and I'm the Chair of the council's Mackerel Cobia Committee. Before everyone got started, I just wanted to provide the AP with an update of council activities related to mackerel cobia, but, before I even get to that, first, I just want to thank everybody for attending today, and I know it's kind of a strange time right now, with COVID restrictions and not being able to meet in person, and I know a lot of people's work life and personal life are kind of up and down right now, just kind of adapting to those various COVID restrictions, and so I do really appreciate all of you guys for making the time today to join us between now and five o'clock and provide the council with your expert feedback.

We really do appreciate that. If you notice, there are three other council members on the call right now, and the council really takes seriously the feedback that we receive from our APs. Granted, the actions that the council takes can differ from the recommendations from the AP, but that doesn't mean that we don't listen to you guys and take that feedback into consideration with some of the other issues and factors that we have to consider.

I want to congratulate those of you who were reappointed to the AP, Gary Robinson and Tom Roller. Congratulations, and welcome back, and I congratulate Paul Rudershausen for being appointed. Thank you for calling in and attending.

We did not have a Mackerel Cobia Committee meeting at the September meeting, but we did have one back at the June meeting, where we received stock assessment reports for king mackerel, SEDAR 38, and it was an updated assessment. We discussed potential actions to respond to that assessment, but, ultimately, we decided to get feedback from the AP before the council moves forward with any actions on that, and so you will notice, as you all walk through SEDAR 38, and as Christina goes over the assessment and the white paper, that there are no council actions on alternatives yet, and that's because the timing was really advantageous, and we wanted to hear from the AP before we really got into the meat of how to respond to this assessment.

Then you guys will receive an update on the Citizen Science Program. Julia and Allie have done yeoman's work on that, the FISHstory project, in particular, and I know there's a lot of interest with king mackerel with that, and that's really progressing well, and so I'm excited to hear what you guys have to say about those projects.

Then we'll finish up with an update on a few other council items, the next Spanish mackerel assessment and timing with that, CMP Amendment 32, and this is the stock assessment for cobia in the Gulf, and it looks like that we will have to make some management changes for that stock, and this would affect at least the east coast of Florida, the chunk that we still manage here, the South Atlantic Council, and so I'm really interested to hear the AP's feedback on that, because the council will, most likely, have to take actions in the coming year to address the stock status of the Gulf and east coast Florida cobia stock.

With that, I really -- That's really all I have to report from the South Atlantic Council. Again, I just want to thank all of you for taking the time out today and attending the AP, and I really look forward to everyone's discussion. Thanks, Ira. Take it away.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Steve. I too would like to thank everyone who has called in and joining us today, and I do appreciate it. Christina, I guess we are going to do the SEDAR 38 update assessment now?

MS. WIEGAND: I think, first, let's just, real quickly, see if there's any public -- Anyone that would like to make public comment before we get rolling, and we'll do this at the very beginning and then once more at the end of the meeting, and so is there anyone who would like to make public comment? You can go ahead and click that hand-raise button. Going once, going twice. All right, Ira. I'm not seeing anyone with their hand raised, and so I'm good to go ahead and get going with the SEDAR 38 update if you are.

MR. LAKS: Sounds good.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. CMP Framework Amendment 10 is the amendment that's going to address the results from the updated SEDAR 38 assessment, and, like Steve Poland just said, we're at the very, very beginning stages of developing this amendment. Typically, when you guys are seeing an amendment, you're getting something that's got some actions and alternatives and some

analysis, some numbers for you to look at, but that's not really where we're at with this amendment.

Like Steve said, the council received the results from the assessment and the SSC recommendations at their June 2020 meeting, and then they directed staff to start work on this amendment, and they won't see it again until this upcoming December 2020 meeting, because, first, they wanted it to go to the AP. They really felt like they needed input from mackerel fishermen to know the direction to take this amendment, and so what you're going to see here is sort of a list of questions that we're posing to the advisory panel, and then you will likely see this amendment one more time before it gets to its final stage, and, at that point, it will be a bit more developed with actions and alternatives, and it will have some analysis for you to look at.

Why are we considering action right now? Like I said, there was an update to the SEDAR 38 stock assessment that was completed in April of 2020, and it indicated, consistent with the original SEDAR 38 assessment, that Atlantic migratory group king mackerel is not overfished or isn't undergoing overfishing. In fact, all of the fishery indicators show an increasing trend, and the new catch level recommendations are significantly higher than they have been in the past, thanks to a number of years of strong recruitment. This assessment also incorporates revised recreational catch estimates based on the new MRIP survey design.

You guys are going to review this now. At the December 2020 meeting, we'll take your comments and recommendations to the council, where they will consider approving this amendment for scoping. Then, in March of 2021, they will review those scoping comments and approve actions and alternatives to be analyzed and so on and so forth, with tentative approval scheduled around September of 2021.

Of course, those of you that have been involved in the council process for a long time know that that date can be sooner, or maybe it will be later, but, ultimately, that depends on council priorities, as well as what actions and alternatives actually end up in this amendment as it begins to get developed, and so I want to really specify that this is a tentative timeline at this point, because we're at the very beginning of the development process. I am going to pause real quick, before I dive into what actions might be considered in Framework Amendment 10, to see if there are any questions.

I am not seeing any hands, and so I'm going to hope that I haven't confused anyone thus far, and we'll hop into potential actions. First, of course, will be revisions to the Atlantic king mackerel annual catch limit based off of the updated 2020 assessment and the new values for acceptable biological catch that we got from the SSC, and you can see those. I've got the biological parameters here, the overfishing recommendations, and, right here, where I'm going to highlight, those are your key ABC recommendations.

Right now, in the mackerel cobia advisory plan, annual catch limit is set equal to the ABC, and so, keeping things as they are now, these would be the ACLs that you're seeing. However, the council can choose to place a buffer between the acceptable biological catch and the annual catch limit to account for management uncertainty, and so one of the questions I wanted to pose to the advisory panel was do you think there should be a buffer set between ABC and ACL? If so, what percentage buffer do you think might be appropriate for the ABC and annual catch limit?



MR. DONALSON: What would that buffer do to the total amount? Is it in addition to, or is it -- Could you explain a little more about what that would do to the numbers? I am not really following the --

MS. WIEGAND: It's just a buffer between the two numbers, and so, if the ABC is 33.3 million, but you wanted a 5 percent buffer between the ABC and the ACL, 5 percent of the ABC would be deducted, and that would be your annual catch limit, and so it just sets the annual catch limit slightly lower than the allowable biological catch to account for any sort of management uncertainty there may be.

MR. DONALSON: Okay. Thank you.

MR. LAKS: Christina, is there any way that we can get what the previous years ABC was, just so we can have some sort of context to what we were at and what we could be at?

MS. WIEGAND: You absolutely can, and so the total ACL for Atlantic king mackerel for the 2020-2021 fishing season was 12.7 million pounds.

MR. LAKS: That was for the recreational or the commercial?

MS. WIEGAND: That's total, and so the commercial -- I've got it split up here in different zones. The Northern Zone commercial ACL was a little over one-million -- There it is. The total commercial ACL was 4.7 million pounds, and the total recreational ACL was eight-million pounds, for a total king mackerel ACL of 12.7 million pounds.

MR. LAKS: So we have a tremendous increase.

MS. WIEGAND: Yes.

MR. LAKS: Okay. I would love to see you guys discuss -- Like Mark Twain said, I was born an optimist, but life has taught me different. I would like to see you guys --What you think about that much of an increase, and if that's anything you're seeing, or should there be some caution put into this.

MS. WIEGAND: Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: My comment was just kind of along the lines of what Ira just said. For the coastal pelagic fisheries in the South Atlantic, do we have historical evidence that, when the ACL is set equal to the ABC, has the OFL been exceeded? I just wanted to see if there's any historical precedent for the OFL being exceeded when the ACL equals the ABC, as we're potentially proposing now.

MS. WIEGAND: I can only go back so far in my memory, but, in recent years, the ACL itself hasn't been exceeded, and so there hasn't been a situation in which the OFL has been exceeded. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you. I just wanted to point out that the new ABC recommendation from the SSC includes the new catch estimates for the recreational catch, and we're calling it the FES

method, and those catches in the recreational fishery are a lot higher, and so comparing the old ACL with the new ACL, it's not really a straight comparison, due to a change in the recreational catch estimates, and so it might be better just to look at the historical catch overall and not really focus on the past ACL recommendations, just because those were based on an incorrect estimate of recreational catch.

MS. WIEGAND: Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: My question is what is the current buffer between the previous ABC recommendations for say 2020 and what our combined ACL for both sectors? Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Right now, for CMP, for king mackerel, there is no buffer between ACL and ABC. They are set equal to each other.

MR. HUDSON: Okay. Well, like Chip, I would have to say that this new MRIP calibration scenario could be problematic down the road, and so it might be useful, since we have this significant increase, based on the latest stock assessment, to accommodate a buffer, because I think it would be useful, personally. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: We're seeing such a tremendous increase in the ACL, and I would argue that we have every means in which to have a large buffer here, for no other reason than we're not really harvesting as many fish anyway, and there's no reason to not exercise caution. Management tends to often follow behind what's going on in the water, and, given some of the issues that we're seeing with COVID this year, and we have clearly some holes with MRIP and compromised sampling, and that could very well carry into next year, and we have a lot more effort on the water.

As a fisherman, I wish I could tell you that the king mackerel fishery, for me, is as awesome as it was twenty years ago. It's certainly really, really good right now, and it's certainly better than it was circa 2010, but I wouldn't make an argument that it's that extraordinarily great, and so that's why I would make the argument, particularly since we're seeing such a large increase, that I would like to see an appropriate buffer, as much as 15 percent, put in place there, because who knows how things are going to go along, and, as Rusty mentioned with the MRIP calibration, that could really present some problems here, and so I would urge caution here.

MR. LAKS: Steve.

MR. DONALSON: Thanks. Kind of two questions. Tom asked one that I was going to ask, and so thank you for that. Just because SEDAR 38 says that the stocks are okay, where did we come up with the number for the increase? Was it just an arbitrary number or a historical number? The second part to that question is why do we have to increase it at all? Just because the stock is doing well, it doesn't mean that we have to increase it, does it?

MS. WIEGAND: The numbers come directly from the stock assessment, and then the ABC control rule is applied at the SSC level, and that's how they get to the ABC recommendations. In terms of -- We would certainly want to update the ABC values based on an updated stock

assessment, because we want to make sure we're managing based on the best scientific information available.

Now, we could also set an annual catch target, which could be a little bit lower than the ABC or the ACL, and we could set a very large buffer between the ABC and ACL, to limit catch, and so there are certainly options, if the advisory panel feels that the ABC recommendation is so high that it's not ideal to put the ABC equal to the annual catch limit, and, like I said, we can put a buffer in for the annual catch limit, or we could institute an annual catch target, and there are things that can be done to make sure that catch doesn't increase wildly, if that's a concern. Steve Swann.

MR. SWANN: Thanks. Have we done any analysis with looking at a buffer and seeing what the potential would be for a potential closure on the recreational side? I mean, I know we're not close to it, the ACL now, and probably not in the future, but I was just kind of curious if there's any potential for a closure, and that's one of the things that is most important to me, is to keep the season open 365.

MS. WIEGAND: I completely understand. We're not at the point in this amendment where we've done any analysis. Like I said, we're at the very beginning stages, but, since sort of the impression I'm getting, from a bit of the AP member discussion here, is that you all would like to see the council consider some type of buffer between the ABC and the annual catch limit, that's something that staff would then go bring to the council and analyze, and so we would be able to show estimates of whether or not a closure would occur later on, when you guys see this amendment probably next spring.

MR. SWANN: Got you. Thanks.

MS. WIEGAND: Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you. With the Keys, they're a 50/50 split, and I'm assuming that part of our increase will accommodate that scenario down there. Furthermore, the south and north zones, for both sectors, recreational and commercial, it would be nice to know what the ACL was by sector, and, since it's equal to ABC, that answers that question, but the big problem that I see with recreational data gathering under MRIP is the two-month wave that then has an additional forty-five days before they even have that, and so, a lot of times, we're already nearing the end of Wave 2, by the end of April, before we're even seeing Wave 1.

I believe it's kind of problematic, moving forward through a year, with the recreational, and they have been the ones that are most accommodated by an annual catch target, and then, when we look at the commercial landings, historically, and that's what I would like to look at, is a spreadsheet for both sectors, the historical landings, how many times did the commercial, by zones, or however it was done in those particular years, actually meet their allocation for the year?

Over in the Gulf of Mexico, I see a lot more frequency of them meeting their catch, because they have a poundage commercially, and, on the recreational, in both the Gulf and over on our side, we have some differences with the recreational trip limit, or bag limit, and stuff like that, and so there is a -- I'm hoping that, as we dig into 38, and work our way through -- It seems to me your timeline for Amendment 38 to be complete and effective really will not affect 2021. It's too late in the year to make the changes, and like, last year, this year is starting to be just like, almost, last year. We

did get a little bit of September in, and, last year, we didn't as much in our commercial, and, by proxy, the recreational, because the wind has been blowing and howling and whatever, and so, even though we carry over our unused portion from Season 1 to Season 2, it's just not being caught.

I don't know what we can do to accommodate that situation, because we have a by-head number in several places, or in one main place, off of Florida, but then we also have times when we switch to some poundage limit for the commercial, and so the last thing anybody wants to see is a meat market that is saturated and the prices collapsing and whatever, but, so far, the indications are that we have had a pretty steady desire for king mackerel, for several years now, and that's a good thing. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you, Rusty, and I think you're actually getting into a couple of questions that we're going to get to later on in this document, but I did want to note that these recommendations don't include the Florida Keys. The assessment boundary and the management boundary for king mackerel didn't change with this update, and so the boundary will remain the Miami-Dade/Monroe County line, and so everything north of the Florida Keys through the Mid-Atlantic's jurisdiction to that New York/Connecticut/Rhode Island line, that is what we're talking about here for Atlantic king mackerel.

MR. HUDSON: That being said, what is the situation down in the Keys? If they have 50 percent Atlantic fish and 50 percent Gulf fish, under the accommodation there, where do they get their fish from between the two stock assessments, because the Gulf is now having to do theirs separate from ours.

MS. WIEGAND: I believe -- I will be honest that I am not super stock-assessment savvy into how they are currently addressing the mixing zone through the assessment process, and, after SEDAR 38 came out, which had the new -- Where we set the new management boundary, if they continued to use that for the SEDAR 38 update, and I will try to find that out for you, Rusty, but my understanding is that now the Gulf is all being assessed with -- The Keys are all being assessed as Gulf fish, but I'm not positive on that.

MR. HUDSON: Isn't the Gulf on lead for the mixing zone?

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, that is correct.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Ira.

MR. LAKS: I think, like Chip was saying, it's hard to compare the recreational fishery, because of the change in MRIP, but the currency should be pretty much the same in the commercial fishery, and so I think, when we get to see what the landings were, and what we have historically caught, and see how many more fish are available, we might have something that we can compare apples-to-apples to. I think Rusty was getting at that.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I'm not seeing any more hands up, unless someone else has a comment specific to ABC and ACL, I will move on to talk about some other things that might appear in this amendment. I see Steve Poland has his hand up.

MR. POLAND: Thanks, Christina. Real quick, I just wanted to make sure that I was clear on the intent that was mentioned by the AP, as far as their preference for a buffer, and so it seems like to me that a buffer was preferred, just given the magnitude of the new ABC, and is that correct? Is there any additional rationale that the AP can provide, because, typically, when buffers like this are applied between an ABC and ACL, it's due to management uncertainty, and so the scientific uncertainty has already been accounted for with the ABC recommendation, and if there's any management uncertainty to add on top of that, and so concerns over the fishery responding to management measures, and concern over how landings are tracked, that kind of stuff, and so I just wanted to make sure that I was clear on the AP's rationale.

MS. WIEGAND: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Regarding a buffer, and I hope this is kind of what Steve was looking for for some more comment, and I'm trying to gather my thoughts here. We have also seen -- In the recreational community, we've seen a huge movement of this fish northward, and there's a lot of people catching king mackerel now off of Cape Cod, off of Rhode Island, off of New York, a lot more than we saw in the past, and that's something that should also be on our radar. I know that management will try to account for this, but it's also kind of hard to account for future climate impacts.

In one of the other things, we talk about management uncertainty, and the big thing I have with king mackerel is how many fish does a recreational community want to harvest? Given the quality of the fishery now, and the limit of three fish, most of my anglers, even people who want to harvest a lot of fish, don't want to take a boat limit of king mackerel, and it's not because they're not good, and it's not because they don't want them, but it's they don't want that many, and so that's another thing, is how many fish do we actually want to harvest, and I know that's probably not fitting too well into what Steve is asking for, as far as management uncertainty and whatnot, but that's one of the big red flags for me, and why I don't see having a buffer as being a big issue going forward.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Thomas Newman.

MR. NEWMAN: I just wanted to get repeated what the 2020 total ACL was.

MS. WIEGAND: The 2020 total ACL was 12.7 million pounds, but, like Chip Collier had noted, comparing the current ACL that's in place to these new ABC recommendations is like comparing apples to oranges, because those new ABC recommendations incorporate the new recreational catch estimates, and so they're not entirely comparable, and so just keep that in mind.

MR. NEWMAN: We just went through this with the cobia in the Mid-Atlantic Council, and it just concerns me that there's a quota increase in the ACL, and it gives both the recreational and the commercial sectors increases, but the commercial numbers are set in concrete, and we know what our landings are, and they won't be increased with just -- I am just worried about that gap is going to end up showing up in the numbers in the future, and I'm still trying to get my head around this big quota increase. I mean, it's almost a triple quota increase. I'm not exactly sure where I want to go with what I'm saying, but I just wanted to get the number for the 2020, and maybe we could discuss it later. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve Donalson.

MR. DONALSON: Tom, thanks for clearing that up, and kind of where I was going with it -- I mean, I just want to make sure that we're not increasing just for the sake of increasing anything, and, from a recreational perspective, I don't know that making an increase is going to make me want to keep more fish, because I can keep more fish, and so I'm just throwing that out there.

MS. WIEGAND: Ira.

MR. LAKS: Again, I think, until we have some more numbers to show what each sector is going to get, I don't know if we can really have an informed opinion. I think there is a view of, so far from what I'm hearing, of caution, especially in the recreational fishery, because of the unknowns with MRIP, but it would certainly be helpful to have it broken down by sector and to see just what we're talking about.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I am not seeing any other hands. Steve Poland, did that help get you the information that you were looking for?

MR. POLAND: Yes, and thank you, guys. That helped a little bit. I mean, I certainly understand that this is kind of the drawback for bringing something to the AP that the council hasn't even discussed or provided actions and alternatives and that kind of stuff, and, as far as the discussion on the ACL buffer, I'm trying to think off the top of my head, and I don't think we have any of our -- Well, there might be one or two stocks that we manage with a buffer between the ABC and the ACL, but, for the most part, most of our stocks are managed with that ABC equals ACL lack of a buffer in there, just to maximize access to the stock, and so, if we were to apply a buffer to this stock, I just wanted to make sure that the AP rationale was understood and that the council could articulate what our rationale should be, one way or another, if we decide to go with a buffer or not, but I certainly understand that it's kind of a hard conversation to have until you have a little bit more information in front of you, but I do appreciate this discussion.

MS. WIEGAND: Ira.

MR. LAKS: I would like to say that we also could -- Couldn't we do a buffer on one sector and not the other, if we chose to, when we see the numbers? Isn't that an option?

MS. WIEGAND: That's an interesting question, Ira. I was thinking of this as a buffer between ABC and ACL, and that would be for the whole fishery and not for individual sectors, but, again, that doesn't mean that you couldn't say set a recreational ACT and then manage to that ACT, instead of the ACL. Steve Poland, did you want to speak to that?

MR. POLAND: You covered it, and, essentially, that's how you would do that, is you set an ACT for the sector, because all the ABC to ACL buffer is doing is setting that management uncertainty level between the ABC recommendation from the SSC and the amount of fish that the council is going to be managing to, but, if there is a desire to set sector ACLs with some type of management buffer, or buffer for whatever reason in there, in practice, it's typically done with ACTs.

MS. WIEGAND: Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: Having looked at a lot of the commercial king mackerel permits, and you have to buy into it, and it's not an open access like Spanish, there are some that have existed in Virginia up through Massachusetts, and I'm not certain, as far as the commercial reporting goes, but the bigger deal would be the recreational component and the intercepts that may or may not occur up that way, and, like Ira just said, the idea of the buffer with the recreational is -- The way I word it, with the new calibrations, it's extremely important to make sure, since there are some PSE issues that have occurred with some stocks under this new stuff, and we just have to see how king mackerel works, and if climate change is driving a lot of our animals further north, and not just king mackerel, but others.

The last thing I wanted to mention is that the SEAMAP work that's been done the last four or five years has indicated very positive trends with those collection of age-zero and age-one and whatever king mackerels, and that positive result is the type of thing that we're needing to see if there's a consistency with that, as we move forward into future years.

2020 is becoming a wash, because of the virus and the situations that have loused up our ability to do certain surveys, and so there's a lot of unknowns as we move forward, and I'm looking at, like I said, having stuff implemented for 2022, because this whole 38 process looks like it's going to take over half of next year just to get things settled and then a final rule put in place, and so I just wanted to throw all of that out there.

MS. WIEGAND: Charlie.

MR. LOCKE: I'm involved in the king mackerel fishery too, and I got on this mainly for the Spanish, but the same issue that we're dealing with with Spanish is we -- When we went to these northern sectors and southern sectors, and we did this with king mackerel also, we started to come into years where we would almost reach our quota, or exceed our quota, and maybe not so much with king mackerel, but everybody I've heard on this has pointed to the fact, from Tom Roller to even Rusty, about the migratory shift of fish further north and the waters staying warmer longer.

I think, going forward with all of this -- I mean, I would like to definitely see some hard numbers, commercial, especially for each sector, but that's an issue we have right now with Spanish, and we've got a very small northern sector quota, and I think our king mackerel actually -- We were worried about what we were given in the king mackerel northern sector, compared to like historically what we had landed in the past, and so I think, going forward -- I'm not against a buffer, but what I'm hearing is the recreational people are maybe more for a buffer, and I'm more for maximum sustainable yield.

I think, if we get a quota, we need to try to shoot for that quota. As a commercial fisherman, I want to utilize the resource that's there, and I'm not saying we have to catch all of the quota, obviously, but I am concerned about the northern sector split and what we're allocated up here. We have increased participation in this, where other fisheries are shut down in our state, our southern flounder, and there's a lot of fishermen that are transitioning into other fisheries in the ocean that used to fish in the sound, and we are seeing an increase.

The mackerel permits are going up to \$15,000 now, I'm hearing, and there's more and more people having to transition into other fisheries, and so I'm concerned about the northern -- You know, our quota that we're going to get to the northern, and I would like to see how it's going to transpire

with this new ABC and what we're going to get to the north, and I think that's something we need to definitely look into as the stock shifts to the north. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Ira.

MR. LAKS: I think, like Steve said, I think what we're saying is that we're -- Especially in the recreational fishery, that is not limited by entrants, that climate change and the fish pushing north, and, as Rusty said, interactions with MRIP up here, and there's a lot of unknowns going forward, and I think we could -- If everyone would agree, or if anyone else has any comments, that we can pretty much tell the council that those are some of our concerns, and I think Steve has heard them, and maybe we can move on from this, unless somebody else has something to say. As far as the commercial fishery, it looks like we're all going to get quite a bit more fish, even if it works out with a buffer.

MS. WIEGAND: Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: When Charlie just brought up what he did, I just looked at the 2019-2020 commercial landings for king mackerel for the Northern Zone, and, during that period that had ended back in February, it was 66 percent, and so you caught two-thirds of three-quarters-of-a-million pounds. Right now, you're at 12 percent. Of course, it seems like you ramp up as you get closer to the end of that particular allocation, and I can't speak for the recreational, and we really have to burrow into that one, to see what we're looking up that way, especially with the expansion.

The last thing I wanted to say is that warmer water going north, yes, but we have these issues that's been going on with Greenland and Iceland and everything, and, somehow, all that cold water gets in the gyre, and it pops up right there in south Florida to central Florida, and we've had multiple cold-water events, and, Charlie, I'm sure you remember some of them in the past, but now it's gotten a lot more frequent, and I'm not sure how much of that you see periodically moving through your area, like Hatteras, because, a lot of times, that west wall of the Gulf Stream sort of affects that cold water that comes up, and it gets a lot further offshore of Georgia and South Carolina and below Hatteras, but Hatteras and Port Canaveral both, or Cape Canaveral, but those are the areas where the Gulf Stream is the closest to the coastline, besides down in south Florida, and so we have sort of a mixed bag here under this climate change. The billions of whatever, however they measure that ice melting, it's been very significant for several years now.

MS. WIEGAND: Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: When it comes to the last couple of minutes, I've heard about this -- A couple of theories that question about the stocks shifting geographically northward, and this might be by my new -- As we're discussing, or deliberating, about these regional allocations, is it -- Do we have evidence that the stock is shifting northward, versus simply the range of the species is expanding along the Atlantic coast, and those are two potentially different things, as far as, as we go forward, deliberating on the regional allocations.

MS. WIEGAND: You are exactly right, Paul, and those are two very different things, moving northward or the range just expanding, and I'm not sure we have a firm answer on which it is for either of the mackerel species. I will say that there is evidence, both anecdotally and in numbers, that catches are increasing throughout the Mid-Atlantic and up into New England. If you search



for news reports in New England, you find people catching king mackerel in Rhode Island, off of Massachusetts, and Long Island Sound, and so there's certainly anecdotal evidence that says that catches up there are increasing, but I don't believe we have firm data on whether it's an extension of their range or whether they're shifting. Steve Donalson.

MR. DONALSON: Paul asked a question that I was going to ask, and, again, I'm not sure we can solve the debate of global warming here today in three hours, but I want to make sure that we had true stock assessments of that area before we go and start saying, yes, there's a lot more fish up north than there used to be.

We had snook showing up in St. Augustine, but they also showed up ten years ago, and that doesn't mean that anything has changed, and it's just we have warmer winters, and then we have a cold winter, and so I would hate to start to make any decisions based on that until we have some clear-cut numbers about that increase.

MS. WIEGAND: Just as a heads-up, while nothing king mackerel or Spanish mackerel specific, later on in the meeting, Myra Brouwer is going to give you guys an update on some of the strategic planning that's going on throughout the region in regard to climate change, and so it's very much an issue that's on the council's radar.

I am not seeing any more hands, and so, with that, I think I'm going to move us along to a discussion of modifications to sector or area allocations, which you guys have already brought up a couple of times. I know it can be hard to have this conversation without set numbers in front of you, to know exactly what those allocations look like, but I did want to sort of start the discussion, since this is something that the council will be considering.

Back in 2019, there was a procedural directive that required all of the regional fishery management councils to set an allocation review trigger policy, and the council did that and set theirs back in 2019, and they chose several indicator-based criteria as triggers, and one of those was considering allocations after a stock assessment was approved by the SSC, and so that's where we are, and the council needs to determine and document whether modifications to allocations are necessary, and so this doesn't necessarily mean that allocations need to be changed, but, because we have a new stock assessment, the council needs to take a look at them and consider whether or not modifications are necessary. If any modifications are deemed to be necessary, that's something that's going to be considered in this amendment.

The current sector allocations between the commercial and recreational sector for king mackerel were set all the way back in Amendment 1 to the CMP FMP, which was approved back in 1985, and, at the time, catch was allocated based on the largest number of years, starting in 1979, for which concurrent recreational and commercial catch data were available, and that was used to calculate the percentage catch each sector received, and that ended up in a 37.1 percent allocation to the commercial sector and a 62.9 percent allocation to the recreational sector, and that's where things currently stand.

Additionally, as you guys have been talking about, in the king mackerel fishery, there are also regional allocations, and there are two zones. There is the Northern Zone, which runs from the North Carolina/South Carolina line north all the way through the Mid-Atlantic Council's jurisdiction to the New York/Connecticut/Rhode Island line. Then there is the Southern Zone,

which runs from the North Carolina/South Carolina line south all the way down to the Miami-Dade/Monroe County boundary in Florida.

The allocations between these two zones were initially set in Amendment 20B, using the proportion of landings from each zone between the 2002-2003 fishing season and the 2011-2012 fishing season, and those were slightly revised in Amendment 26, because the management boundary changed, but the same years were used, and that resulted in an allocation of 23.04 percent of the ACL, commercial ACL, specifically, to the Northern Zone and 76.96 percent of the ACL to the Southern Zone. The regional allocations are commercial-specific, and so there aren't regional allocations for the recreational ACL. This is just for the commercial ACL.

I was hoping that you guys could have sort of a brief discussion about whether or not you felt the sector allocations may need to be revised and/or if you felt that the regional allocations may need to be revised, and, if so, what kind of things would you like the council to consider when revising those allocations? Ira.

MR. LAKS: I know we just had some discussion about the Northern Zone in the commercial fishery, and, again, not knowing what the numbers are going to look like with the new assessment, it's kind of hard, but I think, overall, and I would love to hear you all discuss it, but I think the fishery, overall, has been working pretty well for the recreational and commercial, except for the concerns we just heard about the Northern Zone, but I don't know if that was so much for Spanish or king mackerel, but I would love to hear any of you speak out to that, if there's anything that you think that can be done to adjust it.

MS. WIEGAND: Charlie.

MR. LOCKE: Most of you all don't know, but I grew up in Florida, and I fished out of Ponce Inlet with my dad for years, and Rusty knows me, and I was always -- We felt like, in the Ponce Inlet area where I grew up, that we kind of got the shaft when it went to the split on that east coast sub-zone, because we went to the seventy-five head, and then the Flagler line was 3,500 pounds to the north, and I know will Rusty will attest to more knowledge on this than me, but I think what Rusty was saying about the weather -- I know, in talking to some of the fishermen that I know that still fish down there, John Smith and them, and I haven't been to Florida in five or six years, and I used to go down there in the winter and participate in the king mackerel fishery myself, but it doesn't seem like -- For a long time, we were catching the east coast sub-zone really fast, and then it would shut down, and then it would not reopen until March 1, but, the last couple of years, it seems like they haven't been able to catch it.

I know you all have increased the trip limit from fifty to seventy-five, but I know there was a question, at some time, and I'm speaking for that area down there, and not really for North Carolina, but of bringing that line back to the Cape Canaveral, or the Brevard/Volusia line, and keeping it there year-round, instead of it moving to Flagler, and did you all ever address that, because I'm kind of new to the king mackerel stuff, and I kind of leave it to my buddies that fish down there to keep me up-to-date, but was something changed with that, as far as that line, to try to utilize that quota more to catch it, when you have bad-weather events, or to increase the trip limit, but was the Volusia/Brevard line -- Is that a hard line now on the 3,500-pound trip limit?

MS. WIEGAND: Florida king mackerel trip limits are always complicated, and there is essentially three different systems for three different areas off of Florida. You've got north of Flagler, Volusia/Flagler, and that's 3,500 pounds year-round. Then you've got Volusia County, and, off of Volusia County, from April through September, they also have that 3,500-pound trip limit. Then, south of Volusia/Brevard, it's still at that fifty-fish or seventy-five-fish limit in the spring, and I hope that makes sense. Sometimes it's easier to do with a map. Ira.

MR. LAKS: Charlie, we did some things to address that. For one, we did get some more fish when the last assessment came out, four or five years ago, and determined that we're all Atlantic stock and not a mixing zone in that area. Also, we changed our seasons, and so it used to what we would fish in the winter, if you remember down there, would go through March, and we now start at March 1, and we have two seasons. We go March through September, and then we start over October through February. We did increase the October through February, just recently, to a hundred head, to try to accommodate for the weather and allowing guys to bring in more fish and make a trip profitable.

MS. WIEGAND: Does anyone else have any thoughts on allocations or things the council should consider when deciding whether or not revisions to allocations are needed in the king mackerel fishery? Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you. Personally, I don't think we should be messing with the allocation percentages, the historical, in a lot of ways, the way that we've created them, and we have seen, based on the results, a potential for a significant increase. Our biggest problem is monitoring two-thirds of the catch in a timely way, because three-months-and-a-half is a long time, as far as waves and stuff go, and, generally, that information isn't even available, for instance, for 2020, until we get to some point in 2021, and usually the mid-point, and June has always been where we get the data to use in assessments, and so it just sort of looks, to me, like we shouldn't be messing with percentages. We should just be seeing what it means with regard to landings and/or dead discards. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve Swann.

MR. SWANN: I would like to echo Rusty's comments. I agree with that wholeheartedly, and, unless someone -- If you all can make an argument why the sector allocations may need to be changed, but I don't think there's any reason to mess with it.

MS. WIEGAND: Tom Roller.

MR. ROLLER: I just want to reiterate the previous two comments, that I agree that we don't really need to mess with the allocation at this time. I mean, if we want to look at regional stuff, that's one thing, but the overall allocation -- There's a good basis for it, and we have a lot more fish to work with.

MS. WIEGAND: Ira.

MR. LAKS: I was wondering if anyone thinks otherwise, and, if not, maybe someone would like to make a motion.

MS. WIEGAND: Charlie.

MR. LOCKE: I am not -- I think maybe you guys misunderstood me, and I'm not saying that it needs to be reallocated, but I do feel like there needs to be some kind of something put in place where, when you start to see like what happened with Spanish mackerel -- When you're reaching your quota halfway through the year, there needs to be some kind of trigger in there that says, hey, maybe we need to revise this, and I'm not saying that's going to happen in the king mackerel fishery, but we're already fighting what happened in the past with Spanish mackerel right now, and so I'm not saying the -- I just think on the South Atlantic Council's radar screen should be, hey, if you start to see an effort increase, or you start to see them reaching a quota, and then it might be something to look at.

I'm not saying it has to be done, and I'm not saying -- Like I said, there was no hard number in there, and Rusty brought up something that I guess we didn't catch but sixty-some percent, and, like I said, I fish in Florida too, and so I'm not saying that I want to take anybody's quota or shift it around, but it might be something, in the future, that would have to be looked at, and that's all.

MS. WIEGAND: Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: As far as things go, the Spanish mackerel example is an open access, as far as commercial. For king mackerel, it's a buy-into-it access, and I think I heard something about even the permit prices were rising, which doesn't surprise me, especially with as many year classes as we seem to have been monitoring coming into the stock. Personally, I know that there's an effort underfoot to deal with the Spanish mackerel situation, and that stock assessment will be important in the future, and I think we'll be talking about that later on in this meeting, and so thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: I am not seeing any more hands raised right now, Ira.

MR. LAKS: All right. Again, would anyone like to make a motion?

MS. WIEGAND: Steve Swann.

**MR. SWANN: I would like to make a motion that we request that the council not consider changing the sector or regional allocations at this time.**

MR. DONALSON: Second.

MR. LAKS: Is there anyone who objects to this or would like some more discussion in objection to it?

MS. WIEGAND: I see Tom Roller.

MR. ROLLER: I had just raised my hand to second that motion, if need be, and so we don't need that, and so I offer no objections to this.

MR. DONALSON: Sorry, Tom.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you both. I appreciate you paying attention and being gung-ho.

MR. LAKS: If no one objects, I guess we have consensus.

MS. WIEGAND: Raise your hand if you object. I am not seeing any hands raised, Ira.

MR. LAKS: Okay. **The motion passes unanimously.**

MS. WIEGAND: All right. With that, I will move on to our last topic within this document, which you guys have already talked about a little bit, and so the council has noticed that, in recent years, both commercial and recreational landings have been well below the target, and the recent stock assessment suggests that the ACL could be raised further, and I know it can be a little bit challenging to discuss some of this without, again, numbers and analysis in front of you, but are there any management measures that you could feel could be modified to increase commercial harvest, increase recreational harvest, or are there other issues, such as market or demand, that are keeping recreational and commercial landings low? If there is possible management changes you would like to see the council consider, or would like to see some analysis for, this would really be the time to recommend them to the council. Tom Roller.

MR. ROLLER: I mean, I'm going to speak from the recreational perspective, and what management measures could be modified to increase recreational harvest, and I object to that entire question. Why do we even need to be having a discussion about why we need to be increasing recreational harvest? What's so bad about leaving fish in the water for us to have more interactions with them and have a higher-quality fishery?

I mean, even when the fishing wasn't as good, say five years ago, with a three-fish limit, like I said previously, most of my customers, even the ones who want to keep as many fish as possible, don't want to keep that many king mackerel. It is a fish with a limited shelf life, and it's something that people like to eat fresh and so on and so forth, and, also, many people don't want to keep the big ones, and so we should -- I just wanted to point out that I don't even like that question, and I don't think we should even be discussing how we should increase recreational harvest. There is no reason why we need to increase harvest. I will leave it at that, and I don't want to get fired up about it.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you, Tom, and I think that's a good point for the council to consider. Just because the available catch is going up, it does not necessarily mean that there is a need to be increasing catch, and so I think that's an important perspective for the council to hear. Ira.

MR. LAKS: While I agree that there's not a great demand to have more of a catch in the recreational fishery, the one thing, and I have brought this up before to this panel and to the council, is that the area between the Florida/Georgia border and the Miami-Dade border is only allowed to access two kingfish per person, and I'm not quite sure about north of North Carolina, but North Carolina to Georgia and Miami-Dade to Texas is all a three-per-person limit.

I know there were reasons in the past that Florida didn't want to go off their coast to three per person, but I think it's about time that the east coast of Florida recreational goes consistent with the rest of the managed king mackerel fishery. Again, it is not often that I'm going to have my customers that are like, oh, let's get those extra king mackerel, but there are days where I will have two or three customers onboard, and the weather conditions are such that the only thing that are

biting is king mackerel, and having the opportunity to catch three of them -- Some of them might want to smoke some, or they might want to give some away and make dip out of it, and it just doesn't make sense from the fact of where you live determines what you can catch in the same stock.

For the for-hire fleet, you're competing with boats, especially in south Florida, in the Keys, that are allowed to catch three per person, and so I'm not seeing any biological reasons why we shouldn't be allowed to catch three per person, and I would love to see three king mackerel per person on the east coast of Florida, from Miami-Dade north.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve Donalson.

MR. DONALSON: I agree 100 percent with Tom, by the way, and back to my original point of I don't think that we need to increase it just for the sake of increasing it, just because there is more fish, but, with that being said, and correct me if I'm wrong, Christina, but didn't we make a motion at the last panel meeting to increase it to three fish?

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, sir. That's correct. You guys did pass a motion at the October 2019 Mackerel AP meeting to increase to three fish per person off of the Florida east coast, consistent with the other areas in the South Atlantic and the Gulf.

MR. DONALSON: I don't know if I'm going like against protocol here, but is there any updates on that, or is there is a separate time where we can discuss that?

MS. WIEGAND: Right here is a good time to be discussing that. The council hasn't moved forward on that motion, and it was brought to them at their December 2019 meeting. At the time, I believe they felt that they wanted to wait to make any management changes to king mackerel until after this assessment, and so this is the perfect time to be talking about this, and Steve Poland has his hand up. Steve, is it to this point?

MR. POLAND: Yes, it is, and I just wanted to say that that action in particular -- It wasn't lost on the council, and it will most likely be included as an action in this amendment, and so that will be addressed.

MR. DONALSON: I appreciate the update there, Steve, but I know I was a little vocal about it at the last panel meeting, and, since we're having the discussion, in talking with a lot of my peers in the Jacksonville/St. Augustine area, charter captains and the like, almost to the tee, nobody wants three per person, for what it's worth, and so I thought that they would, but I haven't spoken to a single charter captain that wants to keep three per person, and so just for what it's worth, I think to Tom's point. If you bring home four kingfish, you're cleaning kingfish and that's about it. I will leave it at that.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Thomas Newman.

MR. NEWMAN: I think, with the MRIP numbers, and I'm still learning about MRIP, and this stuff is hard for me to wrap my mind around that, but, with the MRIP numbers increasing the quota almost three-times, the recreational harvest is going to increase almost three-times as well, with the new numbers next year, and, with that uncertainty, you need to be figuring in that as well,

because, even if the daily catch limits remain the same, the way that they're getting the data from the recreational fisheries, the overall numbers are going to increase as well.

I don't know if the stuff was back-calculated with the MRIP numbers, and I would be kind of curious to see if, in previous years, with the MRIP numbers, if it would still be -- Say the recreational industry still harvested 75 percent of their ACL, and it's still going to be 75 percent of the ACL now, with the new MRIP numbers, to my thinking, which would be a big increase in landings this year, compared to last year, with the new estimates. This kind of goes back to the apples-versus-oranges things.

We really don't know what the rec numbers are going to be next year until the data comes out in 2022, and so I just think that you all need to think about that as well, as far as if you want to lower your recreational catch limit, and you might catch your limit a lot faster this year, with the new estimates. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Tom Roller.

MR. ROLLER: I was going to comment on the discussion on the Florida two-fish-per-person, and I think that was well answered before, and I find it interesting, and, also, I will defer to all the Florida AP members, but I guess, from my perspective, if I had a two-fish-per-person limit up here, I might be talking about three fish, and three fish seems to be a pretty good number, but, like I said, more than that just seems like way too much. I will leave it at that.

MS. WIEGAND: Ira.

MR. LAKS: I will just say, as a charter operator, I have customers that won't let me even fish for kingfish, and so, if my customers don't want them, I'm not going after them, but it's just having the equal opportunity that the rest of the country has, and, also, the council saw fit to make an emergency action, and one of the things they chose, because there is allocation in the fishery, is to make the emergency action until March for four king mackerel per person, and I just think, if the council thought it was so beneficial to make an action like that, that would help out, I certainly think that we could go to making it equal for all participants in the fishery.

MS. WIEGAND: Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: Is there a chart inside of this amendment yet with regard to let's say Texas all the way to Massachusetts, as far as what the recreational trip limits are, because, you know, I've heard that two is enough, and three is enough, and now I'm hearing four is potentially enough, and so I was just wondering, for comparative purposes, how that's being handled by the various areas that are managed independent of each other.

MS. WIEGAND: Right now, we have an emergency rule in place, like Ira brought up. When the emergency rule is not in place, just what's currently written into the CFR regulations, north of Florida/Georgia, it's three king mackerel per person recreationally. The east coast of Florida is two per person, and then I believe that the Florida Keys through Texas is also three per person, and so it's just the Florida east coast, right now, that's in two per person.

I don't know of any management measures for king mackerel that currently exist in the New England area, and so north of North York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, et cetera. That's the New England Council's jurisdiction, and I don't believe anyone is currently managing king mackerel in federal waters up there, but, in terms of what we manage under the CMP FMP, it's three per person, with the exception of the Florida east coast, which is at two per person.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Aaron.

MR. KELLY: I just know, from my perspective, in the summertime, we let a lot of twenty-three-and-three-quarter-inch fish go, and I'm not saying decrease the minimum size, but, if you were looking to increase recreational harvest, at least in my area, if you lowered the minimum, we would have more fish being caught. That being said, we don't even keep our limit of king mackerel on a trip, but that would be one way to increase the recreational harvest, is to lower the minimum size.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve Poland, I see you've got your hand up.

MR. POLAND: Thanks, Christina. I just wanted to take this opportunity to kind of go off on a tangent, real quick, since Ira brought up the emergency action. The council requested that emergency action to respond to the Presidential Executive Order to basically do something to kind of alleviate COVID impacts to fisheries. We discussed it, and, based off of the AP's request of adjusting that trip limit of Florida up to three, we decided to just try out four, for that emergency action period. It's 180 days, and we have the opportunity to request an additional 180 days, and so to make it 360 days.

We did it because we felt like it would incentivize more recreational trips and more for-hire trips, and we had just received the assessment, SEDAR 38, that showed that the stock was still not overfished and that overfishing wasn't occurring, and so we kind of made a judgment call and felt like it was a low-risk action with a potential for some reward there, but the council can request to extend that or just let it go.

Just based off the conversation that I've already heard, and conversations I've had with other fishermen, I've kind of got a good idea of what the recreational community wants, or doesn't want, relative to that, but I would like to hear just some feedback, real quick, from the AP, as far as that four-fish limit. Does anyone, especially the for-hire operators, feel like that might have incentivized a few more trips, or did it not do a thing, and we should just let the emergency action expire?

MS. WIEGAND: Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: Back to the minimum size for commercial and recreational of twenty-four inches, the commercial has an allowance there for undersized animals, because of, I guess, the frequency of the catch and stuff like that, twenty-three or twenty-three-and-a-half inches, tolerable up to a certain percentage, and does the recreational have a similar benefit of being able to take smaller, probably tastier, fish, half-inch to an inch shorter?



MS. WIEGAND: I believe the provision to land cut fish is commercial-specific, and I do not believe that applies to the recreational sector.

MR. HUDSON: The reason I'm saying this is because my days of running charter boats, in particular trolling for king mackerel, is, a lot of times, it will get torn, and stuff like that, that affects that recreational catch, and it then becomes a dead and dying discard, but it's the type of thing that sometimes, personally, myself, when I eat certain kinds of fish, I like the younger, medium-sized, instead of the older size, and I wouldn't want to eat a smoker, generally speaking. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Tom Roller.

MR. ROLLER: Okay. I'm going to address two things here. The first thing I'm going to address is Mr. Poland's comment regarding whether or not we felt that the four-fish bag limit increased any incentive to go on for-hire trips this year or whatnot, and I don't think people even know that the limit is four fish, and I can comfortably say that I did not have a single trip or comment whatsoever, this entire summer, or heard anything regarding people wanting to keep more king mackerel. I did a lot of king mackerel fishing this summer, and, on the days that I king mackerel fished, most people typically stop well short of three, even when the fishing is really good.

Now, on that same note, I want to talk about Aaron's comment regarding the smaller fish, as well as Rusty's. Now, when we fish for kings, they're a fragile fish, and they can be hard to release without producing a discard, whether they're a large fish or a small fish, and I have to say, when we're trolling, particularly for Spanish mackerel, and say we're Clarkspoons and planers, we do catch a lot of undersized kings, particularly the last few years. Maybe they are twenty-two or twenty-three inches long, but a lot of them are in that twenty-three-and-a-half-inch range.

A lot of those fish are dead discards, and their gills, obviously, go straight to the point of their chin, and a lot of those fish I throw back. If we really do want to have a discussion about how to increase recreational harvest, maybe we do need to discuss lowering that minimum size limit, because that is going to increase access for some anglers, as well as lower some dead discards, because, like Spanish, people aren't necessarily trying to target these smaller fish, and you just end up catching them, and a good percentage of them, particularly in the way we fish, given how fragile they are, are going to go back as discards.

MS. WIEGAND: Aaron.

MR. KELLY: I just wanted to reiterate what Tom said. I agree with that, and, I mean, we're not really -- If you catch a twenty-three-inch fish, which is actually a better king mackerel to eat than a twenty-five or thirty-pound fish, and it's part of an incidental catch, and they are going back dead. They are not making it, and so those fish are dead discards, as far as I can see, and I don't know how many king mackerel get released from a Clarkspoon trolling at five knots that goes back into the water and swims away healthy, and so I'm all for something of that nature, or at least to account for it. In my world, that would make a difference.

As far as the extra fish goes, it doesn't really affect me or my charter business, and it's nice, but, even the days that we were really keyed-in on the fish, we didn't keep a four-fish limit, because, frankly, the smaller fish are better eating, and, the bigger ones, we let them go. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: This is less of a comment and more of a question. Is the decision whether to increase the Florida east coast recreational catch to three per angler per day -- Is that now resting with the council, because that seems like, to Ira's point, the way to bring in consistency with the recreational bag limit across the whole region, while also addressing your question this afternoon as far as what potential management measures could be modified to increase the recreational harvest.

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, and that's, in a sense, in the council's hands now, and it was a recommendation made back at the last Mackerel Cobia AP meeting, and what I am hearing here, and I'm sure what Steve Poland, Chair of the Mackerel Committee, is hearing here is that that's something you guys would like to have considered in this amendment. That recommendation goes to the council, and then they will develop actions and alternatives and consider whether to include it. Ira.

MR. LAKS: I will try and answer your question, Steve, and I know it sounds like I'm trying to thread the needle, but I think four is probably too many. There's not going to be a lot of demand, and I think three king mackerel per person is a good chunk of fish for everybody. One thing, to get back to making Florida consistent, is there's a demographics issue. I have a lot of clientele that comes from the Caribbean, and they find king mackerel a prize fish. I know, in other places, that it's not a fish of choice, but I do have quite a few customers that really enjoy keeping king mackerel.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve Donalson.

MR. DONALSON: To answer the specific questions on what management measures could be modified to increase commercial harvest or recreational harvest, lowering the size limit would. I mean, just speaking for myself and the other folks that I meet with and talk to, I mean, we're not keeping thirty-inch fish. Anything smaller than twenty-four -- I mean, if we could use them as bait, they would probably be really good kingfish bait for bigger kingfish, and so I don't know that it would make me want to keep more fish, if I could keep the smaller ones, just for what it's worth, but, yes, it would increase it, because I'm sure there's a lot of people that would.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Ira, I see your hand up.

MR. LAKS: Steve, does that help you out? Do you want a motion, or do you think that's a good -- That you can bring back what we're feeling?

MR. POLAND: Ira, I think that's good. I mean, I'm hearing it, and Mel and Spud and Chris are on here, and so I think it's covered, and, I mean, it will be reflected in your AP report, I'm sure, and I do appreciate the discussion on this.

The size limit discussion, does the AP have any kind of preference on what the size limit should be, or, ideally, what it should be? I know part of what was driving the assessment update -- Not only was it including the new MRIP information, but there was also, it seemed like, an increase in productivity in the stock, with age-zeroes and age-ones, and I just know, from anecdotal reports here out of Morehead, for the last couple of years, there has seemed to be a lot of smaller king

mackerel. I have seen it, and a lot of people have seen it, and so it seems to be there is more interaction with those sub-twenty-four-inch fish.

I agree with Tom and Aaron and others that discards on those fish, or potential discard mortality on those fish, can be high, but, if the council were to modify the size limit, what would be a perfect size limit? Would it be twenty-two inches or twenty inches? I know there is pros and cons for that, and I really need to look at the size distribution of fish caught in the fishery and that kind of stuff, but just kind of a general direction to go, if the council decides to address that in this action, or a future action.

MS. WIEGAND: Aaron.

MR. KELLY: I don't know, but twenty-two inches, and I think that would cover it, without getting crazy. I think you would definitely increase your catches, and you would have a lot less waste. Just off the top of my head, that's what I would say.

MS. WIEGAND: Ira.

MR. LAKS: I would agree with Aaron. I think twenty-two, and I don't think you want to go any smaller than that.

AP MEMBER: Are we talking commercial or recreational?

MR. LAKS: I am talking recreational, because there is a provision to keep some -- As Rusty said, to keep some short fish, and there is a certain percentage within a trip limit.

AP MEMBER: Geez, man. I don't know, but twenty-two inches is small.

MS. WIEGAND: Tom Roller.

MR. ROLLER: I would say twenty-two is good. I would agree with that. Now, it is a small fish, but, like I said earlier, I don't think people really are targeting small kings, just like when you catch ten-inch Spanish mackerel, and you're not trying to catch ten-inch Spanish mackerel. You're just catching them incidentally to targeting keeper-sized, current size limit, fish.

The problem is that some of those fish are going to go back dead, and I would actually argue -- When I am live-baiting for kings, I actually rarely catch those borderline fish, when I'm either live or dead-baiting. I tend to catch them when I am pulling hardware, particularly when I'm targeting Spanish mackerel. A lot of them are discards, and so twenty-two, sure. Twenty-one, I would be willing to have that discard in any regard, in any size limit, plus or minus two inches around twenty-two, based off of the data, but --

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Christina, the comment that Frank mentioned is that NMFS does not expect an extension for the emergency measures, and the temporary rule does not contain the needed measures to allow for an extension of the emergency action.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Mike. I think what that is saying is that NMFS isn't expecting to extend that four-per-person emergency rule for king mackerel. Next up, I think we've got Ira.

MR. LAKS: I just wanted to say, and it's not directly due to the size limit, but, Steve, there is one thing that you might want to consider, and I think the AP had brought it up two or three years ago. If I'm correct, you can't keep a mutilated king mackerel on the recreational side, and, with the shark issues that everyone seems to be having, one thing you could do is maybe allow a mutilated fish that requires the size limit, whatever it is, twenty-four inches right now, where you could keep it.

There is times that I will catch a thirty-five-inch kingfish, or a thirty-inch kingfish, and it will get its tail cut off, and you're not really losing a ton of meat, and it's a fish that I can't put in the box, and so I have to kill two fish for one, and so that might be something to look at, where you allow a cut king, as is allowed in the commercial industry too, that you allow a cut king to be kept, as long as it meets the minimum size limit of the king mackerel.

MS. WIEGAND: Charlie.

MR. LOCKE: My question would be what is the size that it has been determined that that king mackerel has spawned at? The only reason I say that is I'm all for lowering the size limit, because I think they have valid points on the recreational side, but, since they have 68 percent of the TAC, or whatever it is, on the recreational side, what is the size? Like, with cobia, thirty-three inches was it was pretty much determined that that fish had spawned one time. Therefore, that's kind of where they made the size limit, and so was there any determination in the twenty-four-inch fork length on king for it has spawned one time? I guess that's my question.

MS. WIEGAND: That is an excellent question, and I do not know off the top of my head. I do see that Myra has her hand up and it's possible she knows the rationale for setting the king mackerel trip limit, or size limit, at twenty-four inches. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Christina. I actually was just looking that up. When the AP put together the fishery performance report for king mackerel, according to those data, 50 percent of females mature right around twenty-two inches, but this was based on, I think, the life history data from the previous SEDAR assessment, and so I don't know if there's any more up-to-date information than that.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you very much, Myra. That was incredibly helpful.

MS. BROUWER: You're welcome.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve Donalson.

MR. DONALDSON: Is there anybody on the call that can clarify what was just said about the recreational rule on keeping or discarding a mutilated fish? I have always been told, and try to practice, as long as your mutilated fish is legal sized, you're supposed to keep that and count it towards your bag limit, and is that not accurate? That's not for debate, and I'm just curious.

MS. WIEGAND: Spud, is it to that point?

MR. WOODWARD: Yes, Christina. I think what ends up happening is most states have landing laws, where a fish has to be landed head and tail and fins intact, and so that's where you actually end up getting into a difficult situation, is the fish needs to be landed intact, and so, if it's been cut, where the tail is missing or whatever, then you actually -- It's not so much a federal law issue as it's an applicable state law where the fish are being landed.

MS. WIEGAND: I am going to go ahead and pull up the exact CFR regulations. Tom Roller.

MR. ROLLER: You know, when it comes to North Carolina, this has been -- Like you said, it's definitely a state-by-state law, and I know, in North Carolina, you're not supposed to have a mutilated or cut fish onboard, though I do like what Ira brings up, in terms of this, and in particular with king mackerel this is an issue, whether it's sharks or barracuda. A lot of fish that I catch over the course of the summer end up getting chopped.

If there's a way for us to address that, particularly as long as the baseline minimum size was in line, and say we, big-picture, lower the size limit to twenty-two inches, and it would be nice to be able to keep a fish that met that twenty-two-inch size limit, or to reiterate that it could be allowed, because it is a big problem.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so I am looking at the CFR right now, and there is a provision, and so fish are required to be landed intact, but there is a provision for cutoff or damaged king or Spanish mackerel that comply with the current minimum size limit, as you've said, and the trip limit, and it specifically references the commercial trip limit and not the recreational bag limit, and so I'm reading this as this applies to the commercial fishery and not the recreational fishery. It's possible there are other ways to interpret that, and this might be something we would want to ask a lawyer about, but, Paul, hold on a second. Steve Poland, I'm going to go ahead and jump you, because I think you have a comment to this point.

MR. POLAND: I just wanted to follow-up with Spud. In North Carolina, we do have state law that doesn't allow landing of mutilated fish, and they must have the heads and fins intact, and, I mean, we actually had to add specific state rules to allow for things like tuna and stuff to be landed, the cores and that kind of stuff, and so it might be more of a state issue, but I do appreciate this discussion, because we've heard, at numerous council meetings over the last year-and-a-half, about shark interactions and shark depredation.

The council's hands are kind of tied, as far as how to address this perceived increase in shark abundance and interactions with our fisheries, but, if there are actions like this that we can investigate, and potentially weigh if it's a good or bad idea to kind of take some of those depredated fish and turn those into fish that can be retained, and I think that's something that the council is definitely interested in and probably will investigate further, and so I appreciate this discussion.

MS. WIEGAND: Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Just to remind the crowd on the call this afternoon that there are technical papers out there suggesting that, when discard mortality rate for a species such as king mackerel exceeds roughly 20 to 25 percent, that it behooves the fishery to retain those animals, and then, coupled with what Steve Poland just brought up, the increasing observations of depredation by sharks and whatnot in this fishery, it seems to me that there's some biological

justification right there, with the size at maturity as a completely separate issue, and there's biological justification with, regard to discard mortality rates and depredation, to drop the minimum size limit.

MS. WIEGAND: Charlie.

MR. LOCKE: Me and Steve Poland have talked about this in the State of North Carolina, and what he said about Spanish mackerel, that it has to be heads and tails attached, and, in the gillnet fishery, we have a lot of fish that come up with the heads missing, or the tail missing, but it was always -- I always took them home to eat them, or gave them to people in my church, and it wasn't until I got stopped by Marine Patrol and realized that, hey, man, I'm going to get a ticket for this, and so I brought that up to Steve before, about, hey, if whatever is left is twelve inches, if it's a twelve-inch fork limit on Spanish, or if it's a twenty-four-inch fork on king, whatever you have left, if the tail is bit off and it's a nice king, but it's still more than twenty-four inches, I don't think there should even be a question in Marine Patrol's mind, but, because of the way that certain laws are written on the books -- The laws alone, I definitely think that's an issue that's going to increase in the future with sharks.

I mean, we're seeing that everywhere, in every fishery, and so I know that you're saying that, federally, I guess, we're allowed to retain mutilated, just in the commercial fishery, but I think the recreational fishery -- I think, in every fishery, and I know HMS did it with tunas here out of Oregon Inlet, and they had a lot of shark predation, and they finally had to change the rule, and they could land those tunas that have been bitten in half.

I'm not sure if they had to reach the certain size limit, or if they were at least a twenty-seven-inch, what they thought was big enough, what was left, but they had to amend that for the shark factor, and so I'm all for retaining fish that you can't release alive anyway, and I think it should be something that should be looked into, for sure.

MS. WIEGAND: Tom Roller.

MR. ROLLER: I mean, the last couple of comments, I just want to reiterate that I wish we could just mirror the HMS regulations for shark-mutilated fish, when it comes to king mackerel.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so does anyone else have any questions or comments related to this amendment, before we move on to other topics of discussion for this meeting? I am not seeing any hands. Thank you, guys, for a fantastic discussion on this amendment. It's given us a lot of information to bring to the council, and I think we're going to have a really strong and productive amendment, because we started with talking to the advisory panel, and so thank you, guys, for your input on this.

With that, I will hop back over to the agenda. Ira, as the chair, do you want to move on to the Citizen Science Program, or do we need to take a biological break?

MR. LAKS: Why don't we give them five minutes, and let's get right back to it. Try and make it back in five minutes, guys.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Five minutes, and so that looks like 3:05. AP member, when you get back, will you just go ahead and click that hand-raise button, so we know that you're back at your computer to get started? Thank you, guys.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. WIEGAND: Ira, I think that most people are back. We're just missing one or two, and so if you want to go ahead and get us rolling.

MR. LAKS: Absolutely. We're going to go into a Citizen Science Program update with Julia Byrd and Allie Iberle, and I will turn it over to them and let them get started.

MS. BYRD: Thanks, Ira, and thanks, Christina. Good afternoon, everyone. I appreciate the opportunity to give you guys a quick update on what's been going on with the Citizen Science Program since you all last met last fall, and so, for those of you guys that I haven't had the opportunity to meet, my name is Julia Byrd, and I am the Citizen Science Program Manager, and then Allie Iberle is on the line too, and she's our Citizen Science Project Coordinator, and so we're going to give you kind of a quick update on kind of programmatic-level activities that have been going on in 2020 as well as update you on a few of our pilot projects that are underway.

First, we want to give you just kind of programmatic-level activities and let you know what's kind of been going on over the last year, and so one of the things that we've been working on on a program level is to develop an evaluation plan for the overall citizen science program, and so we've been working with our Citizen Science Operations Committee, which is one of our advisory panels, as well as Rick Bonney and Jennifer Shirk, who are kind of our citizen science expert advisors, and so we're kind of developing goals and objectives that we want the program to accomplish and are coming up with evaluation plan options, so that, moving forward, we can make sure that the program is doing what we want it to do, that it's meeting the goals and objectives that the kind of council and our partners want, and so we'll be presenting information on this to the council in December, for their guidance and input.

We've also had a number of citizen science kind of advisory panel meetings, and so, for the Citizen Science Program, we have two main advisory panels. One is the Operations Committee that has met multiple times over 2020, working in large part on that program evaluation that I just mentioned, and then we also have a Projects Advisory Committee, and that's a group that is made up of representatives from many of the council's APs, and so that group will be meeting for the first time this year, in November, and, as far as representatives from the Mackerel Cobia AP on this committee, we have Tom Roller and Steve Donalson, and so we really appreciate their kind of participation in that group.

Another thing we've been working on, over the summer and fall of this year, was to put together a citizen science symposium with some of our NOAA colleagues at the American Fisheries Society meeting, and so what we did was kind of focused this symposium on how to better incorporate citizen science data into stock assessments and management decisions, and so we had a group of kind of twelve folks running different projects or citizen science programs, kind of across the country, kind of share ideas and best practices, and so that was kind of really successful, and we were able to learn a lot from folks who are doing citizen science in different kind of regions of the country.

Then a few more programmatic-level activities, and we're working on writing a kind of manuscript on the development on the council's Citizen Science Program, and Rick Bonney, one of our citizen science expert advisors, is leading these efforts. The manuscript was submitted, and reviewers made some suggestions, and so we've made a lot of revisions, and we're hoping to submit that in the next week or ten days or so.

We have also been working on a citizen science social media strategy, and Allie Iberle is the one who has been leading this charge, and so, if any of you guys follow the council on social media, you may have noticed that, on Fridays, there is the hashtag #citscifri, and we're posting information on kind of programmatic updates, project updates, and then we're highlighting some of our wonderful citizen science program volunteers.

One way to kind of help keep up with what the Citizen Science Program is doing is to check out these social media posts, and we've done some kind of preliminary analytics review, and it seems like, by putting these posts out there, we're able to get kind of more eyes looking at what's going on with the Citizen Science Program.

The last programmatic activity that I wanted to share with you guys is that we have a citizen science email distribution list, and we're working to grow that list now, and we are trying to send out regular updates every other month, and so, if you're interested in keeping up with what's going on in the Citizen Science Program, joining this email distribution list is a great way to do it. Again, it's only kind of -- It will be no more than one email a month, and so we won't be clogging up your inboxes, but, if anyone is interested in joining that list, you can either shoot me an email, or let Christina know, and she can pass on that information to me, and we can add you to that list.

That's a quick kind of programmatic-level update, and now I wanted to give you kind of updates on some of the projects we have underway and under development, and so there are two pilot projects we have now, SAFMC Scamp Release and the FISHstory project, and we kind of updated you guys on both of those last fall, but we wanted to let you know kind of where things stand with both of those, and then I also wanted to give you an update on some of the projects we have under development and another collaboration we're working on.

Before getting into the projects underway, I wanted to give you kind of an update on two projects that we have under development and then another collaboration we've been working on with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and so kind of the two projects that are under development now -- The first one is to try to develop kind of a website or a mobile app to work with kind of fishermen and other folks who are on the water to report kind of rare species observations, with the idea that these observations could help serve as an early warning system for shifting species.

There is a project in Australia called Redmap that does this, and so it's kind of adapting the Redmap program to our region, and we have a lot of partners that we've been working with on this project, and we have submitted a couple of proposals, and the latest one was in May of this year, and we have not received funding yet, and so we're still kind of looking for other avenues to pursue for this project, but we wanted to kind of update you on that, and then the second project that's kind of under development now is one that we're working on with REEF and SECOORA, and it's to work with recreational divers to get length estimates for a few data-limited species, and we were hoping to pilot this down in the Florida Keys.



We would work to collect length estimates for things like hogfish, or some of the grouper species found in the Keys, and so, again, this is a project that we have submitted a couple of proposals for, but we haven't gotten funded yet, and we're actually putting together another funding proposal that we'll submit at the end of this month, to try to get this project off the ground.

Then there's one collaboration that I wanted to briefly mention, and that is something that we're working on with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and it's a series of dolphin wahoo participatory workshops.

Basically, we're trying to hold meetings, one in kind of the North Carolina/Virginia area and a series of meetings also down in the Florida Keys, to try to develop a conceptual model of the dolphin wahoo fishery, and so, by that, I mean we're kind of trying to bring together fishermen and other folks within the fishing communities to listen to them and to learn their perspective on what the major factors are that affecting the fishery, what the major risks to the fishery are, or what people value in the fishery, what research is needed for the fishery, and to try to figure out the relationships between those different things.

Mandy Karnauskas and Matt McPherson, who work for the Southeast Fisheries Science down in Miami, are leading these efforts, and we held a series of workshops in North Carolina and Virginia in March, and this was kind of right before COVID kind of shut down travel, and we were originally scheduled to hold a series of meetings down in the Florida Keys this summer, but that has been postponed, due to COVID, and so, right now, we're looking into ways that we can kind of reschedule the workshops, and we're hoping to do them in-person, but we may need to come up with a virtual alternative, if we're not able to do that.

Another thing that I will kind of note is that Mandy and Matt have started to analyze the information that we learned from the fishermen who attended the North Carolina and Virginia workshops, and they actually presented that to the council at their June meeting, and then some additional work they've done they presented to the Dolphin Wahoo AP last week, and so I think we're learning some really kind of helpful information through this kind of series of workshops.

Now, I want to switch gears and talk a little bit about the two pilot projects that we have underway. The first one is SAFMC Scamp Release, and so this is a project that's really focused on collecting information on scamp discards, using a mobile app, and so we're really trying to focus in on collecting data that aren't collected through many other datasets, or there's really limited data on things like the length of released scamp and then information that could help inform discard mortality estimates, and so the depth that these fish were caught, whether or not a descending device was used or a fish was vented before it was released.

The app was launched back in June of 2019, and we're kind of working -- We have been, and we continue, working with commercial, for-hire, and recreational fishermen, to try to recruit people to kind of use the app and retain them to continue reporting their kind of scamp discards.

We had our kind of year anniversary in June of this year, and we provided an annual update to participants in the project, and then we also provided the data we've collected thus far for review at the SEDAR 68 Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic scamp data workshop, and so that's part of that stock assessment process for scamp that's underway now. We have collected kind of limited

data through the project thus far, but some of the preliminary feedback we got from SEDAR 68 participants is that the data provided by SAFMC Release kind of users and the information collected through the app were really helpful in interpreting trends in other datasets, and folks were really kind of interested in seeing this program as it expands and the sample size sort of increases.

There is just a few other things that I wanted to mention that we're working on for this project, and one of them is a grant proposal that we're working on and is underway now, and what we're trying to do is to combine the SAFMC Release app with North Carolina DMF's Catch U Later app. That's an app that North Carolina kind of built off of our Release app, but, instead of collecting information on released scamp, they are collecting information on released flounder, and so the idea is to kind of combine these apps under our regional data management partner, ACCSP, kind of under their umbrella.

By kind of doing this, combining these apps, there will be two kind of separate profiles set up, and so, if you are an offshore South Atlantic fisherman, when you log into the app, you would see the SAFMC Release questions. If you're fishing for flounder in North Carolina, then, when you log in, you see the questions related to their Catch U Later app. By kind of doing this, we're also going to be able to expand the number of species where we're collecting data through SAFMC Release to all shallow-water grouper, and so not just scamp, and we're hoping that that expansion will occur early in 2021.

Then kind of a separate aspect of this project is we are going to be hosting a series of scoping meetings to try to plan for the development of a customizable citizen science app. What that means is we want to basically develop an app that you could build on the fly, so to speak, and so, if you have a project where having kind of a data collection tool on your phone would be helpful, you would be able to kind of build that app on the fly, based on identified data fields, which would make it kind of a more quick turnaround for the development of that data collection tool and then also make it much cheaper to kind of develop that kind of data collection tool.

What we're hoping to do at these scoping meetings is figure out kind of what data needs need to be addressed through this app and what data fields should be included, and so it's really important that we have fishermen participate in these scoping meetings.

You guys will be able to bring a perspective on what you could potentially collect while on the water, what's important to you, and so I will kind of revisit this at the end of the presentation, but, if any of you guys are interested in potentially participating in these scoping meetings, I would love to know, or, if you're just interested in getting more information about what would be involved, and what kind of time commitment it would be, I would be happy to address those questions, too. Then we've also submitted a proposal this year to kind of -- Once the kind of customizable citizen science app is kind of planned, to actually build it, and so we'll find out if we get funding for that in the upcoming weeks.

Then the last thing that I wanted to let you all know about, as far as the SAFMC Release project goes, is that we're also kind of working with a graduate student at the College of Charleston, Nick Smillie, and his research is really trying to identify the best strategies to kind of market these different self-reporting apps to fishermen, to improve recruitment and retention, and so he is working with our SAFMC Release program, and he's hoping to interview fishermen who have SAFMC Release accounts, to kind of learn their perspectives on the app.

I know some of you guys have those accounts, and so I will likely be reaching out to you in the upcoming weeks, to see if you might be willing to talk to Nick. He is interested in talking to people who have the app and have user accounts and have actually reported released scamp and for those who haven't reported anything yet, and so we would be interested in talking to both of those groups.

Then he is also kind of further digging into some of the MyFishCount data that BeBe and others have been collecting over the past several years, and he's going to try to identify kind of common themes he hears between these interviews and with some of the MyFishCount data.

Now I'm going to switch gears and talk about our second pilot project called FISHstory, and, again, I know you guys received kind of an update on this at your fall meeting, and you got a demo of the FISHstory project within the online crowdsourcing platform Zooniverse, but we hadn't launched, the last time we spoke, and so I wanted to kind of give you a quick update on what's going on with this project.

I know that not everyone was on the webinar the last time you guys met, and so, just to give a quick overview, the FISHstory project is using kind of historic photos to try to document kind of for-hire catches and the length composition of fish from about the 1940s to the 1970s, and so that's before kind of the traditional data collection programs that are kind of used now were in place. The photos for this project were provided by Rusty Hudson, who is one of the AP members, and he's been a really critical key partner for this project, and so the photos represent his family's kind of fishing fleets, and they're from the Daytona Beach, Florida area, again from the 1940s to 1970s.

There are three primary components to the project. The first component is actually digitizing the historic fishing photos, and Rusty worked very hard to scan in all of these kind of 1,300-plus photos and provided kind of corresponding information on the photos, and so what the date of a trip was, the vessel name, the captain name, the homeport, all of that information that really makes the information we know about these photos more complete, and so now we have a photo archive with all of that information.

Then there are two other parts of the project that are underway now, and one is to estimate the for-hire catch composition during this historic time period, and the other is to develop a method to estimate length composition, and we're actually kind of pilot testing that method on king mackerel, and so we wanted to share some more information on that with you guys.

The first thing we wanted to do was give you a quick update on the for-hire catch composition component of the project, and so, as we kind of mentioned the last time you met, we're collecting this information using an online crowdsourcing platform called Zooniverse, and so that allows us to build kind of a project where we upload photos and then train members of the public to help us identify and count the fish and people in the photos.

Allie was able to give you guys a demo of the FISHstory project in Zooniverse at your last meeting, but we hadn't launched yet, and so we launched the project in May of this year, and we've really been blown away by the interest we've seen, and so I looked last night, and we're now at -- We have had over 1,500 volunteers kind of participate in the project, and they have made over 26,000

classifications, and so we have really been encouraged and impressed that there are so many folks who are interested in helping us analyze these photos for the project.

We have also been continuing to work on some additional aspects of this for-hire catch composition component of the project, and one thing that we're having folks do within Zooniverse is we have multiple volunteers kind of analyzing each photo, and then, if the volunteers disagree on the number and types of fish within a photo, we have a validation team that is made up of fishermen and scientists who are kind of the species ID experts who will go in and kind of verify the species counts and identifications within the photos.

We have had the validation team kind of work on a beta test with us, and we'll be having them start verify kind of the live Zooniverse fishery data in the upcoming months. We have also started to analyze kind of the live FISHstory data within Zooniverse, and so that is getting underway now, too.

Then I wanted to quickly give a little bit of information about how we've been kind of promoting the project, and I wanted to thank everyone who's on the kind of FISHstory team, as well as our council outreach team. They have done a great job kind of spreading the word about the project, and we've been really lucky to have FISHstory featured in a number of blogs and podcasts and newsletters and that sort of thing.

On this slide, each of the FISHstory features that are blue contain a link, and so you can check out some of the kind of features that we've had on the project, and one that I quickly wanted to mention is we recently did a guest blog for *Discover Magazine* working through one of our partners, SciStarter, and so I would encourage you guys to check out that post. It's a great kind of story of how the project kind of developed and how it's going now, and so that's a quick update on our outreach and promotion.

The last thing I wanted to talk to you guys a little bit about was the third component of the project, which is trying to accurately describe the lengths of fish in these historic photos, and we are pilot testing the methods that we have developed on king mackerel, and so I wanted to give you guys a little background on kind of what exactly we're doing and how the protocols were developed and kind of what our next steps are here.

Within these photos, it's fairly easy to kind of zoom-in and draw a line from the snout to the tail of the fish, but the hard part is figuring out how long that line is, and we're needing to convert kind of this unknown size of the fish to a length, and so I'm going to talk a little bit about kind of how we have done this and how we've set up the protocol to collect length measurements.

We have been working with our FISHstory design team to develop and pilot test a draft protocol. We are pilot testing the method we've come up with on king mackerel, and we're using a software called ImageJ to get the kind of photo measurements. So far, we have five kind of analysts who are trained to do the length measurements in the photos, and, before an analyst can kind of be let loose on the photos, they have to complete a virtual training with staff, and then we have a calibration photoset, and so it's a set of fifteen photos that we make all analysts measure, to ensure that everybody is measuring fish the same way in the photos. Then, once folks are kind of let loose on the photos, we get two people to analyze and do the length measurements for each photo.

Within the photos, what we're doing to try to estimate length is we're using the lumber, the two-by-fours, or the two-by-sixes, in the photo to scale and to get estimates of fish length, and so I'm going to talk a little bit on the next few slides, in kind of a little detail, on kind of how we developed our methodology.

The first thing we had to do was figure out what we wanted to use in the photos as a scalar to estimate length, and so we had some discussions on whether it would be helpful to use something larger as a scalar, something larger than the two-by-fours or two-by-sixes, because that could help decrease the error we may be seeing in measurements, and so the first thing we did is Chip built us this kind of leaderboard that you see in this photo out of two-by-threes, and you can see pieces of wood hanging vertically that act as our kind of test fish in these photos.

What we tried to do is take measurement of the kind of vertical wooden boards, which were kind of known lengths, and then use different scalars to figure out what works best to estimate the length in these photos, and so we used the two-by-threes, and we used kind of the logos and the signs in the pictures, as well as the larger kind of boards in the pictures, and we explored all of those different options.

What we were really trying to do is we wanted to estimate length -- We want to estimate the length of fish within two inches, and that two-inch delineation is based on the bin size for lengths that were used in the last king mackerel assessment, and so we tried out all of these different potential scalars, and I'm not going to get into details, unless folks have questions, but we found that, by using the two-by-threes, which would equate to the two-by-fours or two-by-sixes in our historic photos, we're able to get 96 percent of the measurements within that kind of two-inch length bin. We did a few other statistical tests, but we decided that using that lumber was the way to go in kind of scaling the length estimates in the photos.

Then the next kind of things we did in developing the methodology is we put together this kind of calibration photoset, and so these are kind of fifteen photos that all of our length analysts have to measure before they are able to kind of be let loose and assigned kind of photos where they're measuring the lengths on their own.

What we found, between our five analysts, is that there was some difference in the size distribution among the different analysts, but those variations were pretty small, and they were about maybe one-inch difference, which is smaller than that two-inch size bin we were shooting for, and so we felt that kind of all analysts were kind of properly trained and could be used to measure king mackerel within the larger photoset.

Then one other thing that we did, and Allie is really the one who tackled this, is we wanted to try to do comparisons with items of known length within the historic photos, and so we used kind of oil barrels that appear in the photos that have been the same size for a long period of time, and then we also used pictures that had Rusty's mother in them, Phyllis Hudson, just to kind of get an idea of how accurate we could get on the lengths within these photos. After we did all of these different analyses, we felt confident that we could use the two-by-fours and two-by-sixes and get within that kind of two-inch size bin that we were hoping for.

Then just kind of the last piece of kind of where we're headed next, now that we have kind of the methodology laid out for measuring fish within the photos, we're developing kind of a resampling

method to get a length distribution, and Chip Collier is the one who is kind of leading these efforts, and so what we're hoping to get is a length distribution that includes some kind of error associated with it for the different years we have photographs, and we may not be able to do kind of a length distribution for each year, but every few years, dependent on the sample sizes that we get.

The last thing that I wanted to mention here too is that we took this length methodology to the council's SSC during their kind of last meeting in October, and then we also shared information on this methodology with the king mackerel lead assessment analyst in the South Atlantic, to get their input on kind of the methodology and protocol we had set up, and we asked for any suggestions or improvements that they could think of.

I think it was really exciting to hear that both kind of the king mackerel lead assessment analyst, as well as the SSC, were really supportive of this work, and there isn't any information on lengths from this historic time period, and so they felt that this could provide some really useful data, and so we're working to incorporate some of the suggestions we got from SSC participants, but I think folks were really supportive and excited about this aspect of the project. That's just kind of the FISHstory project in a nutshell and what's been happening since you guys met last fall.

Then I just wanted to, again, thank you guys for letting us give this update and letting you guys know what's going on with the Citizen Science Program. Again, if anyone is interested in getting on our email distribution list, just let me or Christina know, and we'll get you on there, and, if anyone is interested in participating in these customizable app scoping meetings, I would love to know that as well, or, if you want additional information, I can kind of share it now or contact you offline, to give you that information, and so thanks again, and I would be happy to take any questions.

MR. LAKS: Hi, Julia. I have one question about this, and it has to do with you're taking pictures from a very specific area, and also time, what time of year these fish were caught, and the method. Any time you go back in history and compare fish catches, a lot has changed, and so, if you were to go down to a dock today, with some of these triple outboards and super-fast boats that load their live wells up with bait, you're going to probably see the average fish is much bigger than back then, when they were trawling with Clarkspoons and fishing for smaller fish. How are you going to weigh that, trying to use that data?

MS. BYRD: I guess there are a couple of things that I think you're asking about, Ira. The first one you mentioned I think was kind of these photos are from a very specific area of the South Atlantic region, and kind of Daytona Beach, Florida. We recognize that we have a small spatial scale, and so this project is kind of a pilot project to test to see if these methodologies we're developing are working, and so that's something that the SSC mentioned.

If the project is successful, we would like to expand the project to cover more area along the South Atlantic coast, and we have heard from some fishermen, in different regions, that they have pockets of photos like this that they may be willing to contribute to the project, if we're able to get some additional funding and expand, and so that's kind of the spatial aspect.

Then the other thing I think you were asking about is so fishing back in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960, and 1970s is very different than fishing nowadays, and I think regulations are very different,

and the technology that's used to kind of find fish, or the motor size, and all of that kind of stuff is very different.

Through this project, we're not hoping to kind of estimate the total number of fish caught. We're hoping to, in the length piece, look at sizes of fish, to see if those have changed over time, and so I think, right now, there is no information available on the length of fish caught back then, and so I think the information we have can help kind of inform what things were like back when the recreational fishery was really starting to ramp-up in the region, and so we're not going to -- We're not trying to estimate actual catches back in the day, like landed fish, the number of fish that were landed back in those days, and does that answer your question, Ira?

MR. LAKS: A little bit. I'm just concerned that, if I talk to charter captains from this area from the 1950s and 1960s, and they kind of laugh at the guys today, because they would go out with a dozen dead ballyhoo, or some drone spoons, and they would probably target smaller fish, and, today, our charter boat doesn't leave unless it has \$300 worth of goggle eyes in the live well, and, naturally, the fish that hit the dock today, fishing in that method, are going to be a lot larger than the fish that hit the dock back in the day.

I think the methodology of how the fish were caught could be very important. If you look at the average weight like in a tournament, these fish are giant, and that wouldn't be the average weight that's on a charter, and so the methods used to catch fish today, especially in the charter boats, especially south of that area, are targeting much larger fish.

MS. BYRD: Do you think -- I know that, back when these photos were taken, there weren't things like size limits in place or anything like that, and so -- I mean, I know that, just in looking at some of these photos, we're seeing some very large fish, and so I think regulations come into play a little bit too, but I think that's an important point that maybe we need to kind of dig more into with Rusty and kind of note in the kind of corresponding metadata about kind of the methods that people used to catch fish back then, because that could be an important thing to share when we're kind of sharing with other kind of folks who want to use this sort of data, that perspective, or that context.

MR. LAKS: Yes, and especially as you're trying to compare one area to another, and so, like I said, back in the day, they would troll here. It's so crowded here now that you can't troll. You can't get around a fleet, and so they've live-baiting and bump-trolling, which is basically just stemming the tide, and so, again, it's going to be hard to compare. If you're using a different methodology to target a different school of fish, or target a different size fish of what was caught then compared to what's caught today. I just don't want to see that, oh wow, the fish are so much bigger today, and it's just the stuff that was used back in the day seemed to target smaller fish more often.

MS. BYRD: Okay. Thank you, Ira, for that, and that makes me think we need to go back and make sure we have some of that information kind of documented and kind of in our photo archive, so that we can kind of pass it along and share it with folks, and so thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: I am going to jump down the list for just a second. Chip, go ahead.

DR. COLLIER: Just to build on what Julia was saying, if this stuff is used in a stock assessment, in all likelihood, what they would do is end up giving a different time block to that period of data,

and, in there, they would have different selectivities. Just because what they caught back then -- It wouldn't necessarily match up with what is being caught today, and those different selectivity blocks would be estimated in the model, and it would just be used to give some information to it, if that makes sense, Ira.

MR. LAKS: Yes, and it does make sense, but it has to be known that they were selecting different gear, and that could be some of the reason those fish are smaller from the past.

MS. WIEGAND: Go ahead, Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: You touched on it a little bit in the last few minutes, but I was wondering, Julia, if you could speak to how this data, this citizen science data, might be used to resolve some of the discrepancies that have been coming out of the MRIP program, and, specifically, we heard from Chip, earlier this afternoon, about how a change in the MRIP data collection affected the assessment numbers, or the ABC, and so I was just wondering -- If I understand that right, and so I was just wondering if you could speak to how this program might be able to resolve some of those discrepancies, moving forward.

MS. BYRD: I guess I will try to answer that question, Paul. If I don't answer it, feel free to kind of keep picking and giving me kind of additional questions. Kind of our overall Citizen Science Program's approach is to try to kind of fill data gaps and try to supplement existing data collection programs, not to kind of replace them, and so we're really trying to hone-in on kind of targeted research to fill holes, data holes.

I know that one of the -- Something that we often hear is that, particularly for species managed by the council, the sample size for a variety of different things within MRIP, whether it's the number of length data collected on landed fish or information collected on discarded fish, is limited, and so, I mean, I think that citizen science can be used as a tool to try to supplement some of the MRIP data, and, in particular, for the project we have underway right now, SAFMC Scamp Release, we're trying to collect information on the length of discards, which are really limited and aren't really collected through MRIP, and it's more kind of at-sea observer work that's done by many of the state partners.

So, I mean, I think we probably wouldn't develop a project to try to kind of estimate landings, but, if we can help fill, or supplement, some of the biological data collection in the recreational sector, or other sectors, that's something that the program could certainly do, and we're always interested if kind of folks, particularly folks on APs, have kind of examples of citizen science projects that they feel could help kind of supplement some of our existing data programs, and we certainly would be all ears and love to chat more, and so does that help answer the question, Paul, or did I not really get it?

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: I think so, yes, and I'm just struggling with how this might -- How any citizen science program might fill in data needs that are best suited to assess king mackerel right now, and so I'm just struggling with that piece of it. You talked, this afternoon, about using historical data to reconstruct historical lengths from catch photos and that kind of thing, but I am struggling with moving forward with the current information that we have, as far as managing king mackerel, and how citizen science can best be brought to bear on the topic moving forward.



MS. BYRD: When I was talking about kind of FISHstory, we're talking about trying to fill in that historic data gap that could give us some idea of kind of the length of fish caught back when the recreational fishery was kind of ramping up, and so your question is how can we use citizen science to kind of apply to more of the modern data collection programs, and is that right?

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Yes, and how it can answer any contemporary uncertainties in assessment models and fill in those data gaps, and I'm just struggling with how this can get used.

MS. BYRD: I am not sure if you're specifically talking about kind of the king mackerel historic length information or -- I know things that we heard from some of the assessment scientists we have worked with is, obviously, there are kind of concerns and issues with collecting information through kind of non-probabilistic sampling, and so I think there are more and more techniques that are getting developed now, and there have been some papers that have found that information like length collected through non-probabilistic sampling could still be kind of informative, and it has been used in assessments.

There's a Jorle paper, when he was working down in Florida, and I think he was a graduate student when he did that work, and so, I mean, I think are kind of challenges in using citizen science in a stock assessment and management framework, but I think that there are kind of way to get around that, and there seems to be kind of growing interest in more kind of working and putting into developing techniques that can help us do that. Hopefully that answers your question a little bit more, and I'm not sure.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: I don't know either, and I'm not an assessment biologist, but I'm just not sure if any citizen science initiatives can answer the most pressing questions, as far as what assessment biologists have, regarding the greatest contributors to model uncertainty, when they're saying, okay, MRIP is reliable or not, and we're changing the MRIP numbers, and so that's going to have a tremendous bearing on the ABC or whatnot, and I'm not sure -- I guess I remain skeptical of whether citizen science can actively fill in those data gaps and reduce the uncertainty in some of the most uncertain areas of any assessment for king mackerel.

MS. BYRD: I think the other thing that I will just note here too is that we have kind of developed a list of citizen science research priorities, and those get updated every two years, to try to figure out where citizen science may be able to kind of help fill data needs. Citizen science isn't appropriate for all of the data needs that we have, and so we're trying to identify where it could be applied as an appropriate tool.

Folks involved in updating those citizen science research priorities kind of include advisory panel members, and the council looks at it, and we have an Operations Committee that also includes representatives from the SSC and from SERO, and so lots of folks helped develop those recommendations to identify what data needs we feel are appropriate for citizen science.

Then the other thing I will note too is that, when we develop citizen science projects, we put together a design team, and that design team has a -- It's kind of a diverse group of folks with differing expertise, and so we may have kind of a stock assessment scientist, as well as fishermen, as well as outreach specialists, so that we have an idea of kind of --

When we develop a project, we have an idea of how we want the data to potentially be used and then, in the development of that project, we have scientists to help us figure out how to collect the data in a way that it can meet its intended use, and then we have fishermen that kind of say, you know, yes, we can collect that on the water, or, no, we can't collect it like that, but we can collect it like this, and so we're trying to kind of have those discussions in the development of projects, so that the data we collect can meet its intended use. Again, like you said, I don't think citizen science is a tool that can meet every data need, but I think it is a tool that can be used to meet a variety of data needs that would be helpful to the council.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve Donalson, I promise that I'm going to get to you, but, first, I'm going to go to Chip, because I think you've got some info for Paul's point.

DR. COLLIER: Yes. Thank you, Christina. As Julia mentioned, citizen science is being used in a variety of components within the stock assessment, and some of the stuff that you work on, Paul, citizen science can definitely be used to inform things like that, whether or not fishermen are using descending devices, and they can easily report that on some of these apps that have been developed.

Getting to something like a final catch estimate, that is a bit more challenging, and it could take maybe ten years, in order to get a good estimate of catch, and so that's not a goal of ours right now in the Citizen Science Program. We're focused on little components that we can build upon within the stock assessment program, and so, as the fish that's pictured here, we picked scamp as a fish that we could develop an app for and potentially better inform the discard mortality rate for scamp.

That was the goal of the project, and we've been collecting data on that, that have been supplied by recreational and commercial and for-hire fishermen, and so that's how we're working right now, and we're kind of working on small little bits that we have identified the data gaps, and then we're trying to fill those as we can. Then, over time, we might be able to get to bigger-picture -- Be able to inform the bigger-picture thing, like landings, but that is a big challenge, and we're not a huge department, and we just can't get to something that large. I hope that helps.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, Steve Donaldson. It's all you.

MR. DONALSON: You touched on this earlier, and so, if we have groups of photos, or we know people that have groups of photos, older photos like this, we're just telling them to hold tight until we hear back from you, and is that correct?

MS. BYRD: Yes, and, actually, Steve, I wouldn't mind getting kind of the names of folks, and, so, right now, we don't have -- Our funding is to kind of work through this bank of photos that Rusty has provided, but we're hoping to apply for additional funding to be able to grow the project, and so we've kind of started a list of folks who have photos that may be willing to kind of contribute them to the FISHstory project, and so I would love to get kind of names and a little information about kind of what type of photos, what years they cover, or what area, that sort of thing, so that, if we find a funding opportunity, we can kind of reach out to those folks kind of quickly, to see if they may be willing to help kind of partner with us to kind of expand the project.

MR. DONALSON: Okay, and would it be helpful if you got the pictures already scanned, or do you prefer to scan them yourselves?

MS. BYRD: Having scanned photos would definitely be wonderful, and the one thing I will note is that it's really -- It was really helpful -- One of the really helpful things that Rusty provided is all of this other metadata that go along with each of the photos, and so date of the trip, who the captain was, what the vessel was, what the homeport was, and having some ideas of kind of fishing techniques and things like that, and that background information is really helpful, too. We would definitely love to have people who have already digitized photos, but it's also really helpful to get kind of that extra corresponding information as well.

MR. DONALSON: Okay. We can connect offline on that then.

MS. BYRD: Sounds great. Thanks, Steve.

MS. WIEGAND: Go ahead, Ira.

MR. LAKS: I just wanted to ask the group if we have anything that we -- Do we have any specific recommendations, or do we just want to give a keep-up-the-good-work message? Paul.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: My only recommendation -- Again, Rick Bonney, up at Cornell, who has spearheaded a lot of these citizen science initiatives, he would have some perhaps better thoughts on this, or the workshop that was convened a few years ago by the council might be -- With those notes, we might be able to brainstorm some ways to vet this data, or make it more unbiased, but I think Tom Roller, amongst other people, an hour or so ago, brought up the idea of some of these short fish are incurring discard mortality when they are incidentally captured as part of, for example, trolling for Spanish or whatnot.

One idea, if you wanted to consider some type of citizen science initiative, specifically within the context of assessing king mackerel, might be to get an idea of discard mortality, or some proxy for discard mortality, of the short fish that are currently sub-legal, and so that would just be one idea that I had in mind, from based on today's discussion.

MS. BYRD: Thanks, Paul, for that. It is always kind of, I think, helpful to hear from advisory panel members and kind of others who have suggestions for potential projects and ideas for potential projects, and, right now, we're kind of trying to work on the two projects. We always want to kind of develop new project ideas and, in thinking about some of -- Trying to develop a project around getting an idea about kind of discard mortality, I am wondering if -- This is to put another plug in for participating in these kind of customizable citizen science app scoping meetings, but if having an app as a data collection tool for kind of a project like that would be helpful.

It would be great to have folks participate in the workshop who could say, well, here are kind of the data fields that you need to collect, so we can kind of build this tool that we could then easily deploy at an inexpensive cost to try to collect some of that information, and so, Paul, I kind of appreciate that suggested idea, and, again, another plug. If anyone is interested in participating in these customizable kind of scoping app meetings, that would be great to know.

MR. LAKS: Does anyone have anything else for Julia? Thank you so much. That's great, and keep up the good work. It was very informative.

MS. BYRD: Thanks, Ira. I appreciate you all's time today.

MR. LAKS: So we're going to move on to an update on CMP Amendment 32, Christina?

MS. WIEGAND: Absolutely. We've got just a couple of updates on just some council activities that are going on that I wanted to make the AP aware of, the first of which is going to be CMP Amendment 32, which is going to address Gulf cobia. They recently updated the stock assessment for SEDAR 28 and found out that cobia is undergoing overfishing, and so that's something that needs to be addressed.

This amendment is going to be primarily -- The Gulf Council will be the lead on this amendment, but the South Atlantic Council will be involved, for a couple of reasons. The first big issue that we'll talk about with CMP Amendment 32 will likely be allocations. Currently, the east coast of Florida receives 36 percent of the Gulf cobia ACL, and that number was decided upon back in Amendment 18, and it's based on a series of landings. Given revisions to the MRIP numbers, it's possible that the Gulf and South Atlantic Council will want to revisit the allocation that the Florida east coast is given.

The second issue that's going to be addressed in this amendment is the CMP framework procedure. There shouldn't be any huge changes here, and the framework procedure is just slightly out-of-date. It makes references to things like king mackerel zones that no longer exist, and so we're going to be looking at updating the framework procedure to more clearly identify what each council is allowed to do without the approval of the other council.

For example, you've seen us go through framework amendments for king mackerel that specifically addressed Atlantic king mackerel, and those amendments didn't require approval from the Gulf Council, because they were only addressing the Atlantic stock, and so we just need to go through and revise that slightly and make sure that it's clear, and there may be some management changes that the South Atlantic Council wants to consider for the Florida east coast.

That amendment is just at the very beginning stages. The Gulf Council talked about it at their meeting last week, and our council is going to review it at their meeting in December, and we'll slowly get rolling from there, but this is also something that you guys may talk about again in the future. Does anyone have any questions about the new cobia amendment? Go ahead, Ira.

MR. LAKS: I just want to say that I think this panel, maybe a couple of times in the past, has recommended a motion that the Florida east coast goes consistent with Florida state waters, especially with the shark problem these days. You're losing a lot of fish to people trying to catch that second one, and it might be something that might be on the forefront going ahead with this amendment.

MS. WIEGAND: Wonderful, and thank you, Kelly, for correcting me. The apportionment for the Florida east coast was actually set in Amendment 20B and not Amendment 18. Thank you, Kelly. Steve Donalson, go ahead.

MR. DONALSON: What's the percentage that's in the amendment that they're talking about moving from the east coast back to the Gulf, if I'm hearing that correctly?

MS. WIEGAND: There haven't been any discussions yet regarding changes to the allocation. The current allocation that was set in Amendment 20B is 36 percent of the Gulf cobia ACL, the total Gulf cobia ACL, is allocated to the Florida east coast.

MR. DONALSON: Okay, and so the amendment isn't looking to change that?

MS. WIEGAND: It's just something that is under consideration. It's something that the councils will talk about in the future, and they may or may not decide to make any changes to that number.

MR. DONALSON: Okay. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. If no one has any more questions about the cobia amendment, I will go on and talk about SEDAR 78, which is the assessment for Spanish mackerel. Kathleen Howington apologizes for not being able to be here. She's on a shark assessment webinar right now, the same one that Rusty is trying to play double-duty listening to, but I'm going to go ahead and give you guys an update on it, and, if you have any additional questions, I will do my best to answer them, and, if I can't, I will make sure to get into contact with her.

There were initially some concerns that the current assessment schedule that had been set for Spanish mackerel might not be able to proceed as planned, and there were some difficulties with processing samples, as a result of limited access to labs, due to COVID-19, and so there was concern that it might have to be postponed.

However, at the Steering Committee call a few weeks ago, Executive Director John Carmichael, as well as a number of council members, made it incredibly clear that the council felt the Science Center really should make the Spanish mackerel assessment a priority. With the help of state partners, the Science Center was able to meet that request, and so, as of right now, the Spanish mackerel assessment is continuing on as approved, and so starting in May of 2021.

If you asked to be on the mailing list, or were appointed to be one of the AP observers, and this was Thomas Newman, Greg Peralta, Tom Roller, and Steve English, you will be receiving a welcome email from Kathleen in the next few weeks. There will be an additional scheduling call later this month that's going to finalize that 2021 schedule, after which you will receive another email from Kathleen with more information. This update comes with good news. The Spanish mackerel assessment is going to continue on as planned, and, if you guys have any questions, let me know, or please feel free to reach out to Kathleen.

I am not seeing any hand-raises. Does anyone have any questions about the Spanish mackerel assessment? Then I am going to go ahead and throw it back over to Myra Brouwer, who is going to give you guys an update on some climate change initiatives that the council has been a part of.

MS. BROUWER: Hi, everybody, and thank you, Christina. I'm Myra, and I normally don't have a whole lot to do with the Mackerel Cobia AP, and I staff the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel for the council, but I'm going to just take a couple of minutes of your time to update you on the council's initiatives, or soon-to-be initiatives, I guess, on climate change, and I know you guys talked about the issues that you've seen, and there's certainly a whole lot of concern, and so I just want to give you an update on some conversations that have been happening among management agencies along the east coast.

First, a little bit of background. Obviously, we all know that there's a lot of concern about shifting stocks, species moving north, or maybe potentially expanding their distributions, as somebody mentioned earlier today, and so this is going to pose, obviously, a lot of issues for management agencies of how to go about predicting how to handle these things, in terms of governance under the mandate that we have to maintain sustainable fisheries and continue to promote economic growth among fishing communities and the benefits to the nation, as is the mandate for our council.

How can the councils and other management agencies plan ahead when these unpredictable events, brought on by climate change, and now we're facing a pandemic, and all of this uncertainty, and how are we going to go about doing that?

Several regional management agencies, as I said, along the east coast have been having conversations, and so this is among the New England and Mid-Atlantic Councils, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and the National Marine Fisheries Service, that have been discussing a tool called scenario planning as something that can possibly help them address these coming challenges. This is going to give them an opportunity to evaluate all these management issues and figure out a way to address them.

What is scenario planning? Basically, it's a way to identify, or try to predict, future scenarios and how they are going to develop, in order to give managers an opportunity to try to address these potential outcomes, and so the idea is to get a lot of different participants together and everybody consider different possible future states for the environment, and, in our case, it's fisheries.

Together, the group will develop management strategies to address these scenarios, and this tool has already been applied by other councils, and the Pacific Council is currently using it to develop strategies to address climate-change-related issues on the west coast, and it's also been used -- I believe NOAA Protected Resources did a scenario planning exercise to address issues related to protected resources, to North Atlantic right whales.

These are the agencies that so far have been involved, and so the GARFO, Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office of NOAA Fisheries, the two councils, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and so this -- It's called the Northeast Region Coordinating Council, and so this body is based in the Northeast, but it has participants from various agencies, and they started talking about this back in 2019, and they convened a working group of representatives from all these agencies to put together a proposal that would include the scope of the project, how much it would cost, the type of effort that would be required from these agencies, in terms of meetings and other resources, such as staffing, in order to move forward with this scenario planning initiative, as I said, for the entire east coast.

This workgroup, of which I am a part of, and there is staff from all these other agencies, got together over a couple of conference calls, and I came in a little bit late in the process, but, ultimately, they put together, we put together, a series of recommendations that went on to be presented to this Northeast Region Coordinating Council back in July, I believe, and these are the recommendations that we came up.

There is a core team now that is actually the working group, the people on the working group right now. Hopefully we're going to get representatives from other agencies, such as the Southeast

Fisheries Science Center, and maybe the Regional Office as well, and the recommendation is to hire a professional facilitator that has scenario planning experience, in order to help us drive this process and establish a committee. This would be made up of council members and other agency representatives for the various agencies, and maybe representation from the various Scientific and Statistical Committees, and then reach out to fishermen and make sure that there is a good, solid public participation, people that are going to be informing this whole planning exercise.

The Nature Conservancy has come forward with an offer to partner and provide funding to conduct this, and so, based on the discussions we have had so far, we have recommended that we conduct this starting with a two-workshop model, where we would bring together participants, and so the estimated time to do this would be from eighteen to thirty-six months. Of course, things are rather uncertain these days, with the pandemic and whatnot.

This is where we are so far, and, as I said, the Northeast Region Coordinating Council discussed this in July, and there was general support among the members for it, but, of course, people had a lot of questions at that time, mostly related to the impacts of the pandemic on staff and that sort of thing, travel and whatnot. The Mid-Atlantic Council put this on their priority list to consider for 2021, and I'm not sure whether they have decided on a list of priorities yet, and the councils are doing that planning exercise for the next year right now, during the fall.

Our council briefly discussed this at this last meeting, in September, and they have requested that we bring back together some more information in early 2021, a little bit more background on what scenario planning is and what would be involved, kind of more of the details of it all, but, in general, there's been good support for it, and that's why I am here telling you guys about it, because one of the things that our council requested was that we keep our advisory panel members informed of what the discussions are around the table when it comes to climate-change-related issues and how we plan to hopefully address them. That's basically where we are, and I would be happy to take any questions.

MR. LAKS: Does anyone have any questions for Myra?

MS. WIEGAND: I am not seeing any hands raised, Ira.

MR. LAKS: All right. Thank you so much, Myra. That was very informative, and I think, going forward, it's going to be something that we're all going to have to deal with.

MS. BROUWER: You're welcome. I will keep you updated.

MR. LAKS: Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: I see that Paul just raised his hand. Go ahead.

MR. RUDERSHAUSEN: Kind of a musing here, and not really a question for Myra, but something that we might keep in mind. Jim Morley, who did some post-doc work at the UNC Institute of Marine Science here in Morehead City, and now he's an Assistant Professor at East Carolina University in Greenville, has done some of this work on range expansion, as opposed to range shifts, or both, for a variety of species on the Atlantic coast, and so that's something that we should be keeping in mind, and Jim could speak to this more eloquently than I could, but something

that we should keep in mind in the South Atlantic is the relative impact of climate change, or not, for some of these species, some of these tropical or sub-tropical species, in a region that might simply be expanding their ranges into the Mid-Atlantic, as opposed to shifting their ranges.

I think that would be a good person to tap into his expertise in finding out what kind of impact, or not, that this might have on the managed species in our region before going head-long into assuming it's all doom-and-gloom during the age of climate change, and I don't think it necessarily portends for a lot of species, warm-water species, here in our region -- That it's necessarily a gloomy picture for the managed species that we have in the South Atlantic.

MR. LAKS: Does anyone else have anything else regarding this situation, or any questions for Myra? All right. I guess the next thing we've got up, which is something I certainly do not want to bring up, is an election, at this time, but we have to have an election for Chair and Vice Chair.

MS. WIEGAND: Before we go through and start discussing, I just wanted to say thank you, Ira, for being an incredible Chair. You were Chair when I first started with the council, and you definitely helped me through some of my first meetings, and I genuinely appreciate it, and I'm glad that you'll still be remaining on the AP, even though your three-year term as Chair is up.

MR. LAKS: Thank you. You've been extremely helpful for me in this process. I guess I will turn it back to you, and we'll get the election started.

MS. WIEGAND: Sure thing. For the Mackerel Cobia AP, we would like to elect a Chair and Vice Chair for a three-year term. Obviously, your current Chair is the illustrious Ira Laks, and your current Vice Chair is the wonderful Steve Swann, and so now it's time to discuss elections, and I need someone to nominate someone for Chair, as well as nominate someone for Vice Chair, and then you all will pass a motion to that effect, and I can go ahead and pull up -- I have a draft motion written for you all. Go ahead, Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I would just like to nominate Ira for Chair.

MS. WIEGAND: Go ahead, Steve. You know what? This is actually an interesting question for me, that I'm not sure the answer to, and I'm going to look to a couple of other staff members who are on here, but is it protocol to have Chairs serve consecutive terms or no? Go ahead, Brian.

DR. CHEUVRONT: It's not a problem. You can do that. There's just no reason -- You just have to have the election on the regular schedule, and so, if the AP chooses to re-elect their Chair, they certainly are able to do that.

MS. WIEGAND: Perfect. Thank you, Brian. That's exactly the guidance I needed, and I appreciate that. Tom, just to confirm, you were nominating Ira for a second term?

MR. ROLLER: Yes. I am nominating Ira for a second term.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Thank you. Go ahead, Steve Swann.



MR. SWANN: If Ira is willing, I think it would be great to keep him as Chair, and I would like to nominate Tom Roller as Vice Chair, if Tom is interested, because his knowledge and ability to stay on top of these issues is great and appreciated.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve Donalson.

MR. DONALSON: I was just going to second Ira's nomination, and that's all.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I am seeing no other hands up. I have a draft motion on the board. I would need someone to make that motion, second that motion, and then you all can discuss and vote. Steve Swann.

**MR. SWANN: I would like to make a motion to appoint, or reappoint, Ira Laks as Chair and Tom Roller as Vice Chair of the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel for a three-year term.**

MS. WIEGAND: Charlie.

MR. LOCKE: I am sorry for the question, but I guess, just where I've been involved in these in the past, is Ira -- Are you a commercial seat, or does it go by seat, or is it -- In other words, I guess my question is -- I know Tom Roller is a for-hire captain, but I guess that was my question about Ira, and I'm new to all of this, and so sorry for the question, if it's a stupid one.

MR. LAKS: Charlie, I commercial fish and charter fish.

MR. LOCKE: Okay. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: I just wanted to make a note that the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel seats are not sector-specific, and so, yes, Tom is a for-hire captain, and Ira is commercial and for-hire, but the actual seats aren't sector-specific. Brian, I see you have your hand up.

DR. CHEUVRONT: I just wanted to say it is up to the AP, and this is where they get to choose whoever they want to be Chair and Vice Chair, and there are no restrictions. They just have to be somebody who is on the AP, and so they can choose -- If they want two recreational guys, they can do that, if that's what they wanted to do, and so there are no restrictions at all, even if there were seats that were specific to different sectors.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you, Brian, and so we've got a motion on the board, and it's been made. Is there a second to this motion?

MR. DONALSON: I will second.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Steve. With that, it's on the floor for discussion. Steve Swann.

MR. SWANN: I would just like to make a comment, when we were talking about whether Ira is recreational or commercial, but I think both Ira and Tom are good kind of go-betweens between the commercial and the recreational sectors, and they sort of have their hands on both sides of the fence, so to speak, Ira more than Tom, but I appreciate the insight that they have.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Steve. Is there any other discussion? Thomas Newman.

MR. NEWMAN: I just wanted to second that, and I think Ira and Tom would make a good Chair and Vice Chair. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Go ahead, Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: I support the motion, just to put that out there, because I've been on this blacktip stock assessment peer review, and I think it's a great group. Thanks.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, Ira. I am not seeing other hands up, and so you can go ahead and call the vote.

MR. LAKS: How do we want to do it? Is it all those in favor raise their hand, Christina?

MS. WIEGAND: I think we can just do this one by consensus. If anyone is opposed, they can raise their hand, and, if no one is opposed, then we will approve it by consensus.

MR. LAKS: Okay. Is there anyone who is opposed?

MS. WIEGAND: **I am not seeing any hands.**

MR. LAKS: Well, on that, I will say thank you for your support, and I would like to thank Steve Swann for the time he served as Vice Chair, and congratulations to Tom.

MS. WIEGAND: Ira, that is all I have for you today, unless there is anything to be brought up under Other Business. Charlie, I see you have your hand up. Did you have a question?

MR. LOCKE: Yes, and I sat through all of this today, and a lot of it was -- It's new to me, and I know this is probably subject to another discussion, but I see SEDAR 78 is still on track, which is good, for the Spanish mackerel, and I'm sure everybody on this is aware that we're at 1,037,349 pounds on the 500 for the northern sector, and we probably would have had the biggest fall we've ever had for North Carolina if we could have fished like we normally fish, and it's just -- This is the reason I'm on this AP, and it's the reason that Thomas stepped up to be on it, and we didn't really have any North Carolina representation, and we kind of felt like, when this sector divided, it was kind of not fair what we got.

Here we are, and we kind of said that we need at least a million pounds, and here we are already over a million pounds on the 500-pound trip limit, and so, I mean, I just really want this AP to understand that, as far as I'm concerned, it's really important that we get to increasing our -- Whatever we've got to do to get more quota for the northern sector in the Spanish mackerel, and it's a very healthy stock, and we're not utilizing what we can utilize here in the state, and I just wanted to put that on the record, and I appreciate it. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Go ahead, Ira.

MR. LAKS: I would like to speak to what Charlie was just saying. This AP has, in the past, talked about the Spanish mackerel, especially the commercial fishery, and I understand, and I'm glad, the

assessment is on track, but we all know that assessments can be delayed. At the last council meeting, there were several comments from Spanish mackerel fishermen, and I understand that there was no committee meeting, but there was a lot of angst in the fishery, and to let those comments go undone is not really helping.

I want to acknowledge the fact that those Spanish mackerel fishermen are out there and that their concerns are being heard, and I think an amendment for Spanish mackerel needs to start. I don't think we can wait on a stock assessment and try and make an amendment fit into the numbers. I think we need to make an amendment and then have the numbers fit into that. I mean, we all know how long assessments take to get done, especially with delays, and we all know how long amendments take to get done.

It's definitely a need, and we all know that, yes, the commercial guys need more fish, but, on top of that, if there is more effort, then more fish don't become any better for anybody, and so there has to be some decisions made, and I just would appreciate that the council really looking into ramping that up and getting it rolling, so that, when the assessment is done, we're not just starting out and we're talking about a four or five-year process, and we could be talking about a two or three-year process. I don't know if we need a formal amendment or if we could just get consensus from everyone that that would probably be a good thing for the council.

MS. WIEGAND: Thomas Newman.

MR. NEWMAN: I appreciate Ira bringing that up, and I would just like to say thank you for all the help we got before with the AP, at the last meeting, and with the council, because that 500 pounds was definitely a lifesaver for this state, and I would also like to say that our state has been working on this on their own, and they have decreased net limits in the internal waters, in the sound, and they have spaced it out, so that we're not catching our fish too quickly, and they have reduced the limits even afterwards, after we went to the 500-pound catch limit, and they reduced limits even further on the nets, and they also are dealing with the catching our bluefish too quickly right now as well, and so the state has been doing a really good job, in the hard position they've been in, to help kind of keep us honest on our quota.

I think, if we were able to get some more quota allocated to us, that we would be able to take care of it responsibly as a state, because our fishermen really are working well with the state and doing the best we can with what we have right now, but it was definitely a lifesaver for all of our coastal communities, because all of our communities -- Our lifeblood is Spanish mackerel in the summer and fall.

Without that 500 pounds, we would really be hurting, but I would really appreciate the help, and we also really would like to get something done before the stock assessment is up, because it keeps putting us in a crunch point, and, if we're able to have more quota, maybe we could work with the numbers and get everything to work out better for everybody and not be -- Like I said, to not just be last minute trying to get everything right, and we could also space out our catches as well, but I would like to see some more discussion, and I know it's late in the day, but I would definitely keep that at the top of our radar, if we can, and we appreciate. We appreciate you guys, and thanks for letting us join the AP.

MS. WIEGAND: Go ahead, Steve.

MR. POLAND: Thanks for those comments. They're heard loud and clear. I just want to say that there was an amendment that the council had initiated to look at accountability measures and commercial trip limits for the Northern Zone for Spanish mackerel. We discussed it at a couple of meetings, and we even received scoping comments on that action. Ultimately, the council decided to postpone that action until the next Spanish mackerel assessment was completed.

Really, what it boils down to is, to reallocate more fish to the Northern Zone, it would either be taking those fish from the Southern Zone commercial or reallocating some recreational, or some combination of both, to increase that Northern Zone allocation, and, at the time, the council really didn't have the stomach to make any of those adjustments, and they felt like, given the new recreational numbers, the current recreational landings were not what they felt were reflective of the actual landings, because any allocation discussions always turned into a long process. They wanted to have the complete picture, with the next assessment, to see if that stock has in fact responded to an increase like that and kind of have that discussion all at one time.

I certainly understand the comments from Charlie and Ira and Thomas, as far as going ahead and getting something done in the short term. In North Carolina, at the state level, we did make some changes to how this fishery is managed, but, again, I guess what I'm just trying to say is the council, as a whole, felt that we would be better served if we just waited until this next assessment.

Ira will give us an AP update at the next council meeting, and we can certainly have this discussion again, to see if the desires of the council have changed, and we have that amendment on hold, like I said, and so there's already an amendment initiated, and some analysis and discussion around actions and alternatives, and the scoping has already occurred, and so, if the council were to kind of reverse course on this and take this back up, it is there, and I just wanted to let you all know that discussion that occurred at the council over those meetings, and just put this in a little better context, but I do hear you all loud and clear. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Go ahead, Charlie.

MR. LOCKE: Steve, I want to say too that we appreciate everything you've done in the state to help us, but I think it does go back to the new MRIP that's affecting everything from bluefish to cobia to king mackerel, as we're seeing in this meeting here, and I know there is some questions on are they landing that 1.5 million in the recreational quota that's not being harvested every year, but, like we've talked about in other things, trying to speed things up and the flexibility to do that, and I just -- I would love to see an option at least brought to the council of trying to do something like what Ira was saying, as far as having it on the radar screen sooner than later, because the 500 pounds -- I still don't know if that's a -- We still are worried about that.

Is the 500 pounds -- Are they going to go to the next meeting and see what we've -- You know, we've got a 665,000-pound quota, and we've caught 1,037,000, at the last update. Are they going to freak out, or are people going to -- How are they going to respond to the 500, and so the 500 is not really a guaranteed thing, and I guess that's why fishermen in the state are really concerned. That's probably why your phone rings off the hook, but it's concerning to me, enough that it's like an unsettling thing going into each season and not really knowing how this is going to fall out, and everybody kind of in consensus that the stock is pretty healthy.

It seems to be an extremely healthy stock, and we're seeing all year classes, all the way from little teeny ones to big ones, and, like you said, with what we've done in the state, and we've implemented a lot of restrictions on the gillnet fishery, and we've got yardage limits, and then you go down to 800 yards from 1,500 and going to 500 pounds, and, I mean, everybody is having to fish more conservatively, but I just see this as being something needs to be done to address what's going on in this fishery, especially in the northern sector.

I mean, I'm not saying that everybody is not doing all they can, and I'm not saying there is anything we can even do, but I agree with Ira that if there's some way of bringing this up to the council that this is -- It's just an important thing for the state, and it's an important thing for me as a fisherman and the guys around me and the communities around me. This is a big fishery for up here, and it's something that everybody depends on, especially going into the fall.

Last year, we didn't have the fishery until we got the 500 pounds implemented, and it was almost towards the end of the run. The hurricanes and stuff pushed the fish in faster this year, and we had milder weather, and the fish were here longer, and thank god we had the 500 pounds, since it closed in July, or we met the quota in July, and so it's been a lifeline to most of us, but it is still an ongoing kind of looming thing that hangs over a lot of fishermen's heads.

It's like what's going to happen next year, and what are we looking at, and so, I mean, it is an important thing, and I just wanted to bring that to the council, and I appreciate everybody and what they've done to get us to the 500 pounds. I know that took a lot to do, and, Ira, I guess you had a lot to do with that, and I appreciate that, and Steve and everybody, but we do definitely need to address this. This is kind of a big deal for us. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Go ahead, Ira.

MR. LAKS: I was just wondering if anyone else had anything they would like to bring to the table.

MS. WIEGAND: I am not seeing any hands, but, before we adjourn, we need to just call for public comment one last time.

MR. LAKS: I have one quick thing that I just wanted to bring, and it has to do a little bit with what we talked about with the climate change. In the South Atlantic, the for-hire fishermen are going to be under a reporting system, come the first of the year, and, as we've discussed before in this panel, and, for those of you who are new to it, the charter boats in the Mid-Atlantic are required to have a for-hire coastal migratory pelagics permit, and Christina was good enough to give me some information. There's about 130 of them in the whole Mid-Atlantic, and I suspect that half of those are probably boats that fish in our jurisdiction that are either addressed to those states or registered in those states.

I think it's important that we do something to try and get those boats onboard, especially since I don't know if their for-hire reporting captures these fish, but, anyway, it's something the council needs to look into, and, with these fish expanding their range, or moving north, or whatever, and we're not sure, but maybe we want to think about adding some members, especially from those areas, especially for webinars, just to find out what's happening with the fishery to the north.

MS. WIEGAND: Ira, just to add to that, I think that's a great thing to bring up. At the December 2020 meeting, the council will be discussing the makeup of the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel, and so now is a great time to recommend adding additional members from the Mid-Atlantic, if that's something this AP feels would be appropriate, or helpful, in future conversations.

MR. LAKS: I don't know what the rest of you guys think, but I think it would definitely be helpful to us to get some sort of a person who is on the water up here fishing for these fish, to get their view of how the fishery is changing in their area, and we could just make it as a suggestion. I can ask Steve, and I don't think we need it as a motion, but, if there's anyone who objects to that, raise your hand, but I think it would just be good to -- We need to know what's going on north of us to inform our decisions.

MS. WIEGAND: Go ahead, Steve Poland.

MR. POLAND: Thanks for that, Ira, and I don't think you need to make it into a motion. I hear you, and that's some of the discussion that we had at the last meeting about the makeup of this AP, because of the potential that this fishery has expanded northward, and it probably would be good to get some feedback from the Mid-Atlantic, or maybe even potentially New England, and I think we need to reach out to those councils, to see if they have any interest in that.

We had also discussed, in September, the fact that there used to be a cobia sub-panel, and we dissolved that, a couple of meetings ago, and thanked those stakeholders for their service, but, given that we still manage cobia on the east coast of Florida, do we feel like we have adequate representation for that fishery there? A lot of those items could be discussed, but certainly I appreciate those comments, and, if the AP has any further ideas on AP makeup, I would certainly be interested in hearing them.

MS. WIEGAND: Tom Roller.

MR. ROLLER: Before I make my quick comment, I just wanted to thank everyone for their support as Vice Chair. I look forward to working with all of you. I just wanted to reiterate Ira's comments and Steve's comments regarding getting potential involvement from north of us. The last years, and this year was a great example, there were a lot of Spanish caught in New England. My social media, particularly from the for-hire guys up off of Cape Cod and New England, and Long Island, they were targeting Spanish mackerel daily, and I thought that was pretty cool and really interesting. I even saw fish caught on the north side of Cape Cod, offshore of Boston Harbor. That's remarkable, and so I fully support that, and particularly, going forward, it might be really helpful to get the perspective of some of those guys.

MS. WIEGAND: Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: As far as up north, the Mid-Atlantic Council already has representatives sitting on our council, and we need some of their rank-and-file from the AP to sit on our AP, because of the overlapping situation, and that's my comment. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Thomas Newman.

MR. NEWMAN: I just want to comment that the North Carolina fishery closed last year, and we had a period in between where we were able to get the 500-pound bycatch, and I actually went to Virginia and commercially fished for Spanish, and I was, as far as I know, the only boat gillnetting south of the Chesapeake Bay in Virginia, and I had a good season, and I didn't catch -- I didn't set any records, but the price was high, because nobody else was fishing, but there was definitely some interest in Virginia for the commercial guys to start fishing for Spanish.

I know there's two or three in Chincoteague, Virginia, which is only a few miles from the Maryland line, that they catch Spanish all summer long, and nothing big, but they go out and get 200 to 500 pounds every day, and so there's definitely some commercial fishing as well in the State of Virginia for Spanish mackerel, and I think that's only going to increase, if people continue to gillnet, and I know gillnet is kind of dying in Virginia, but the guys there that do gillnet are going to start branching out into Spanish fishing as well.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I am not seeing any other hands up, but, before we move away from the for-hire discussion, I just wanted to make a note that, if they have the CMP for-hire permit, whether they are fishing in the Mid-Atlantic or in the South Atlantic, they will be required to report, the same way you guys fishing down here are.

MR. LAKS: I think it's important to capture that effort.

MS. WIEGAND: Absolutely.

MR. LAKS: If nobody else has any other business, I think we can move to public comment. Is that correct?

MS. WIEGAND: That's correct, Ira. If anyone wants to make public comment, they can go ahead and raise their hand now. I am going to give it a going once, going twice. I am not seeing any hands raised for public comment, Ira.

MR. LAKS: Well, I think that will bring an end to the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel. I want to thank all you guys for what you bring to this panel, all the information, and I'm sure that the council members will appreciate it, and I would especially like to thank Christina and the rest of the staff for all they do. They definitely do a fantastic job and help us all out. The rest of you, have a great holiday season, and stay safe.

MS. WIEGAND: Before you all hop off, I see that Steve Poland has got his hand raised.

MR. POLAND: Thanks. This goes until 5:00, and so I'm going to keep you for the next nine minutes. No, I'm just kidding, and I just wanted to reiterate my appreciation for all of you guys taking time out of your day to talk about these issues that I know are important to you all, and it's important to us at the council, and it's important to all stakeholders and all citizens who utilize those resources, and so I really do appreciate it.

Congratulations, Ira and Tom, for your election, and I look forward to continuing to work with you two and everyone else on the AP on these issues, and I hope everyone is staying well and safe with COVID, and I do look forward to meeting in-person again one day, and I hope that's in April, but we'll see. Again, thank you, all.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Steve Donalson.

MR. DONALSON: Just real quick, do we have any open panel positions on Mackerel Cobia?

MS. WIEGAND: I need to look at the list, but I don't think there are any open mackerel seats that have been advertised for the next meeting. Kim, can you confirm that?

MS. IVERSON: No, we don't have any this round. We haven't advertised, and we don't have any open seats, but we will be addressing -- The council is scheduled to address the open seats again at their June meeting, and again in December of 2021.

MR. DONALSON: Okay. Cool. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you, Kim.

MR. LAKS: All right. Well, I guess, if there's nothing else, we're adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on November 2, 2020.)

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Certified By: \_\_\_\_\_ Tom Roller \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ 4/6/2021 \_\_\_\_\_

Transcribed By  
Amanda Thomas  
December 23, 2020



# Mackerel Cobia Advisory

## Attendee Report: Panel Meeting

Report Generated:

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**Webinar ID**

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**Actual Start Date/Time**

11/02/2020 12:02 PM EST

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Bell	00Mel
Bianchi	Alan
Bowen	Keith
Brouwer	01Myra
Burgess	Erika
Chaya	01Cindy
Chevront	01Brian
Conklin	00 Chris
Donalson	Steve
Hadley	01John
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