

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

MACKEREL COBIA ADVISORY PANEL

**Crowne Plaza Hotel Charleston
North Charleston, S.C.**

March 31-April 1, 2025

Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel

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Anthony Benevento
Michael Oppegaard
Melissa Leone

Charles Locke John
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Observers and Participants

Other observers and participants attached.

The Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in North Charleston, South Carolina on March 31, 2025, and was called to order by Ms. Christina Wiegand.

MS. WIEGAND: Okay, ladies and gentlemen. I think we're going to go ahead and get started, and so, first, I think most of you have met me, in one form or another, but my name is Christina Wiegand, and I am the fishery council staff for the Mackerel Cobia FMP, and so the first thing I would like to do for this meeting, since we've got some new faces, is just sort of go around the table, and we'll have you introduce yourself, where you're from, and how you participate in the mackerel fisheries, and I'm going to start down here at the very end, with Robbie.

MR. WADDICK: How is everybody doing? Robbie Waddick, and I'm from Stuart, Florida, and I commercial fish for probably 80 percent king mackerel, and the rest, 20 percent, Spanish mackerel, and I also travel all around Florida, mostly for kingfish. Anything I missed on that?

MS. WIEGAND: No, and you got it.

MR. WADDICK: It's nice to meet you all.

MR. BENEVENTO: I'm Tony Benevento, and I'm retired from work, but I still get out and fish as much as I can, all recreational, and I've been on the committee here for, I don't know, three years, or four, something -- Three. It seems like a while, but I'm real happy to be here as well.

MR. MALLETTE: My name is John Mallette, from Sneads Ferry, North Carolina, and I own Southern Breeze Seafood, and I also commercial king mackerel fish, and I also run charters, and so I do both the commercial and recreational side. I've been on the panel -- I think this is my second term on this panel, and that's about it.

MR. OPPENGAARD: I'm Mike Oppengaard, and I'm a charter captain out of Topsail Beach, North Carolina.

MR. AMAN: I'm Kevin Aman, and I work for the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries. I'm here on the committee, and we sample a lot of king mackerel and Spanish fishing tournaments, and I'm also a recreational fisherman, and I have a lot of knowledge of both species, and I'm happy to be here.

MR. JONES: Will Jones, and this is my second term on the AP, and I'm a fulltime fishing guide out of Morehead City and Beaufort, and I do a decent amount of king mackerel and Spanish fishing, as well as inshore trips.

MS. LEONE: Hi, guys. I'm Melissa Leone, and I'm from Daytona, Florida, and I primarily do a lot of charter fishing, but I also have a kingfish permit too, and so we fill in, you know, when we don't charter with a commercial living, and we've got a lot of other commercial permits on the boat, but this is my first meeting of this sorts here, and I'm also on the for-hire panel, and some other panel that I don't remember right now.

MR. NEWMAN: My name is Thomas Newman, and I'm from North Carolina. I commercial fish fulltime, for Spanish mackerel and king mackerel both, and I also work parttime for the North Carolina Fisheries Association.

MS. HARRISON: I'm Alana Harrison, also from North Carolina, and I have a retail seafood market, and then my brother has a commercial boat that targets mainly king mackerel and Spanish and cobia.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you, guys, and then I just want to let you know that also on the webinar we have Council Chair Trish Murphey listening in, as well as Dr. Carolyn Belcher, who is the vice chair of the Mackerel Cobia Committee, and I'll let you guys hear from her in just a minute. The first thing we need to sort of decide on, as a group, is how we would like to run this meeting.

We're in a bit of an interesting situation, in which we don't currently have a chair, because our meeting cycle got a little bit off-track when we did a whole year of mackerel port meetings, which we'll talk about later in the meeting, and then our vice chair was unable to make it. We were already scheduled to do elections for chair and vice chair of this committee at this meeting, and so there are two ways that we can proceed forward.

If you guys are comfortable, I can chair the meeting this time, and we can do elections at the end, or we can do elections at the beginning, and I will help chair with whomever you all decide to elect as chair and vice chair, but, ultimately, this needs to be an AP decision, and so what you guys are comfortable with is what we're comfortable with moving forward.

MR. NEWMAN: I think we've got more people coming tomorrow, and so I would rather wait and do the election when we have more members present, and let you take over.

MS. WIEGAND: Okay, and so I'm seeing nods around the table, and so I will chair this meeting, but I will say keep in mind that we will be doing elections for chair and vice chair at the end of this meeting, and so consider whether or not that's something you individually would be interested in volunteering for.

I guess so, with that, I will say I've never chaired a meeting, and so we're going to muddle together, but first would be Approval of the Agenda, and so does anyone have any changes or additions to the agenda as presented? All right. Seeing none, then we'll approve the agenda. Next is Approval of our Meeting Minutes from November 2024. Did anyone have any changes or edits to the November 2024 meeting minutes? All right.

I am seeing none, and so the next order of business is Public Comment. I don't see any members of the public in the room, but, if anyone online is interested in making public comment, if you would just please raise your hand, so that we can call on you. The hand-raise button is the little hand that looks kind of like a Thanksgiving turkey that you would have drawn in kindergarten, and I'll give it a minute, to see if anyone raises their hand. All right, and I'm not seeing any hands online jump up. We will have another opportunity for public comment at the end of the meeting.

With that, I am going to turn it over to Carolyn Belcher, our vice chair, to give you guys sort of a welcome and an update on what the council has been talking about relative to mackerel cobia over the last few meetings.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks, Christina. Welcome, everybody, and so I'm Carolyn Belcher. I'm the Chief of Marine Fisheries for the State of Georgia, and I'm also the Georgia representative on the council, and, as Christina said, the vice chair for the committee. I would like to thank you all for your time in attending the meeting, both today and tomorrow, and I'll provide you with a couple of highlights that were points of discussion from our March committee meeting.

We received information on giant manta ray, which included the results of two studies, one investigating reproductive habitat and the other looking at interactions with the cobia fishery. The latter is something that the committee is hoping that you, the AP, can help with, by discussing best management practices for when the two species are cooccurring, especially during the times that cobia are being targeted.

The committee also reviewed the findings of our port mackerel meetings report and discussed possible options that could be considered as future management actions. Because of the joint management of king mackerel with the Gulf, the council requested that council staff obtain information on the findings of the Gulf stakeholder engagement activities as well, and the committee also requested more detail from our South Atlantic meetings on a subset of topics, which you guys will discuss during the meeting over the next couple days.

Also, to tie in with management, the council has requested a refresher on the catch level recommendations from the SSC for Atlantic Spanish mackerel. Those were generated during SEDAR 78, and, obviously, those catch levels will be helping guide us as we talk about potential options for management.

Those topics, along with your discussion, will be considered at the June council meeting in Cape Canaveral, Florida, and, again, we thank you for your time and service for the council, and we look forward to hearing from you guys in June, and so, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Carolyn. Does anyone have any questions for Carolyn off the bat, before we move into our update on active council amendments? All right, and so we usually like to start the meeting with an update on sort of the council amendments that are going on for mackerel. Most of them we're going to talk about later in the meeting, and so I'm not going to spend a lot of time going through them, but there were a couple of things I wanted to highlight.

The first is that Framework Amendment 13, and this was the amendment that the council had originally looked at for updating Atlantic Spanish mackerel catch levels, based on the latest stock assessment, and, if you'll remember, the council paused work on that in December of 2023, because they didn't feel comfortable moving forward adopting those catch levels without having gone through the port meetings process.

We did port meetings all throughout 2024, which we'll get into after this, but now the council sort of needs to move forward in considering -- In implementing the recommendations from this new stock assessment, and I'll talk about sort of what those numbers are in a little bit more detail, but I did want to let you know that that amendment is going to start to be talked about again.

The other things I wanted to note is there is the Comprehensive For-Hire Limited Entry Amendment. One of the things that came up a lot during port meetings was the concept of limited

entry for the for-hire fishery for mackerel and cobia. This is something that you will not see included in sort of the outcomes from port meetings, and that's because the council already has this amendment on their plate that they're working through and so, right now, they've paused development on that, but it's only until permit data are available for them to look at when making decisions.

The other thing I wanted to note is the Comprehensive For-Hire Reporting Improvement Amendment, looking at making changes to improve the SEFHIER, or the Southeastern For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting, program, and that's something that you guys are going to receive a much more detailed presentation on tomorrow morning, and then, just as a note, this document is Attachment 1a, if you're interested in some of the other things that are going on at the council outside of actions that are specific to the mackerel and cobia fisheries.

This document is comprehensive, and so it covers snapper grouper, dolphin wahoo, spiny lobster, should you ever have any questions about anything that's going on in those fisheries, and so I'll pause quickly to see if there are any questions, but, otherwise, we'll dig into sort of the meat of the agenda.

All right. Well then, with that, let's talk about port meetings. This is what we're going to be spending sort of most of this afternoon talking about, and so, as you guys will remember, and most of you were at some of these port meetings, but, as a history, for those that are maybe just now getting involved with the advisory panel, this advisory panel had requested, back in 2022 I believe, that the council do a series of port meetings, where they would go out into communities and talk to fishermen about what was going on, in the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries specifically.

The AP felt that this was really needed, because there were some changes they were seeing within these fisheries, and there were talks about management moving forward, and the advisory panel felt like, before the council moved forward in taking any sort of management action, talking to fishermen needed to be the first step.

The council wholeheartedly agreed, and we spent 2023 planning what's known now as sort of the mackerel port meetings series. Then we implemented that plan in 2024, going all along the coastline, talking to fishermen in their communities, and so what I'm going to present to you all today is a sort of quick summary of what we learned through those port meetings.

What was learned is a ton of information, and we could spend all week talking about everything, and what I'm going to show you guys today is just sort of the very tip of the iceberg of what was learned, and then, after we go through the port meetings information, I'm going to talk to you a little bit about how the council intends to move forward from here, and there will be some discussions about possible management actions that I would like you guys to have.

So, first, again as a refresher, the council did have a series of goals and objectives for port meetings, and what we did is sort of broke those up into three different categories of environmental conditions, management changes, and then overall fisheries dynamics, and so, in talking about maintaining the long-term sustainability of stocks, and making sure we were properly identifying and considering community concerns, and then, for management, evaluating the goals and objectives of the CMP FMP.

Those haven't been updated since the late 1990s, and so that's one of the things the council will need to do moving forward, is update those goals and objectives, considering interjurisdictional management for king and Spanish mackerel, and then making sure that the management structure is equitable.

Then, finally, sort of fishery dynamics, making sure that management is achieving the maximum economic and social yield from the fishery, and then maintaining the integrity of fishing communities under climate change, and so these are ultimately the goals that the council has coming through this port meetings process.

There are two other attachments in your briefing book, in addition to this presentation that I'm going to go through, and there is Attachment 2a, and that is the port meetings report itself, and then there is Attachment 2b, which is the appendix, and so, depending on what information you're looking to get, you might want to go to sort of a different part of that report.

If you are looking to just sort of broadly understand what's happening with king and Spanish mackerel along the entire Atlantic coast, you're going to want to look at just that draft report, or, if you're interested in what's happening with king and Spanish mackerel just in a specific state or region, what's happening in the Mid-Atlantic, what's happening in South Carolina, again, that port meetings report.

If you are interested in getting into more of the nitty-gritty information about a specific community, and think, you know, what sort of price per pound are they getting for king mackerel in Cocoa, Florida, that information, you're going to want to go to the appendix and find the summary notes for that specific meeting, and so that's how to sort of navigate those two different documents. Together, they're almost seventy pages, and so that's why I wanted to go through sort of how to get to your target information, ultimately, unless you want to read the entire report, which I would respect.

Then, just as a note, and, you notice I say, you know, draft report, draft report, and the reason this report is still in draft form is because it was sent out to everyone who attended a mackerel port meeting, if they gave me their email address, and they have until the end of April to let me know if they would like to see any changes to that report.

One thing to keep in mind is that people who attend these port meetings -- There are always differences of opinion. I remember, when I first started in fisheries management, I was told you can put ten fishermen in a room and end up with fifteen different opinions, and so the hope is that the port meetings report will capture all of those opinions, and so there might be experiences listed in the port meetings report that don't align with your individual experiences, but what is important is that all of it is captured.

So, at the end of the month, once everyone who was at the meetings has had time to read the report, and get their feedback to me, I will incorporate their feedback, to make sure that everyone's perspective is considered, and shown, and then I will send that final document out to the council and let them know of any changes. With that, Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: Yes, and I was just wondering, and have you gotten much feedback from any of the people from the meetings yet? I like to see people get engaged, but then stay engaged, and stay re-engaged, and I'm just curious if you've had much feedback yet.

MS. WIEGAND: I haven't had a lot of feedback on the report itself. I will say I have had individuals who were at port meetings sort of email me updates about just what they're seeing on the water, and express interest in getting involved in making public comment at a council meeting, and sort of where the next steps from port meetings are going to go, and so we have had some continued engagement.

MR. NEWMAN: Also, I'm glad to hear -- I wasn't able to make the meetings. I was out of town that week, but I've heard a lot of good things about the port meetings. I'm glad you're able to do that. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so, moving on, I want to give you guys a little bit of a sense of what all we did as a part of this port meetings process. We held sixteen in-person meetings throughout the entirety of the council's jurisdiction for king and Spanish Mackerel. If you'll remember, that jurisdiction actually extends through the Mid-Atlantic, and so it's the New York/Connecticut/Rhode Island line, that's out in the water, all the way down to the Miami-Dade/Monroe County line in Florida, and so we tried to hit key communities throughout that entire range.

We also held six webinar meetings. Three of those were targeted at New England fishermen. While we don't manage up there, the council was curious sort of what they were seeing up in, you know, the Massachusetts and Connecticut area, in terms of king and Spanish Mackerel, and then we also held three separate webinars at the very beginning of this year, just sort of as a last fallback, if someone was unable to attend an in-person meeting, for whatever reason, and they were able to attend one of those webinar meetings.

Through this process, we were able to talk to 263 stakeholders, visiting eight states, and we took over 160 pages of notes, which isn't necessarily an important statistic. I was just curious how many pages of notes we took, but that also gives you a sense of just how extensive the feedback we were able to get from stakeholders was.

Then, if you look at the graph that's all the way on the right, it shows sort of the breakdown of attendance, based on commercial, recreational, for-hire, government, or NGO, non-governmental organization, and so it was roughly split sort of 50 percent commercial and 50 percent recreational, with about half of that recreational being private recreational, and the other half being for-hire.

The green is the for-hire sector, the blue is the private recreational sector, and then the orange is the commercial sector, and then those other two colors up there are sort of small parts of the pie for government individuals and then non-governmental organizations. All right, and does anyone have any questions about sort of what we did for port meetings, before I start digging into that tip of the iceberg of what we learned from each of the different regions?

All right and so, starting at the top of the coast, at least for where we manage, what we learned in the Mid-Atlantic, and, again, this is the very tip of the iceberg, what we learned trying to sort of summarize into broad themes that we heard about at all of these different meetings, and so, for the

meetings in the Mid-Atlantic, in terms of environmental conditions, it was clear -- They talked mostly about Spanish mackerel up in this region.

King mackerel is still sort of a sporadic fishery in the Mid-Atlantic, and they talked about Spanish mackerel has become really a, you know, late summer and fall fishery. The fish have sort of always been there, but it's become a much more focused fishery now, and, really, the arrival time seems to be dependent on the water temperature, and this is something that we'll see as a theme sort of throughout, is water temperature being a huge driver of when king and Spanish mackerel are showing up.

In terms of management changes, there was a lot of discussion about the commercial northern zone needing more commercial quota to support that fishery, and, just as a refresher, for the commercial sector, for both king and Spanish mackerel, the coast is broken up into two zones. The northern zone is the North Carolina/South Carolina line north through the Mid-Atlantic region, and then the southern zone is that North Carolina/South Carolina line south through the Miami-Dade/Monroe County line in Florida.

Those quotas are broken up based on a percentage. It was based on the proportion of landings from back around the 2012 timeframe, and, right now, most of those fishermen talk about how the quota has often already been met, and federal waters has been closed, by the time the fish are arriving in that area, and so they really wanted to see an increase in the quota for Atlantic Spanish mackerel to that northern zone region.

They also talked about sort of trying to balance the need for, you know, a high enough trip limit to make a trip profitable, but also wanting to avoid short seasons, something that we talk about in a lot of fisheries, and they generally felt like they would rather have a lower commercial trip limit than a shorter season, and there were a couple of different ideas thrown around at different meetings.

There was talk about lowering the limit, the commercial limit, to 1,500 fish for Spanish mackerel commercially, and there was also talk about moving to a weekly limit, as opposed to a daily or per-trip limit, and so a couple of different things thrown around as a way to try to extend that federal waters season.

Then, in terms of fishing dynamics, and, you know, I can't sort of express this strongly enough. The fishermen we talked to in the Mid-Atlantic talked about how important Atlantic Spanish mackerel has become as part of a multispecies commercial fishery, but also that there are now people in the Mid-Atlantic that target Spanish mackerel specifically. There were some people that said it can range from 30 to almost 50 percent of someone's yearly take home from commercial fishing, and so it's become a pretty important fishery to fishermen in the Mid-Atlantic.

They also talked about how they're seeing increasing interest in the for-hire and private recreational sectors, similar to what we heard from some of the fishermen in North Carolina. Spanish mackerel, you can run sort of two-a-day trips, and people -- With gas prices getting more expensive, people don't want to pay to go all the way offshore, and so being able to run multiple trips a day inshore for Spanish mackerel has become something that's very important to the for-hire sector in the Mid-Atlantic.

Then, last, like I sort of mentioned, when we were up there, we primarily heard about Spanish mackerel. We did not hear as much about king mackerel. They're available in the Mid-Atlantic region. They see them, but it's not really a targeted fishery. It remains really opportunistic and sporadic, and so any questions about the Mid-Atlantic before I move us on to North Carolina?

MR. MALLETTE: Was there anything -- I mean I'm looking at this, and, when you all did the port meetings, were there really any discussion from any recreational guys targeting mackerel at all up there, or was it just commercial guys talking?

MS. WIEGAND: So some of that depends on where we were. In Whitestone, Virginia, in particular, it was primarily commercial fishermen that were in attendance at that meeting. In Virginia Beach, we did hear some from recreational fishermen, mostly for-hire captains, and they, again, talked really there about this switch from people wanting to go offshore to target things like king mackerel to wanting to stay inshore, because it's cheaper, and you can run family trips on that, and so that's where they were seeing that sort of switch towards Spanish mackerel, but less input from the private recreational sector.

All right, and so then moving on to North Carolina. Starting with those environmental conditions, you'll notice a lot of parallels in North Carolina with the Mid-Atlantic. Fishermen were reporting Spanish mackerel are staying in North Carolina longer in the fall, and they're also seeing a move farther north into the Mid-Atlantic region, and then there was a lot of talk in North Carolina expressing concerns about sort of coastal use, and offshore use, with the development of offshore wind, dredging activities, and concern about how all of that coastal activity is having an impact on both king mackerel and Spanish mackerel fisheries. A lot of talk, both in North Carolina and in Florida, about how, once that water turns turbid, or turns murky, those fish are gone.

In terms of management changes, again, there was a lot of talk about allocations for Spanish mackerel. This includes both allocations between the commercial and recreational sector as well as those commercial allocations, again, between the northern and southern zones, and interest in seeing those revised.

In North Carolina in particular, they talked a lot about the years that were used to make that northern zone and southern zone commercial allocation, and they felt that those years that were used were hurricane years in North Carolina, and so landings were lower because of that, resulting in a proportion between the two zones that might not accurately reflect effort.

There was also a lot of talk about the need to improve recreational data and accountability, a lot of frustration over MRIP estimates and feeling that, with a limited resource, private recreational fishermen should be reporting, and be accountable, and that that should be -- Implementing that should be a priority for the South Atlantic Council.

Then, finally, for king mackerel, they felt like there wasn't necessarily a need to change anything for the trip limits, bag limits, size limits, that there might be room for higher limits, but neither the commercial or the recreational sector was really restricted by current limits, and so making changes to those didn't necessarily need to be a council priority.

Then, for fishing dynamics, again, I feel like I would be remiss in not noting just how important Atlantic Spanish mackerel and Atlantic king mackerel are to the commercial and for-hire industries

in North Carolina. Fishermen we talked to were really passionate about these two fisheries and wanted to make it clear how important, and it's really sort of the lifeblood of fishing in North Carolina.

Then one of the things we really noticed is that Atlantic Spanish mackerel harvest really occurs in state waters in a lot of places in North Carolina, whereas king mackerel harvest is occurring in some state, but also a lot of federal waters, and that's a different dynamic than what we see elsewhere along the coast, and so, again tip of the iceberg for what we sort of heard in North Carolina but I would be curious, and I know we have North Carolina fishermen around the table, and does this sort of track with your experiences in the fishery? Is there anything you feel like --

MR. MALLETTE: The majority of our fish are harvested anywhere between fifteen to thirty feet of water, and so we're well in state waters. Even you net guys, sitting on the beach, right, and you're in fifteen to twenty feet.

MS. WIEGAND: Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: I was just curious, and my experience with the Mid-Atlantic was it's the same the same dynamic. Did the guys really talk about that there in the Mid-Atlantic, whether it's all state water mackerel?

MS. WIEGAND: So it depended on where we were in the Mid-Atlantic. In Virginia, they talked a lot more about state waters, but, when we got up to Maryland and New Jersey, they talked a bit more about fishing in federal waters primarily, though some of them did talk about how they had gotten rid of their commercial, federal commercial, Spanish mackerel permit, because they want to fish in state waters when federal waters are closed.

All right. Not seeing any other comments, heading down the coast, moving on to South Carolina and Georgia, which we grouped together, because it was similar feedback from both states, and so, in terms of environmental conditions, they really report seeing sort of fewer king mackerel and Spanish mackerel, and are attributing this, again, with that temperature driver, due to warmer waters, especially in shore.

Because they're not seeing as many king mackerel and Spanish mackerel, they didn't really feel like there were any changes needed to management measures for either fishery. I will say there are a couple of things that we'll talk about later, when I talk about similarities and differences on the coast, bigger issues, like limited entry and tournament landings, and so one of the things that Georgia, in particular, that they did talk about were king mackerel tournaments. That was also a topic in North Carolina, and I will cover that a little bit later in the presentation.

Then, last, fishing dynamics, neither species is really specifically targeted in South Carolina or Georgia. When they're available, they'll catch them, but it's not enough to make a commercial business on, or anything they're sort of relying on to keep their charter-for-hire businesses afloat. It's really, when they're available, it's great, but it's not quite the focus that you see in North Carolina, the Mid-Atlantic, and Florida.

MR. MALLETTE: I don't know if it's -- Honestly I really don't know if I should really ask this now, or if it ever came up in the port meetings with South Carolina and Georgia, but did anybody

bring up anything on the environmental part of South Carolina and Georgia of like the bottom structure, of the differences, and so North Carolina and Virginia and all that, we've got rocks, and we have ledges, and we have everything in the bottom.

With South Carolina and Georgia, it's just mud. That's the reason why it's so good for shrimping on the beach, because it's just flat land. There really isn't anything to hold those fish there, like it is in North Carolina and further, and even down in the Florida, and so I was just wondering if any of that was taken into consideration for South Carolina and Georgia.

MS. WIEGAND: That is not something I recall anyone bringing up. I certainly have all the recordings, and can go back and be sure, but I don't remember that being discussed in detail. It's also not something we asked explicitly about, which might be why people didn't bring up that specific difference.

All right. Moving us back down the coast to Florida, and so very much in contrast to what we're hearing in the mid-Atlantic and in North Carolina. Fishermen in Florida talked a lot about how where king and Spanish mackerel can be found has changed substantially over the last five years. Runs that they used to be able to rely on, they can't rely on anymore, and the sense I got was it wasn't that the fish weren't there, but just where they are located has changed pretty significantly.

Then they were very concerned about development of the coastal environment really having a negative effect on these fisheries, mentioning things like dredging, freshwater discharge, lack of working waterfronts, and then the impact, especially when we were in Cocoa, talking about the impact of space activities sort of preventing fishermen from being able to get out on the very few good weather days that they still have.

In terms of management changes, there were a couple of different conversations relative to commercial trip limits for both king mackerel and Spanish mackerel. There seemed to be a real interest in at least switching king mackerel from a per-head, or per-fish, limit back to a poundage limit, with some sort of, you know, 5 percent leeway for overages.

The king mackerel trip limit system is pretty complex in Florida. It changes based on the time of year you're fishing, what county you're fishing off of, how much of the quota has been caught, and so one of the things we did sort of outright ask fishermen was do you like that system, and we got sort of answers on both sides. Some felt that having, you know, just one trip limit for king mackerel year-round might help with some of the market fluctuation. Others really felt that that system had been designed over many years, and was functioning very well, and that they would like to see it stay in place, and just a switch from the per-head to a poundage limit.

Then, for Spanish mackerel, there were talks about actually increasing the commercial trip limit, either making it a multiday limit or making it a little bit higher, going from 3,500 pounds up to closer to 5,000, or 7,500, pounds.

Then, in terms of fishing dynamics, again, king and Spanish mackerel are incredibly important fisheries in Florida. They talk about, with king mackerel, it's one of the few fisheries where you can still get a decent amount of poundage across the docks, and that Spanish mackerel is one of the few fisheries that's still relatively easy to enter, and it is a fish that's readily available.

Then, in Florida, and they talked about this also in North Carolina, but especially in Florida, that the king mackerel market can be really sensitive to the number of fish on the market at a given time, and there have been a lot of challenges trying to balance the need to have a trip limit, especially in the winter, that is high enough to make a trip worthwhile, but also doesn't result in so many fish on the market that the price drops, and so sort of the challenges associated with trying to balance those two needs.

That's what we've heard in Florida. Again, I know we've got Florida fishermen around the table, so I would be curious, and does this match your experience? Is there other input that you think, or other themes that you're seeing in your fishery, that you think the council should understand?

AP MEMBER: I would say this is spot on for what I've been seeing.

MS. LEONE: We just got our mackerel permit probably in the last year or so. We used to lease one, but then, since kind of 2021, we've just been charter busy, and so we don't -- We haven't been using the permit to really have a say, or experience, with it, but I do think that changing everything all the time keeps it really hard to keep track of, and not knowing what the price is going to be until you get offload the fish is a little frustrating sometimes, but, everything that they've said, it all -- It all coincides, but I haven't heard them talk about anything about the predation or anything, and it's just the trouble with the fishery, but, when I was reading through that, it said -- Like everywhere it says that the sharks are eating all of their fish, but we find barracudas eat our -- Like there's a ton of other fish that are eating them too, but we don't -- I don't have as much experience using our permit, like some of you guys do for a living, and we kind of rely on the charter heavier.

AP MEMBER: Well, recreationally, we've had pretty much the same year as always. You know, particularly in a tournament, you know, you're going to go chase them, and so I can see where some of the comments of, you know, where they were last year is not necessarily where they are this year. Getting to the depredation, the sharks are now eating the barracudas that are eating my kingfish. I've got a -- I was like good, you know, and turnabout is fair play, but, yes, most of that is, well, you've heard from the right people.

MS. LEONE: Then we just recently had an increase in our king mackerel, and like, recreationally, just went from two to three fish not that long ago, and so it sounds to me like there's plenty of these fish out there, but, if you keep too many, then you don't have a value in them anymore, and so --

AP MEMBER: As I recall, didn't the advisory committee -- Didn't we feel that the two-fish limit was appropriate, and then it went to -- It may be just, you know, where I am.

MS. WIEGAND: So there was some discussion about the recreational bag limit for king mackerel, goodness, three or four years ago, or maybe longer, and this was right after the most recent stock assessment for king mackerel came out, and we were talking about possible management changes, and, at the time, the bag limit for king mackerel was three fish per person, everywhere but the east coast of Florida, and so the AP passed a motion asking the council to just up that to three fish per person off of Florida, to be consistent all along the coast, and the council ultimately did that through an amendment process.

I do not remember, off the top of my head, the discussion the AP had surrounding that topic. It's certainly possible that there were mixed opinions around the AP table about whether three fish or

two fish was more appropriate for the recreational bag limit, but, ultimately, I do know a motion was passed by this AP, and then the council included that in the amendment.

AP MEMBER: You're right that three per person. If you've got four people on the boat, are you really going to keep twelve kings? That's like really wanting some fish dip bad.

MS. LEONE: Yes, and the people aren't -- We're not keeping that many fish for our clients, if they have nothing to do with the fish, and it's too tempting to want to go sell them, or something else, and it's not really -- No one is maxing that out, unless it's the guy who just wants to say that I got my limit, you know, the guy who is just fishing for the limits.

AP MEMBER: See, that's the conversation that I remembered, because, you know, I know -- Well, we all said, you know, if you bring home twelve kingfish, you're going to be giving every neighbor you know filet, or whatever, and you'll still have some left over, but maybe we should look at, some time, again, the two fish per person is plenty.

MS. WIEGAND: I will say that, sort of once we sort of finish up talking about what all we learned from port meetings, we're going to talk about how the council can move forward, and so there's an opportunity for future discussions on some of these things, and I believe -- I'm not sure if king mackerel recreational limits were included, but it's sounding like that might be something that the AP wants to recommend considering, when we get to that point. Thomas, did I see your hand up?

MR. NEWMAN: Yes, and I just wanted to say something about that conversation, because I vaguely remember, and it was more -- It was more about a fairness issue. I think a lot of the boats weren't keeping the two fish, even the two, and it just was being consistent with the other states, and it was it didn't make sense for Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina to have a limit of three, and the New England states and Florida to have a limit of two, and it just -- It was it was looked at as more of an opportunistic, a fair value, versus, you know, a conservation issue, because, also, I don't think we're even coming close to reaching our quota, recreationally or commercially, but that was the big issue, was just fairness with other states.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Well, then now we're going to go from all the way south to all the way north, and I do just want to sort of briefly touch on what we heard from fishermen in New England. Again, we don't manage king or Spanish mackerel in this area. The council does not manage king or Spanish mackerel in this area, but we did talk to some fishermen up there, and they really noted that, you know, Spanish mackerel, in particular, is becoming more of a regular presence in the New England region, whereas king mackerel is still remaining really sporadic.

They didn't feel like management was really needed for king mackerel and Spanish mackerel in the New England region right now. In fact, they noted that the Mid-Atlantic is really where you're seeing changes in the Spanish mackerel fishery, and that the council should focus on what's needed in that region before moving up into the New England region.

Then, again, in terms of fisheries dynamics, no one is really targeting king or Spanish mackerel up there, not by the for-hire industry anyway, and it was primarily for-hire fishermen that participated in these webinars, and that they're -- You know, if the king and Spanish mackerel are around, they'll catch them, and it's an exciting bonus. They talked about how it's kind of an exotic fish for

customers, and you don't see them all the time, but it's not something -- No one is actively going out trying to get king and Spanish mackerel.

All right so now I want to talk about some of the similarities that we're seeing, sort of trying to step back and think about, you know, we did all sixteen of these port meetings, and what are we seeing, or hearing, about from fishermen consistently all along the coast.

The first of these things is that king mackerel and Spanish mackerel are robust and healthy fisheries. We didn't hear a lot of conversation about how we feel like these fisheries are really in trouble, and it seemed like they were still healthy fisheries, and that they're important fisheries. They're really some of the only remaining fisheries in the Mid and South Atlantic that fishermen felt were accessible, and that they were able to make a living off of, and so both commercial and recreational businesses are relying heavily on these two fisheries.

Then participation in the commercial fishery is really sort of stable, or decreasing, whereas participation in the private -- The recreational sector, but primarily the private recreational sector of the king and Spanish mackerel fishery, is generally increasing, and we sort of heard about that trend throughout the coast.

The next, and this was talked about -- I remember this a lot in North Carolina, and a lot in Florida, and commercial and for-hire fishermen really rely on a diverse set of species to harvest, and that one of the biggest frustrations is that regulations are making this challenging, and not only does that sort of hurt fishing businesses, but it ultimately isn't ideal for fish stocks, because what is happening is effort is just being concentrated onto the few species that are still available, and that this is a problem we -- You know, that we're hearing about and seeing along the coast.

The other thing that I feel like fishermen really wanted to drive home, similar -- Getting back to that, you know, these are still robust and healthy fisheries, is that changes and catch and effort for these species aren't really driven by issues with the stock, but rather they're reflecting sort of other challenges that fishermen are facing, in particular challenges with the economy, just the cost of getting offshore, the cost of traveling to where the fish are, and the big one being the weather. The weather has gotten worse, and you're seeing more bad weather days, making it harder to get out to target these species, and so, changes in any sort of catch and effort trends, they really wanted to make sure it was known that they were driven by those other factors and not by an issue with the stock.

Then one of the things that I really noticed is that it seems like water temperature, not shockingly, is the primary driver of where king and Spanish mackerel are going to be located. There are other factors that we heard about, but the one we heard about, no matter where we were along the coast, is that water temperature determines where and when these fish show up.

You guys already touched on this one a little bit, and sharks are a problem in the mackerel fishery. They make harvest challenging, and not only do they make harvest challenging, but a lot of the for-hire and private recreational fishermen talk about how it has just ruined the fishing experience. They won't even go to target king mackerel anymore, because of the issues of depredation from sharks.

Then, last, but certainly not least, that continued engagement is essential. Fishermen really talked about wanting to see a lot more transparency in how data is collected, for both king and Spanish mackerel, and then more communication directly from council members on the management decisions they were making, and why, and so, again, that's sort of what I'm seeing all along the coast, when I look through sort of the notes from all of these different meetings, but I want to pause here again to see -- Does this, you know, sort of track with your guys' experience in the fishery, and is this something -- You know, do you guys think, yes, this makes sense for something that you would see all along the coast.

MR. NEWMAN: Yes, and I would say it tracks, but I also had a question too. I know, when I was -- When we were working on Framework 13, I remember that I talked with you and Chip about the number of fish that MRIP was estimating per trip on for Spanish mackerel, and did anybody, in these port meetings, talk about how many Spanish mackerel they typically land per trip? I know we were just talking about the amount of kings, and that just kind of made me think about that.

MS. WIEGAND: So I don't remember specifically talking about how much they were landing per person. I know, in North Carolina in particular, as well as in Virginia, they talked a lot about how fifteen fish per person was too high. Oftentimes, if they were really on the Spanish mackerel, they would limit people to ten per person, but, often, you know, especially clients don't necessarily want to keep ten Spanish mackerel.

MR. NEWMAN: I was just curious about that, because I think, during the council discussion, that they were saying they only average like one fish, or less than one fish, per angler, and it was -- It was really, really low. I thought it would be closer to ten.

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, and so there was -- You're right. When we were talking about Framework 13, and so this sort of analysis will be updated and brought to the council at some meeting in the future, but we did run a quick analysis that showed that -- I don't have these numbers in front of me, but it was, on average, recreational fishing trips were only keeping, you know, one or two Spanish mackerel per trip. Any other thoughts on sort of the similarities along the coast before we move on to where we heard a lot of differences?

AP MEMBER: I just had one question. I was going to ask about the regular, or the average, recreational trip, and was that, you know, for the for-hire industry, or was that private recreational, or was that both combined?

MS. WIEGAND: The analysis included both. It had separated them out by private recreational and for-hire, and I apologize, but, off the top of my head, I cannot remember what those numbers were, but maybe, when we go to a break, I can see if I can dig out that old analysis, and it would have been a couple briefing books ago, but we still have it.

All right. Well, then let's talk about some more controversial stuff and what differences were the most prevalent throughout these meetings. The first, you know, sort of being in the Mid-Atlantic and North Carolina, it seems like especially Spanish mackerel, and king mackerel as well, they're consistently available, whereas, when you get further south, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, this is where you're really seeing a lot of changes in where the fish are available from year to year.

Then king mackerel, in particular, it seems is an incredibly important fishery in North Carolina and Florida, but just less important in South Carolina and Georgia and the Mid-Atlantic, for whatever reason, and certainly the sporadic nature of the fishery in those areas being one of the drivers.

Limited entry, this is something we heard a wide array of opinions about, and so limited entry for commercial Spanish mackerel permits, and for for-hire permits, remains really controversial. Fishermen in the Mid-Atlantic and North Carolina regions didn't really express any interest in limited access for the commercial Spanish mackerel fishery, really feeling that the economy was ultimately sort of the bigger driver, and would balance the number of people in the fishery.

Mid-Atlantic fishermen in particular were concerned, because they've either gotten rid of their federal permits, to fish in state waters under a federal closure, or they're just now getting into that fishery, as the fish are becoming more prevalent in that region, and so there was no interest for limited entry up in that area.

Alternatively, in Florida, the commercial fishermen down there felt like there was really a need for limited access in the commercial Spanish mackerel fishery, and they wanted to ensure that, should the council move forward with limited access for Spanish mackerel, that state waters were required to also require that federal permit, and there was also a desire to see a gillnet endorsement for the federal waters gillnet fishery that occurs in Florida.

For the for-hire permit, there was a lot of support for limited entry in the for-hire fishery. However, there were some individuals that expressed concerns about how that, you know, turns a permit into a commodity, and they didn't want to see some of the issues that they've seen with limited-access commercial permits occur in the for-hire industry, and so a lot of expressed caution to the council about making sure that any sort of regulation was written in a way that would avoid some of those problems that have been seen with commercial permits.

Then, last, but certainly not least, king mackerel tournament sales, and there was a lot of -- The split between this wasn't necessarily by region, and it was much more by sector, with commercial fishermen expressing a lot of concern about how tournament sales will flood the market, and also pre-fishing. If those fish are being sold, that will flood the market and drop the price, and concern about whether or not those fish, and the proceeds, were ultimately going back to charity, whether there was any illegal behavior going on, and then concern about poorly-handled fish, that aren't up to HACCP standards, and those getting on the market and ultimately negatively affecting the commercial industry as a whole.

Alternatively to that, recreational fishermen really discussed the importance of these tournaments to communities, especially in terms of the sale of fish really supporting a couple of local charities that really rely on these king mackerel tournaments for a huge influx of cash.

They also talked about how it's a community event, and it's how a lot of people get into the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries, and so a difference of opinion along the coast, and so, sort of after we wrap up this part of the presentation, we'll talk about what the council can consider moving forward, but we wanted to note that those were sort of the things that we saw a lot of differences of opinion on throughout the coast time.

AP MEMBER: Back to the for-hire, when we were talking about limited entry, and I can understand the desire to have some kind of better reporting from the for-hire industry, but, in truth, the for-hire industry turns over every three or four years anyhow, and so you would have all these permits either leaving the market, or coming back on the market, and I could imagine the nightmare of trying to keep track of who has got a permit and who doesn't have a permit, because what I see in our area is, every year, three to five start, and, every year, three to four get out. The turnover in the for-hire industry is constant, and I don't see how a permit would actually track that, as much as a simple phone call, or a requirement for the for-hire industry to report.

MS. WIEGAND: So I'll say those are interesting thoughts, and, tomorrow morning, you're going to be getting a presentation on the for-hire reporting improvement amendment, and I think a lot of the things you just brought up there would be very much of interest as part of that conversation.

AP MEMBER: On the sale of kingfish from the tournaments, we had a real long discussion about that in here, and I remember there was only one member, myself, who voted against, or voted for them to continue to sell, and what happened after that? Didn't it go to the council?

MS. WIEGAND: It did go to the council, and the council also had a discussion about how they wanted to move forward with king mackerel tournament sales, and, again, that was -- All of this was sort of happening while we were planning mackerel port meetings, and so, again, they said we're not going to make any decisions on what to do, if anything, about the sale of tournament-caught fish until we do port meetings and gather all of this input from fishermen along the coast.

They got this presentation at their March meeting, and they can choose to move forward with modification to king mackerel tournament sales, or not, but that's sort of why the council ultimately didn't move forward after the AP passed that motion, was because they wanted to wait until we finished this port meetings process before having continued discussion, because they wanted this additional information.

We're going to talk about the for-hire reporting improvement plan tomorrow, and tournament sales are sort of the next step of this presentation, is to talk about how the council is going to move forward, after they got all this input. I imagine we will talk about some of this stuff not just at this meeting, but probably at meetings to come as well.

MS. LEONE: So, in Florida, and we don't have as many of the mackerel tournaments, or the sale of them, but we get a lot of the dolphin wahoo tournaments, but I run a charity tournament at Christmas for sheepshead, and, when I was looking into selling them, or doing something with all these fish that are going to show up, we have a limit of --- Like you can only apply for that exempted permit to do that like once or twice a year, and so, even if you get these same guys going into six, eight, ten, twelve tournaments, and like I guess the --

I don't know if it's just in Florida or whatever, but they can only sell that catch like once or twice, because of whatever law is on the books about that, and so maybe you could just put a limit to how frequently they can sell them, but we have the issue with dolphin, and not so much mackerel, where we are, but they don't pay nothing for the dolphin.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, and that's interesting. I didn't know how they sort of managed something like a sheepshead tournament, in terms of sales in Florida, and so that's interesting.

MS. LEONE: I just do a sheepshead derby for charity, for shelter dogs, but I'm not even trying to sell the sheepshead. We found a restaurant that would just offer to cook the fish off, and get more traffic into the restaurant, and so they just -- Like the people can donate their fish, or whatever, and the winners get their fish cooked for free or something.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so, with that, do you guys have any other questions about mackerel port meetings? While you're sort of thinking about it, I do just want to give a huge shoutout to both, you know, staff at all of the councils along the coast, state agency staff, Atlantic States Commission staff, that were incredibly helpful, and I know Kevin and Amanda did a ton of outreach for us in North Carolina, but, also, a lot of you guys sitting around the table came to port meetings, reached out to people in your communities, and one of the reasons we were able to talk to over 200 fishermen is because you guys took the time to encourage people to come out, and so I wanted to say thank you for doing that.

Then sort of, if you guys have any questions about port meetings, or the process, before we start talking about what the council's next steps are going to be, and I wanted to give a chance for that, and then I actually have a question to pose to you all.

Okay. Well, then I'm going to put especially those of you who were at the port meetings on the spot a little bit. Now that we've sort of been through this port meetings process, is there anything you took away from it that you feel like council staff, and council members, should do more of, or maybe anything you would have changed about how those port meetings were run? I will say don't worry, and you're not going to hurt my feelings. I'm genuinely very interested in sort of how you felt these port meetings were perceived, and how we can improve upon them, should we do similar efforts like this in the future.

MR. JONES: I think the port meeting that we had in Morehead City was, you know, very enlightening, and I think it went really well, and so I don't have any criticisms or anything, and I think we should continue to do them in the future.

MR. MALLETTE: I was going to say that went to the port meeting in Wilmington, and I think it went really well, and I really like how, instead of everybody kind of talking over each other, we separated people, and kind of like had a little roundtable discussion, so you could get individual opinions, and maybe five six people at a time, and I really liked that, as opposed to people just, you know -- You know how it goes.

AP MEMBERS: I liked the port meetings down in Florida, also. I think it was a good way to do everything, a round table, where everyone came to -- We could actually talk, and it was a really good setup.

MS. HARRISON: I was at the one in Wanchese, and I think like the layout of the whole meeting was really well -- Especially like explaining kind of like basic like management 101, because a lot of fishermen don't really understand, and all they understand is that like they mail you their trip tickets, and you send them rules, but I think that was really helpful, and I think it was also very helpful using like easy-to-understand language.

I noticed, during the dolphin MSE workshop, that like the whole room was lost when they started talking about like comparing the dolphin fishery management to a thermometer in your house, like getting too hot, and it like -- I think too many like metaphors, and you kind of lose the -- It's like hard to follow, and so I think this was a lot more effective than the dolphin workshop, and I think that also had to do with your messaging.

You kind of -- You really stressed that this was not a public hearing, and it wasn't a public comment. There were no council members present to accept public comment, and it was more just a community -- Like a town hall, and so I think that was really helpful.

MR. NEWMAN: I'll kind of follow up with Alana, and I was actually in Florida, on spring break, when you all had the -- Or my kids spring break, when you all had the meetings in North Carolina, but we never get any commercial fishermen out to a meeting, you know, and you all had very strong showings in Wanchese and Hatteras, and that right there is just a testament in itself, that you were able to get them guys out of their house, you know, to go there and sit and talk with the South Atlantic Council, because, you know, a lot of them had negative connotations of the council, but yet, you know, they were -- You came to see them, and they were -- I didn't hear anybody complain about it, which, you know, if there was a complaint, you would heard it, and so I think you guys did a good job.

MS. HARRISON: In fact, I had a lot of people praising it, which, I mean, praise in association with the South Atlantic Council is like super rare in North Carolina, and so it's like a testament to you and your work, and so I think you did a great job, and thank you for making such an effort coming out to everywhere. That was really awesome, and I think that showed the communities as well like that you're invested in them as well, and like the people in Hatteras were like, wow, they're coming all the way to Hatteras, and so it was really cool.

AP MEMBER: Well, we'll try to keep the hurricane away from canceling the one in north Florida, but, you know, I did hear a lot of positive around the meeting, and just be thankful that you weren't on the red snapper.

MS. WIEGAND: I'll say we're not going to talk about red snapper. This is the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel, and we will talk about mackerel and cobia, but I'll say thank you. It's very good to hear that these were well received.

Later on tomorrow afternoon, the council has sort of structured a new stakeholder engagement effort, that we're calling Lines of Communication, and we're actually going to have you guys sort of do a practice run for us all tomorrow afternoon, and so I'm glad to hear that you felt sort of the breakout group discussions, and coming to communities, was really helpful. Again, one of the reasons we were able to get so many people out is because you all did outreach on our behalf, and so, again, we really genuinely appreciate that.

All right and so, next up, we're going to talk about possible amendment topics, and the list here is long, and so I've broken it up by fishery, and we're going to start with Spanish mackerel. One of the things the council has asked to come to them in June, for their meeting, is sort of details on the different management requests, I guess you could say, that were made through port meetings, and what the discussion was surrounding those requests, and so I'm going to go through the list here.

I know that some of you guys might be in favor of some of these changes, and some of you guys might not be in favor of these changes. Similar to the port meetings report, what we really want to make sure is that all of the possible changes that fishermen could want to see are included, and then, ultimately, the council will decide what to move forward with.

I am almost certain that as this, what will likely be a very large amendment, or maybe two amendments, just depending on how they decide to structure it, will come back to this advisory panel for more discussion, and so, when you're seeing these sort of topics on the board that might be rather controversial, don't feel like this is, you know, your only opportunity to comment on them. These are going to come back to the advisory panel at least once, if not more than once, for discussion.

Getting right to it for Spanish mackerel, here's the long list of things that we heard fishermen were interested in the council discussing further, the first being sector allocations for Spanish mackerel, and these would be the allocations between the commercial and recreational sector for Spanish mackerel.

Commercial zone allocations for Spanish mackerel, and so, again, the proportion of catch for the commercial sector that's in between that northern zone and that southern zone. Also, how the zones are designed, and there was some talk, up in the Mid-Atlantic, about maybe there's a need for, you know, three zones now, instead of just the northern and southern zone.

There also might be a need to talk about accountability measures for Spanish mackerel, especially given the most recent stock assessment, which I'll talk about a little bit later, looking at whether or not to make any changes to the recreational bag limit for Spanish mackerel, as well as the size limit, possible changes to the commercial trip limit for Spanish mackerel, and then consideration of limited entry for the commercial Spanish mackerel permit.

Again, I know that's a long list. Some of this stuff is very controversial, and I guess my big question for the advisory panel right now is is there something for Spanish mackerel that you think needs to change, or you remember being brought up at a port meeting you were at that is not included on this list for Spanish mackerel, and we'll talk about king mackerel, and some more general stuff, like recreational reporting, later on, but, just in terms of Spanish mackerel management, is there anything you see missing from this list that you would really like to see the council discuss?

MS. LEONE: Maybe an aggregate recreational limit for the Spanish and the king, because nobody is keeping them all anyway, or something, and I don't know, but --

MR. NEWMAN: Ms. Belcher was talking about they requested for the -- They're requested to come back with the catch limits, and is it going to be -- Are the OFL and ABC recommendations going to change from what they were from Framework 13?

MS. WIEGAND: No, and so the OFL and ABC recommendations are going to be the same. They're the ones coming out of SEDAR 78, which were the same as what was in Framework Amendment 13, and I will -- After we talk about some of these amendment topics, I'm actually going to put those up on the screen, so you can see what they're going to be.

MR. NEWMAN: I know one of the reasons for pausing this was -- For folks around the room who weren't involved with this stuff a few years ago, but we were we were supposed to be updating the MRIP-FES estimates, and I'm -- I don't know how big of a -- It's going to change something, and I just don't know where it's going to change it at, and I was at the understanding that we would start seeing some of these -- Some of that pilot study coming back this year, or the next year.

MS. WIEGAND: So you're correct, Thomas, and there has been work done to look at those FES estimates. They did a pilot study, but I'm not entirely sure when that's going to come to the council and how that will ultimately then be sort of incorporated to update catch levels. That's still a bit of a TBD.

MR. NEWMAN: I see Chip is trying to get to the table.

DR. COLLIER: So they're still working on the finalization of that study, and, in some of the discussions, we heard that they -- It should be available in early 2026, or maybe mid-2026, and so they're going to be rolling it out, and they're going to be working on the calibration going back in time, and so they've done the study.

They've figured out if there's bias or not, but they have to do the calibration back in time to recorrect all those past numbers, and so there's still a lot more work to go, but they've done the research, and I -- Everything I've heard, it's still on track, but I'm not certain who might be leaving MRIP staff, and that could have an impact on whether or not they're able to get everything done.

MR. NEWMAN: Yes, and, I mean, my biggest concern is I know it's going to change probably our OFLs and ABCs, but I also feel like it's going to weigh pretty heavily on the results from the stock assessment, and that's kind of what put us in this pickle to start with, and what's the odds of putting the this can of worms back into its can and trying to get another stock assessment after some of these better numbers get here?

DR. COLLIER: I know the SEDAR Steering Committee, and this is a group that kind of advises overall stock assessments for the region, so the SEDAR Steering Committee has been talking about Atlantic Spanish mackerel. I believe it was put on the schedule for 2028, and so that would be the earliest that a new stock assessment could get done.

Unfortunately, that's a long time away, but, when we're looking at what's going on with the stock assessment capabilities -- They did lose an analyst in the South Atlantic branch, and so it dropped the number of assessments that could be done per year, and so, even though we're requesting it in 2028, that might not be possible still.

MR. NEWMAN: Yes, and I appreciate the info. I mean, it just -- With the numbers we've got right now, I mean, we're looking at, you know, a possibly severely shortened recreational season, and, as Christina said earlier, this isn't going to be a one-year amendment. This is going to be a two to three-years amendment, because there's going to be a lot of moving parts that need to change, and I don't know. You know, it's not working perfect, what we have right now, but I think we could survive with what's going on for another two years, before we go completely chop this up, and then have a whole another set of information come out from the 2028 stock assessment.

MS. WIEGAND: So, to provide some clarity, I went ahead and skipped forward a few slides to the SEDAR 78 slide. This is the stock assessment for Atlantic Spanish mackerel, and what you see on the screen are sort of the current acceptable biological catch and the current ACLs, broken out by sector as well as by zone, and then the recommended ABC from the council's Scientific and Statistical Committee on the right side.

The one thing to keep in mind here is that, while it looks like an increase in the ABC, it's actually not, and that's because SEDAR 78 included the revised recreational landings that are based on that newer FES MRIP methodology, and so, as a result, those two numbers aren't directly comparable, and so it's like comparing apples to oranges, and that eight million pounds that was recommended actually represents -- I believe it was close to a 20 percent decrease in available catch coming out of the -- It's a decrease in available catch coming out of the new stock assessment.

Moving forward with sort of the big port meetings amendment, and this stock assessment that needs to have the catch levels implemented, the council can do a couple of different things. They ultimately haven't decided which way to move forward, and this might be something this advisory panel wants to provide input on.

They can do sort of one large amendment, that would include a lot of the different management measures that they want to talk about coming out of port meetings, and it could include these Spanish mackerel catch levels. Because of the joint nature of the fishery management plan, the Gulf Council would have to be involved in that process, and it would likely be a lengthy process.

Alternatively, they can move forward with two different amendments. They can restart Framework 13, to implement these Spanish mackerel catch levels quickly, and then do a larger amendment to address all of the port meetings stuff, and so those are sort of two options, moving forward. The council hasn't decided which path they would like to take yet, and so I guess, first, while Chip is still at the table, if there are questions about the stock assessment, now is the time.

Also, if you would like to sort of weigh-in on how you would like to see the council move forward with this stuff, in terms of one quick amendment and one slow amendment, or one big slow amendment, and I think that's information that they would find valuable.

MR. NEWMAN: Just to just to kind of help people understand, I just want to kind of go one step forward. What we're looking at now is, with the old recreational effort, the recreational sector was only catching 50 percent of their quota, and like they were only catching half their quota, and we never even came close, for decades. Now, with the new FES estimates, the recreational season is probably only going to be six months to eight months long, is what they're projecting now, and so you're looking at you're looking at a four to six-month closure for the recreational season, if everything stays the same.

What the problem is going to be is you're going to have a -- Best-case scenario, you're going to have an allocation fight, because the recreational sector is going to be closing, and they've never experienced a closure before, but the great irony of all this is, for so many years, the recreational sector was supposedly only harvesting half of their quota, and now somehow they're harvesting four times the amount of fish, or four to seven times the amount of fish, and so now the recreational sector would see a closure, at our current management. That's the reason I'm bringing all this up, and that's something that's going to be a very hard conversation in the next two to three years.

MS. WIEGAND: To provide some additional context, Thomas is right that, prior to sort of us re-estimating a catch under CHTS, the old MRIP, it did look like the recreational sector was only catching 30, 40, 50 percent of their catch limit a given year. When we switched to the Fishing Effort Survey, we realized that we had actually been underestimating what recreational harvest was, and so, with the switch to FES, it does look like, based on the analysis that was done for Framework Amendment 13, back in December of 2023, that the recreational sector would be looking to meet their catch limit by the September/October time period.

One of the things to keep in mind is that the accountability measures for recreational Spanish mackerel right now do not include an in-season closure, and so, unless that's changed, the fishery wouldn't close. What would happen, under the current accountability measure, is that, the subsequent year that there was an overage, the Regional Administrator would be able to drop the bag limit down low enough to prevent the ACL from being exceeded.

The concern, when the council was looking at that, is that, because the number of Spanish mackerel kept recreationally was so low, that bag limit would likely have to be pretty low to prevent the recreational sector from exceeding their ACL, and so that's one of the reasons, in that previous slide talking about possible Spanish mackerel management measures for the council to consider, recreational accountability measures was on that list, and so the council may want to consider how they address an overage of the recreational Spanish mackerel ACL.

AP MEMBER: My question is we're talking about limiting a season when overfishing isn't occurring though?

MS. WIEGAND: Correct. The stock is not overfished, or undergoing overfishing, and I would say the council hasn't had any discussion yet on sort of how they will address this new ACL, and that's something that will come forward, and so it might be a season, and it might be something else, but to be discussed.

AP MEMBER: Even if we do have a seasonal limit, you -- Really and truly, for us in North Carolina, Spanish season is only let's say mid-April through late September anyhow. I mean, give or take, and we're not -- Occasionally in March, and I caught some last year in March.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I've got Thomas and then John.

MR. NEWMAN: I want to address you first, and then bring another point. The Spanish mackerel season starts March 1, and so the problem with the end, you know, the possibly closing in September, is that, by the time the fish get to Florida, Florida won't have a -- There will be no quota left when the fish get to Florida for a recreational season, but another issue that is going to be -- From this is going to be reflected in the commercial fishermen., because the last -- The last four or five years, the commercial -- The northern sector has experienced closures.

Right now, accountability measures allow us to have a 500-pound bycatch, after the federal quota has been met, as long as the total ACL isn't met, but, with the total ACL looking like it's going to be met, there's also concern, on the commercial community, that we're going to lose that 500-pound bycatch allowance, and that's going to completely shut fisheries in Hatteras down, because

it's impossible to fish for any fish in the fall of the year without encountering Spanish mackerel, and that's also a big concern.

I don't know, and I think that needs to be a topic for discussion with the council, but I didn't know exactly how to bring that up, being it's an accountability measure with Atlantic States, and it's a very confusing issue, and I've had a few conversations with staff about it, and I'm still not a hundred percent how that works, but that that also needs to be -- I would want to bring that issue out as well, because that's also going to be an issue with us potentially reaching our total ACL.

MS. WIEGAND: I'll go to John and then provide some more context on that bycatch limit.

MR. MALLETTE: All right, and so Thomas just brought up one more thing that just added a second point, and I'll address that first. As far as the commercial side goes, you know, there's not a -- I would say, just from my personal experience, and the people I know, and just for what I do, there's not a ton of people who really commercial fish for Spanish hard, but, when they're there, they do, and they really depend on it, whether it's gillnet or whatever, and they really depend on it.

The biggest issue I see with all of this is it's not just a mackerel fishery, but it goes with all the fisheries that the South Atlantic -- But especially mackerel, for the reason that we talk about the recreational -- Getting these exact numbers, and I'm telling you that, no matter what you do, you can't get it, just because of our constitution, and what I mean by that is mackerel are low-hanging fruit in the recreational community.

Anybody with a skiff can go catch Spanish mackerel. Anybody can go catch -- You know, everybody is not going offshore for the bigger stuff. Mackerel are that low-hanging fruit, because anybody that just learns about it goes Spanish fishing, right?

Well, you're relying on voluntary information to get these numbers. As a commercial fisherman, I have to put trip tickets in, and I have to -- As a dealer, I have to report, or I'm fined for it. Recreational guys, you're relying on voluntary information. With so many people doing it -- You've got people that's going fishing and going back to their house, to their boat ramp, and you can't go on somebody's private property and say, hey, what did you catch, and you don't know what they're bringing every day.

When you get these recreational numbers, it's all -- I just think they're so skewed, but you have to have something to go by, but I think -- I just don't like so much being put in the numbers that common sense tells you is either going to be way higher, or it could be lower. Honestly, but you're just not going to get an accurate assessment for recreational, no matter what you do, unless you do like what we suggested with the for-hire, to make people call in, or do something.

If you're going to have a license, you have to report something, instead of nothing, and I just -- I had a long list of stuff to get to, and that was just one thing, but it brought it up, but that was -- It's just very frustrating on my end, because they see so much emphasis put on these are what recreational numbers are, and, I mean, I could sit at any boat ramp in the summertime and say, yes, and you don't know what they got, and so, I mean, it's just a guess.

MS. WIEGAND: Will.

MR. JONES: Is there any way to go to like a more conservative daily bag limit before you get to the point where you're looking at a closure?

MS. WIEGAND: So there are things that are done, for example in the commercial sector for commercial king mackerel. In some parts of Florida, the trip limit will drop once you hit 75 percent of the quota for spanish mackerel in Florida, and they also have sort of an adjusted quota system, where they pull a chunk of quota off the top and then drop the trip limit based on how close they are to that.

I guess that's a long way of saying, yes, if you wanted to institute a system where the recreational bag limit was ten, and I'm just speaking hypothetical now, but ten fish per person until 50 percent of the quota was caught, and then it dropped to three fish per person, and that is something that can be done.

I will say the council has been cautioned against that, from the commercial standpoint, because it's hard to know when you've hit that point as commercial landings come in. I think that would be even more challenging, if not impossible, for the recreational sector, with how slowly landings tend to come in through MRIP, and so theoretically yes, and, practically, I'm not sure how well that would work with the recreational sector.

MR. JONES: So do we have to -- You're saying like we have to have a season or two of getting the data to make a management decision?

MS. WIEGAND: The council, and, again, I'm speaking very hypothetically here, and the council could, I guess, go back and look and see, historically, when approximately 50 percent of the recreational catch was harvested and then say, okay, it seems like by June 1, and that's usually when they've caught about 50 percent, and then put that on June 1 it drops, so that it's static over time. I think that's probably more likely to be effective than trying to do it season-by-season, because recreational landings just don't come in rapidly enough for the agency to be able to drop things like that. Robbie, or I guess Tony and then Robbie.

MR. BENEVENTO: Just going back to what John said, recreational people aren't going to call in and say I caught, you know, seventeen Spanish mackerel today, when I had three people on the boat. It just doesn't happen. In the first place, you probably don't target the Spanish, unless it's -- Well, I don't want to say that. You could be targeting the Spanish, and say, you know, we're going to go out and catch a few Spanish mackerel, and come back in, but, you know, to think that we would put some sort of reporting -- It's going to have to be a projection of sort to get to that.

Now, I would -- Having said all of that, I would also advocate that we reduce the limit on Spanish mackerel. I think it's currently, what, fifteen in Florida, and I think my other Floridians can tell, and you're not going to be more than three miles off catching, at least where I live. They're going to be in state waters, and so, you know, if anything, I'm advocating that we, you know, drop the thing, the quota, rather than reaching the quota and closing a season, which will be over in September anyway.

AP MEMBER: Are you saying drop the daily bag limit recreational?

MR. BENEVENTO: Yes, and nobody is going to keep fifteen Spanish mackerel, or, you know, if you've got three people onboard, you have forty-five fish in the box, and that's crazy.

AP MEMBER: That seems reasonable to me.

MR. WADDICK: To that point, I mean, the council has already had that discussion, and I believe it was Councilman Roller that was saying that this situation is real similar to bluefish. You know, that bag limit was like fifteen, ten or fifteen, and they had to go all the way down to three for it to make any difference, and the Spanish mackerel situation is the same, because of that question I was asking earlier in the day.

You know, they're only averaging one or two fish a trip, and so, to get a meaningful reduction out of it, you're going to have to go to a very low bag limit, especially considering you're starting at fifteen, and so you would have to go down to three or less to see a meaningful difference in recreational landings, most likely.

MR. BENEVENTO: I don't see how they're reaching their catch limit then, if they're only bringing two or three.

MR. NEWMAN: Well, that's the reason I was asking did anybody at the at the port meetings talk about how many fish they catch, because, I mean, I know in North Carolina, nobody goes and catches two Spanish mackerel. If you catch one Spanish mackerel, you're going to catch enough to eat for supper, eight or ten. You know, you're not going to just catch one or two mackerel and say, hey, I'm done. I've never seen anybody land just one or two mackerel, unless it was a mistake.

AP MEMBER: I would like to know who is in charge of the stock assessments, and how do you conduct accurate stock assessments?

DR. COLLIER: So the stock assessments are done by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and it's a collaborative effort in order to put all the data together, and so they'll rely on state agencies, as well as the Atlantic Coast Cooperative Statistics Program, which aggregates all the data for the states.

They rely on MRIP for the recreational side of things, and then there's -- South Carolina DNR does some fishery-independent surveys to gather information on juvenile fish, looking at trends in that, and so it's a lot of people that work together to put the data together. It's the Southeast Fisheries Science Center that conducts the stock assessment, and it's going through and figuring out if you have a reliable stock assessment.

There's two different paths that typically occur in the South Atlantic. We have one path that will have the Center for Independent Experts provide a review, and so what they do is they -- They're experts from around the world on stock assessments, and they'll dig into these different stock assessments, and figure out what the problems are, and whether or not they should be -- Or identify some of the problems that occur in the stock assessments.

Then it's up to -- Then it will come to the individual SSCs, or the Scientific and Statistical Committees, in order to review the stock assessments, to determine whether or not they're usable for management, and, from that, the Scientific and Statistical Committee will make the ABC

recommendation, or the acceptable biological catch recommendation, and the council has to reduce from there when they're setting the ACLs for the year. Does that make sense?

AP MEMBER: Yes, and it makes sense, but, I mean, I know you guys know the hard numbers, when it comes to the commercial guys, and the recreational sounds like -- I mean, it's always going to be a guess, until we figure something out, and like it needs to be black and white, I feel.

MS. WIEGAND: So I do want to add one more thing to Chip's excellent explanation of the science process. When stock assessments do occur, there are opportunities for advisory panel members to get involved. I think the next stock assessment coming up is for king mackerel, in 2026, but, when those stock assessments come up, we will ask for advisory panel volunteers to participate, and, if you are interested in that process, I encourage you to sign up and participate.

You'll get to sit through sort of the webinars, and the in-person data meetings, and, at least at the few that I have been to, they often call on the fishery observers and participants to provide important context to the numbers that they're seeing, and so I would encourage you to participate. Then our chair, our Mackerel Cobia chair, Tom Roller, is on, and so I am going to turn it over to you, Tom, if you would like to add to the discussion.

MR. ROLLER: Can you guys hear me?

MS. WIEGAND: We've got you loud and clear, Tom.

MR. ROLLER: You can hear me? I wanted to touch on Thomas' comment earlier. I think this is something that the AP should consider, you know, the comment regarding the bag limit reduction, or potential reduction, as an alternative to a shorter season. The bluefish analogy was a great point, and what that really looked like was, when some rebuilding -- The Mid-Atlantic manages bluefish, and, when some reductions needed to be done in the fishery, the bag limit was fifteen at the time.

In order to get reductions, they had to drop all the way down to three, because your average fisherman wasn't keeping anywhere near fifteen bluefish, and I would have to really dig deep in my memory to remember what sort of analysis we did on this, but there's a good potential here with Spanish mackerel, because your average fisherman isn't keeping anywhere near the bag limit.

If we were to reduce that bag limit, it may have to go way, way, way, way, way down, or we may not even be able to do it, in order to get a year-round season as an alternative, and so that's just something to think about, and those are tradeoffs that I really think the AP should at least discuss, but also remember that, just because -- You know, just remember that just dropping from something like fifteen to ten really isn't probably going to do much, and it may have to be much, much further, and that's something that the AP should think about, and so thank you, all.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Tom. Alana, I've got you next.

MS. HARRISON: Well, I have a couple of things I've noticed while we've been discussing this. Where I am, and I'm in Hatteras, and so on the Outer Banks, and Spanish is a major fishery, both commercially and for-hire and private recreational, and I don't think anybody has really thought about this from the private anglers' perspective, and I don't think any -- I think Kevin is the closest

that we're getting to a private angler, probably, but, like in Hatteras, like you go there to surf fish off of the national park, you know, like national seashore.

Then you also do it on the inshore charter boats, and this -- If they get their season closed in August, that's going to really be detrimental, I think, because, especially in North Carolina, where the private anglers are already so upset over the flounder season being closed, and then we have red drum, and it's like so hard to catch them that you can keep, and so like we kind of like -- Spanish are a very popular fishery to target, and sure you might not like set out to target Spanish, but they are a wonderful dinner when you can't get what you did set out to target, and so I think that's really important to remember.

Then, for the commercial industry, I was looking on the Amendment 17, where it says we have our highest landings, and that's in like the summer mostly, and I can't find the page here. In Hatteras, we use Spanish mackerel to use in our -- I guess May is our highest, or, no, and it goes higher, but Spanish mackerel for our fish fry, like our fundraiser for our fish fry, right, and the money goes to scholarships in our town. I don't know what they would use, because, like at this point, we've kind of like teased through all the fish, you know, and like there's not like an affordable fish left that we can catch that consistently to kind of fill that part of the market.

Then, touching on Tom's comment, if a reduced bag limit doesn't work, what about post-season paybacks, and is there any way -- Because is reporting so weak that we can't get any idea for a post-season payback?

MS. WIEGAND: There is an accountability measure for a post-season payback, but it is written so that it only happens right now if Spanish mackerel is overfished or undergoing overfishing, and it's not currently in that status, and so there wouldn't be a payback for an overage. That's how it's written right now. There's no reason the council can't reconsider how it's written, but, currently, it's only if the stock is overfished or undergoing overfishing. John.

MR. MALLETTE: So, real quick, and this kind of falls under what Alana just said, and this kind of goes back to what I was just saying about getting the recreational data. What I notice, and where I feel like I have an issue, is all of this assessment, which the definition of the word "assessment" is you're basically making a guess, and all it is is to see how much you're going to close something, but I really don't hear anything about --

Since we can't get the good data, how about leaving something open, to get more data, and why do you have to close something at all, for a fish that we know -- That you admit is not being overfished, and we know there's a bunch of them out there, and all we're really trying to decide on is how many people are fishing for them, and getting them, because your assessment is built on a fish deciding to bite a hook, which we all are fishermen, and we know there could be a hundred fish down there. If they don't decide to bite, that don't mean they're not there, but that's what you have to go by to decide if the fish are there, if they bite a hook or not.

We all know, just from anybody that goes to the beach in the summertime, there's no shortage of these mackerel. You don't need -- I mean, no offense to the people that make their living off of it, but I don't need a bunch of scientists to tell me that there's a lot of Spanish mackerel around. You can go to any boat ramp, or any marina, in the summertime, and every charter boat is coming in with a limit, plus telling you all the ones they let go, and so I just -- I think you would get a lot

more data, and a lot less pushback, and probably more people willing to help, if the constant word they all hear is you're just trying to take away, and make it to where you're trying to actually give more, and give more options, and you'll probably get a lot better results, and a lot more people willing to help.

MS. WIEGAND: I think I'm going to turn it over to Chip briefly to explain a little bit, because I know this is something that I personally have always found a little confusing, is sort of why -- The stock is not overfished or undergoing overfishing, and so why is the stock assessment and the SSC recommending a reduction in catch, and so I feel like that's something important, and I'm going to have Chip explain that, and then I'm going to go to Steve online, and then to Will.

DR. COLLIER: All right, and so the way we have management set up through Magnuson-Stevens right now is, for the long-term average, we try to base it on maximum sustainable yield, and so that's maximizing based on the selectivity and the population size, how much yield you can get from a fishery.

Then what we're looking at with the overfishing limit and the annual catch limits -- That is more of a short-term basis, and so that is what is available based on the current stock size, and so, if you're trying to prevent overfishing and overfished status, maximum sustainable yield will be the highest point you can go, and then you could have a level less than that of the -- Where the population would be at maximum sustainable yield, and it could be half that.

I believe that's what it is for the mackerel fishery, and so you have a big range in biomass of how many fish could be out there, in order to get maximum sustainable yield, and so you might not be in overfished status, but the population could be going down, and so, from there, if you're looking at overfishing, once again, that's looking at population size and how quickly you're removing them.

The annual catch limit might be going down, even though you're seeing fairly good things in the population, and so something going on right now with Spanish mackerel is there are really high catch levels, compared to what it was a couple years ago, and it appeared that recruitment wasn't as good in that time series as well, and so that -- The population is going to be going down as the catch of the adults is going up. You don't have those juveniles to replace them, and so you have to reduce the catch level in the future years.

What's happening with this stock is we have an OF that looks like it's around eight million. or 8.2 million, pounds and the ACL is around eight million pounds, and so, if you're -- The new catch levels are going to be above that, and then you have to reduce it, in order to prevent overfishing in the future and to make sure you're going to maintain maximum sustainable yield over the long-term. That's the goal.

Sometimes it's very hard to reach, and, you know, there were a lot of issues with the stock assessment. The SSC identified many of those issues, and, if you look at the end of the time series, it looked like recreational catch was very different than it was in the years prior to. It had jumped from around probably six to seven million pounds for the recreational catch up to sixteen million pounds, in one instance, but it remained above ten million pounds, and, with an OFL of eight million pounds, that means there's going to be a cut, and that's just the recreational sector, right, and you've got to add the commercial on top of that.

That gets you around thirteen million pounds, with an OFL at eight million pounds, and so there has to be a reduction somewhere, and that's the unfortunate news that we have for the stock assessment, and you hear Thomas talk about it quite a bit, and he's worried about what's going to happen, and, yes, it's a big deal.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, and so I'm going to go to Steve online next, then Will, and then Mike, and so, Steve, I've got you unmuted on our end, if you want to go ahead and make your comment. Steve is one of our new Mackerel Cobia AP members from South Carolina, and so go ahead, Steve.

MR. SAUNDERS: Good afternoon, everybody. One quick question for you around that was how often are the assessments done, where maybe, if you make, you know, some minor changes, right, and I know, here in South Carolina, I think the catch limit is about fifteen, but, here in South Carolina, me personally, I don't know any other charter captains that kind of target it, other than something to catch and, you know, not very many people that I'm aware of that kind of do it.

I don't know much about the commercial side of that, how many people actually commercially fish it, but my question is how often are the assessments, to kind of see what the levels of fish that are out there, and how often are those done, and then, if you go in and say, like in South Carolina, and it's at fifteen fish, and if you say drop it to twelve, or ten, or something like that, and then recheck and see what the, you know, the assessments actually kind of show, and, you know, what's wrong with micro changes, rather than, okay, let's drop it to three, and that's the rule now, and why not make some minor changes and then kind of look at the assessments ongoing, to kind of see what other kind of micro changes you may need to make.

DR. COLLIER: The frequency of assessments is about once every ten years, I guess is what we've been getting them. You're right that, if we got more rapid assessments, then we could probably be making smaller changes, and, you know, hopefully things will get --

MR. SAUNDERS: The last assessment was ten years ago?

DR. COLLIER: No, and assessments are done about every ten years, and the last assessment had a terminal year of 2020, with a completion date of around 2023.

MR. SAUNDERS: Still, that's -- That seems pretty -- That seems like pretty big gaps in data, and I'm not throwing rocks or anything, but it just seems like, you know, we had some record colds on the east coast, and stuff like that, and how does that affect it? It seems like more rapid assessments make a lot more sense, rather than just closures.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Next, I've got Will, then Mike, then Thomas.

MR. JONES: I don't want to derail the conversation, but just to clarify, and was the reason why the recreational sector wasn't meeting the quota for years, and then now we're worried about going over it, because the methodology for determining landings changed, and is that what happened?

DR. COLLIER: It's a combination of multiple things, but, yes, a big change was going from the previous way they had estimated recreational landings to the new Fishing Effort Survey, but you're talking -- There's so many different pieces in this it's hard to figure out, you know, which one is the overall driver of what's going on, but one of the big ones is looking at the age structure of the

population, to determine what is a sustainable harvest, and then it's scaled based on the landings that are coming in, and so it's -- A lot of it is looking at the age structure, and it didn't appear to have a healthy age structure.

AP MEMBER: I don't mean to go into the weeds about the age structure, but how do you judge recruitment of something that's being released constantly, because, at that age, you're talking about an under-the-size-limit fish, right, and you're talking to ten to twelve-inch fish, which nobody is going to keep anyhow, and how are we judging recruitment to know that the recruitment is down, is my question.

DR. COLLIER: There's a trawl survey that South Carolina DNR does along the Atlantic Coast, from Cape Canaveral, Florida all the way up to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, and they're using - - Well, in the past, they had used twin mongoose trawls, towing that during spring, summer, and fall, and that's been used to estimate the index of abundance for age-zero and age-one fish. They use smaller mesh, and they don't have the fish excluder that many of the shrimp trawlers have, and, since it's a fishery-independent survey, it's felt like it's a little bit more stabilized, and it's not bouncing around with some of the market conditions, or what some of the patrons might want, and so it feels like it's a more -- You can base trends off of that, and that's what they've been using for the past few stock assessments.

MR. NEWMAN: I had another point before that, but, to bring up that point right there for how they're looking at recruits, the study that -- The study you just mentioning only goes up to Cape Hatteras, and these fish have climate change, and this is a this is a climate-change-driven species, and that's why we're seeing these species further up north.

The last few years of that of that trawl survey in the south of Cape Hatteras, and I don't remember the numbers exactly, but I believe it was single digits, if not less than twenty, recruits were caught during that survey period, and I think it was during the whole survey period, and they weren't like per tow, but, at the same time, the NEAMAP survey, which is a survey that's done from Cape Hatteras north, had hundreds of these Spanish, juvenile Spanish, mackerel in the survey.

The stock assessment did not use any of that data from Cape Hatteras north that was done from that NEAMAP boat. The way that the stock assessment was done, they couldn't add any new information in it, but these fish are shifting further north, and we have missed a very significant part of their breeding grounds that -- Like they caught young-of-the-year fish all the way up the Delaware Bay, in the last few years of the NEAMAP survey, and so we have missed a whole big picture of what this fishery is, and what this fishery is producing, by just not even looking at recruit data from north of Cape Hatteras.

That is a huge, huge concern on my part, and then another huge concern is that we aren't doing these stock assessments but every ten years or so, and, with all these things happening politically lately, we might not be -- It might start turning into a twenty-year data gap, and we can't get -- We can't get locked into new numbers here until we can see the whole picture.

Like I say, we're missing a big picture of recruits, and I think, if we had opened up our view, in that stock assessment, of all those recruits in the north, I really believe your biomass would have grown, probably two or three times, and, also, addressing the numbers, and that's 100 percent what happened in the stock assessment.

They changed over from CHTS to FES numbers, and, if they had ran this stock assessment with the CHTS numbers, you wouldn't -- We wouldn't have seen the issue, because, at the same time that the South Atlantic was tracking in CHTS, MRIP was tracking in FES numbers, and, the last four or five years, those numbers have been four times, up to seven or eight times, higher coming out of MRIP than coming out of the South Atlantic numbers, and they're -- To be that big of a discrepancy in the numbers, one of the -- One or both of those numbers is wrong, and one of them is really, really wrong, because, like I say, one is seven times higher, and one is seven times lower, and so, you know, we either caught two million pounds or we caught fourteen million pounds.

That's a big damn difference, and to be basing the future of fishermen, for all up down the east coast, for ten to fifteen, or possibly even twenty years, off of numbers that we aren't really sure, and are actually -- We know are going to change once this pilot study is finished in 2026, and it's real hard for me to hang my hat on any of this right now, because you're going to disrupt a lot of lives, and a lot of fisheries, and a lot of fishermen, because this fishery does affect people from New York to Florida. We have an onus on us to get this done right, and, the information we have right now, it's going to be really hard to get it right, especially for such a long time period.

MS. WIEGAND: I'm going to provide some additional context to what Thomas is talking about, and I'll say, Chip, feel free to jump in, if you want to add additional detail, or if I'm not explaining things clear enough, but there's been a couple of different changes that have happened over the last five to ten years with the Marine Recreational Information Program, which is how we track recreational landings, private recreational landings in particular.

There was a switch from the CHTS, or the Coastal Household Television Survey, to the FES methodology, which is the Fishing Effort Survey. CHTS, the effort survey, was done via phone, and I'm sure you guys know everyone has cellphones, and do you all answer a call from a number you don't know? Probably not that often, and so maybe there are some exceptions to that, but I'll say I know I don't answer numbers that I don't know.

By and large, you're seeing people move to cellphones, and have caller ID, and so they moved to the Fishing Effort Survey, which is a mail survey, which gave us a very different perspective on the amount of recreational effort, which is a very simplified way of talking about what was a very long, long process.

Then there was a study that showed that, because of the order of some of the questions that are on that Fishing Effort Survey, that there might be an overestimate of some of the recreational catch, and so what's happening now is a pilot study that NMFS is undergoing, on a much larger scale than that original study, to see if there really is that big of a discrepancy, and that's the report that we were talking about, which should hopefully come to the council sometime in 2026, and then, ultimately, sort of what comes out of that report, and how that gets incorporated into catch levels, is to be determined.

AP MEMBER: I'm just trying to get my head ahead around this, and so, basically, we don't have an issue that this advisory committee can make recommendations on, because we really -- Nobody here has any confidence in the recreational numbers that were being given, with maybe the exception of Chip.

I mean, I know you're doing the best you can, but it's like the analogy is, well, we have this bank account, and we've got money in it, but I don't know how much money is in that bank account, and can I write a check for \$10,000, or can I write a check for ten-bucks, and have it bounce, and so I'm kind of wondering -- You know, we're spending a lot of time on this issue, and you keep alluding that there will be -- That the council is going to address this somewhat later, and maybe they'll have better data, but, until then, you know, I would suggest, you know, that we take the position, as an advisory group, that we not change anything around Spanish mackerel until that time.

MS. WIEGAND: So certain things to consider, and this advisory panel can absolutely pass a motion and take a stance. I will say the council is legally required to implement best scientific information available, which this -- The Scientific and Statistical Committee, while they had their concerns with the assessment, did ultimately make an ABC recommendation that is considered best scientific information available, and the council is legally required to implement that catch level.

They cannot exceed that catch level, and they can certainly implement something lower than that, though I'm not hearing any desire from the AP to see that, but they cannot exceed that recommendation. This advisory panel -- So they have this recommendation from the SSC, and they have to implement it.

There are a whole host of management measures that they can consider implementing to make sure that this ABC that they're required to not exceed is not exceeded, and they can consider things like private recreational permitting, or reporting, to get better data, and they can consider trip limits, bag limits, size limits, and there's a whole host of management options, all of which they often want input from their advisory panel on, but they are legally required to implement a catch level that is equal to or lower than the recommended ABC.

AP MEMBER: So, given that, what do you see, or maybe I'm just being dumb on this, but what would this advisory panel have that we could provide at this point? What would be our accountability?

MS. WIEGAND: I guess I'm not sure exactly what you mean. I think what the council ultimately is looking -- So, if I'm going to take a step back from SEDAR 78 and look big picture about what the council is asking for at this meeting, they're asking for you to comment on the list of management options to consider that came out of port meetings.

In terms of this stock assessment specifically, if you guys are looking to have sort of a conversation around it right now, they would be interested in -- You know, Amy is here, and feel free to explain this from a council level, and so the amendment topics that the council is going to be considering, discussing, at their next meeting -- In terms of this stock assessment right here, one of the things you can provide input to the council on is, okay, we understand that you're sort of legally required to hit this catch level, and these are our recommendations for how to do that, and so that's what the council would be looking for from this advisory panel. All right. I've got Melissa, then Will, then Thomas.

MS. LEONE: Just a question, and so you said, for like four or five years, the recreational side wasn't even meeting their limits, until you changed the way you were accounting for them, and, in

any of those years, did you reallocate those catches to the commercial side to compensate for not having it or -- Then, now, if it's not being overfished, and the people up in the New England are saying that they're not running into these fish, can you move their portion of their catch to the states that do get all of that, that have the fish there to catch, to harvest?

Then when was the last time they allocated more fish the following year from a previous year, instead of reducing it? Whenever in history, of your -- You know, not controlling, but of your rulemaking, have you ever given an increase of the fish, other than just reducing the catch allowances?

MS. WIEGAND: So I'll try to answer everything.

MS. LEONE: I know there's a lot of question, and just --

MS. WIEGAND: In terms of reallocation between the commercial and recreational sector, that's -- I'm going to try to answer it in two parts. From the federal side, there has been no reallocation between the commercial sector and the recreational sector since 1998, I believe was when we -- The last change that was made to have it be 55 percent commercial and 45 percent recreational, and that has been in place since the late 1990s.

Thomas was talking earlier about that bycatch limit. That is something that is done by the states, and not by the council or by, you know, the federal government. We are required to close federal waters when a commercial catch limit has been met. North Carolina decided, in state waters, to allow a 500-pound -- What they call a bycatch limit of Spanish mackerel, when federal waters has closed, so long as the total ACL, and so recreational and commercial combined, hasn't been exceeded. That's not a reallocation, in a sense, and the allocation has stayed the same, 55 commercial and 45 recreational.

To I think it was your last question, in terms of has the council ever, you know seen -- Offered an increase, and I'll say, for king mackerel, the most recent stock assessment showed there was a larger allowable catch. The ABC that came out of that stock assessment was higher than the previous ABC.

I would have to go back in history and see where the Spanish mackerel ABCs have fallen since before I was with the council, but, just sort of speaking off the top of my head, I know the most recent king mackerel assessment was an increase in available catch, and not a decrease, and then you had one other question in there, and, if you remind me of it, I will try to answer it.

MS. LEONE: (Ms. Leone's comment is not audible on the recording.)

DR. COLLIER: Just to build on that last one, about when has the council, or when have catch levels gone up for the annual catch limits if you did not meet it the previous year, in the federal fisheries, that's not allowed, unless you do an analysis that allows carryover, and so that was only recognized, I think in 2018, as a potential option to do, and so we're working that through the system.

We have not incorporated that into the system for coastal migratory pelagics yet, but that is something that would be -- It probably needs to be investigated, as long as the stock is not

overfished and overfishing, and that was the recommendation for the snapper grouper plan for carryover, and so maybe something like that could be done for Spanish and king mackerel, in case there is some overage one year, and maybe it could be given back the following year.

MR. JONES: We've just been talking about so much, and it's -- I kind of forget this, that, and the other, but, just to clarify, that pilot study that you were talking about, was that to address the recreational methodology? Is that what that was, for determining landings?

MS. WIEGAND: Correct.

MR. JONES: Is that going to be concluded before any management changes are made, or is it going to be implemented, or considered, in that process, like in the timeline?

MS. WIEGAND: So I'm not sure, and, again, I'm looking at Chip, sort of when that information will come to the council. It is to be determined, and the hope is sometime in 2026.

MR. JONES: Is 2026 when they would -- When the council would make changes to the management plan?

MS. WIEGAND: So, for these -- It ultimately depends on which route the council decides to take. If they decide to do one big amendment with everything, that's likely to move slow, and it would take into 2026, and maybe longer, and it's sort of hard to say, until we know the actual range of actions and alternatives that are going to be considered.

If they were to split it into two amendments, one that just did the Spanish mackerel catch levels and then one bigger amendment, the Spanish mackerel catch level amendment could move very quickly, in the span of just a couple of meetings. Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: That's the question I forgot to ask earlier. Once the pilot study is finished, will the -- Will we be updating the OFL for Spanish mackerel, because that would make sense to me, that, if they had a different recreation number, that we would need to update that OFL.

MS. WIEGAND: So I know, when we switched from CHTS to FES, everything was updated to FES as a new stock assessment was conducted. I do not know how they would do it with this potential new change, and so that -- I know I've given you a lot of I'm not sure, and it remains to be seen, but that also remains to be seen. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and I think it would be good for the advisory panel to recommend what you all think should be done, and make a strong recommendation to update the stock assessment with these new catch levels. I think that would -- The council would hear that loud and clear, I believe.

MR. NEWMAN: Yes, and that was kind of my question, is like how hard would that be to update the stock assessment with those new numbers, and would that be just something plug-and-play, or -- I wouldn't want to wait until our next stock assessment to use that that new updated pilot survey numbers.

AP MEMBER: I was going to say why don't we take that as a motion. Could you restate that?

MR. NEWMAN: I've got another comment too, but I'll definitely make that motion.

AP MEMBER: Thank you.

MR. NEWMAN: I'm sorry, guys, and I've been working on this since 2019, and so I'm a little bit deeper than everybody else, but, when we were going through the stock assessment, part of it wasn't approved, and I know that the SEDAR gave us our OFL, so that we could, you know, set fishing limits, and work on that, but remind me again what they didn't approve and what they did approve.

DR. COLLIER: They approved the stock assessment for use in management. They did not approve the projections for use in management, and what they did was they recommended a 75 percent of the OFL as the recommended catch levels for ABC, is what the SSC recommended.

MR. NEWMAN: So, if it wasn't approved for projections, did that -- I don't know, and it just -- It seemed to me like, if it can't -- If it can't produce results, it should have kind of been -- I don't know, put back in the queue to be done again, but I don't know, and it's just -- I've been working on it for a long time, since -- You know, I actually was one of the AP members that sat there, and was in the stock assessment when we were doing it, but I just had a lot of bad blood that, you know, we didn't go ahead and work on this thing again.

If it wasn't good enough for complete acceptance, why didn't we go ahead and start working on it again? I know that there was one time that it was stuck back in the queue for 2026, for like a half a meeting or something, to go ahead and do another Spanish mackerel stock assessment, but then something -- Then we had, you know, the word that Christina says we can't say happened, and then we had to go, you know, reorganize the schedule again. Red snapper, and you said we couldn't say "red snapper", but I'm just saying it's -- There was just so much concern, and back and forth discussion, and I think -- I think even the council talked with SEDAR, for two to three meetings, over the stock assessment, and it wasn't just the one and done. There was a lot of back and forth, and it's just -- I don't know, and I just -- I'm still trying to figure out how to put that can of worms back into the can.

DR. COLLIER: Well, with these stock assessments, you can think of it in two different components, like the stock assessment, the SEDAR part of the stock assessment, which is 78, and that -- What that's doing is it's looking at catch going back in time, and so you're looking at the condition of the stock at that point.

The hard part, for any of our stock assessments, is looking forward, and knowing what catch is going to be available for the next few years, and that's the projections, and those are extremely challenging to do, and we have some difficulty with it, and the SSC agreed that there was a lot of difficulty with the projections for Spanish mackerel, and that's why they went with that 75 percent level that they had recommended, as opposed to taking the stock assessment and using the output of that moving forward.

This one is more of a kind of a catch average approach going forward, and so they recognized the challenge with it. It's -- You know, the condition of the stock, looking back in time, seems to be like it was doing pretty well, and everybody kind of agreed where it was, a healthy fishery, and not overfished, and the hard part was moving forward and how to get there.

MS. WIEGAND: So, Thomas, I've put a motion on the board that reads: Recommend the council update the Atlantic Spanish mackerel overfishing limit and acceptable biological catch recommendations based on the results of the FES pilot study before implementing any new catch levels. Does that capture what you were thinking?

MR. THOMAS: Yes, and I couldn't have said it better myself.

DR. COLLIER: One piece I would recommend in there is, after "recommend the council", "recommend the council request an update", because they don't do the stock assessment.

MR. NEWMAN: I agree.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so, Thomas, are you comfortable -- I don't want to put words in your mouth, and I'm trying to draft what it seems like you were looking to make a motion for.

MR. NEWMAN: Yes, and that's exactly what I was thinking in my head. **Recommend the council request an update of the Atlantic Spanish mackerel OFL and ABC recommendations, based on the results of the FES pilot study, before implementing any new catch levels.**

MS. WIEGAND: Okay. Is anyone willing to second that motion?

MR. MALLETT: I second.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so I have a second from John, as well as others. Is there any more discussion around this motion? Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: I don't know, and we were talking over here, and is there anything we still manage that we decided not to use FES, you know, maybe a commercially-viable species that, you know, we didn't have a lot of recreational landings, and so we decided not to switch over to FES in the management?

DR. COLLIER: Fishery Effort Survey, and, as ABCs are updated, or catch levels are updated, for each of these species, they are switched over from the Coastal Household Telephone Survey to the new Fishery Effort Survey, and so the council has not said to not use the Fishery Effort Survey for any species, and, in fact, we have some that go as far back as MRFSS. Some are still tracked in - - So that survey was updated in 2006, and so it just takes time to incorporate some of these management levels in there, but, as the surveys improve, and I know we have a lot of issues with the values coming out of the new Fishery Effort Survey, but the statistical experts agreed that this was an improvement over the past methods.

Now, I don't necessarily agree with all the numbers that come out, but the statisticians say this is the way we should be doing it, and now we have a revision that's coming up, based on some of these statistical models that say, you know, there's some issues with how it was implemented, and so they're going to improve it, and the MRIP staff have indicated that we should be expecting these changes in recreational catch numbers for a while, as they continue to improve their survey, trying to make it better, and nobody seems -- At this table, nobody seems happy with it, and at many

tables, and we don't hear many people are happy with it. What they're trying to do is improve it, get it to the number that seems more realistic and is matching everybody's desired outcomes from their survey.

MR. NEWMAN: I hate to take the discussion away from the motion, but, I mean, I know, for a long time, we kind of managed with soft targets in a lot of fisheries, especially recreational fisheries. When there's so much uncertainty hanging there, especially with new numbers coming out of the box, is that something that the South Atlantic Council can look at, is possibly doing a soft target for a short period of time, or are you all kind of hard set in the quotas underneath Magnuson?

DR. COLLIER: Unfortunately, even if you have low confidence in those numbers, you still are stuck with those numbers, and so ACL and OFL are hard values that are coming out of stock assessments.

MS. WIEGAND: Any other discussion on the motion? Alana.

MS. HARRISON: I just have a question for you, Chip, and so, the overfishing limit, that hasn't changed since the like fishery created an allocation, right, in like the 1970s, or is that updated as we move through time, right, and so, as like -- Because our survey changed, and so the overfishing limit is adjusted based on the quota? Okay. Great. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: The allocation between the commercial and recreational sector has changed over time, but, Alana, you're correct and so that OFL has been updated based on this most recent stock assessment. Any other discussion on the motion? All right. Well, then can I get hands up in favor of this motion? All right, and then, Steve, I know you're online participating. If you want to, I've got you unmuted on our end, and just say yay or nay.

MR. SAUNDERS: Yes, and I've already raised my hand with the app, too.

MS. WIEGAND: Excellent. **So the motion passes unanimously.** All right, and so this is what I'm going to propose to move us forward, and I think this has been a really great and helpful discussion for the council surrounding the stock assessment.

We still need to talk about the management measures that are coming out of port meetings for the council to consider, and so I'm going to propose we take a quick ten-minute break, and not a council ten-minute, but an actual ten-minute break, and please come back at 4:00, and we will talk about those management measures before moving into a presentation on manta rays.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. WIEGAND: All right, guys. If we can come back to the table, please. All right, and so, as everyone is coming back to the table, I want to sort of get us back to the original topic, which was things the council should consider discussing post-mackerel port meetings, and, again, I know I already mentioned this earlier, but this is a lengthy list of things.

There are likely some things on this that you think the council should absolutely move forward with, and there are probably some things on this list that you think, no, the council absolutely

should not move forward with this, and the input we're looking for right now is sort of what is everything the council should be considering, because some of these things were brought up during port meetings, and so we want, you know, the information to go to the council, and so, at this juncture, we're really only looking to sort of populate a list of management measures the council can consider, or should consider, for management for spanish mackerel at this point.

Again, as the council moves forward with this, there will be additional opportunities for this AP to talk about sort of the nitty-gritty of things like sector allocations, or commercial trip limits, and things like that, and so just populating a list at this point, to make sure the council understands everything they should be considering.

Starting with Spanish mackerel, what we have on the list right now are sector allocations between the commercial and recreational sector for Spanish mackerel, the commercial zones, looking at whether or not those zones should be changed, and should there be three zones instead of two zones, that sort of thing, and looking at the commercial allocation regionally for Spanish mackerel between those zones, accountability measures for Spanish mackerel, recreational bag and size limits, commercial trip limits, and then the limited entry for commercial Spanish mackerel permit, and so is there anything, when you guys are looking at this list, that you're thinking, you know, oh my goodness, I can't believe the council is not considering X.

I will note that we'll talk about king mackerel next, and then other topics that involve both of the mackerels, things like recreational reporting, and that would be next, and so, right now, just things that would apply to Spanish mackerel, and, Thomas, I see your hand up.

MR. NEWMAN: You're still on break online, but I just kind of want to go down it, just me personally, being we've already got a discussion going, and I personally don't want to look at sector allocations for Spanish mackerel right now, until we can get some better recreational numbers, especially with the numbers changing. I just don't want to switch that dynamic, before we have something solid.

As far as the commercial zones for Spanish mackerel, I think that does need to be looked at, and maybe look at eliminating the different zones, or switching the season dates around and allowing for some overage, and so, if there is underharvest in one zone, it can be it can be allocated over to the to the other zone.

I wouldn't -- I wouldn't think a third zone would be beneficial, and I don't think the Mid-Atlantic and the New England areas probably have enough catch history to have a very large quota, and I just -- I know that the southern zone has been underharvesting for a few years now, and, if we could reallocate some of that -- Not reallocate, but if some of that quota could be rolled over into the northern zone, if we kind of switch the season around, that may be beneficial to the commercial fishery, and not have to utilize the 500-pound bycatch.

The accountability measures, that should definitely be looked at. Recreational bag limits, as hard as that is, I mean, that has to be talked about, and the commercial trip limits, and I feel like that's something that's going to be need to be talked about as well, possibly have some step-downs, and, also, North Carolina put together a really good white paper in 2019, looking at that information, and I don't -- I don't know if the document is still publicly available, but, I mean, I've got a copy of it, and I know Trish does have a copy of it as well. I think our deduction from that was the

average trip was already right around 500 pounds or less anyway, and so a lower trip limit wasn't going to make that big of a difference.

Limited entry is always, and, for the commercial Spanish mackerel permit, that's definitely a controversial subject, and I know a lot of the controversy stems from, in a lot of the fishery -- The fish are caught in state waters up north too, and so I don't know how that -- If you had a limited entry federal permit, how much that would actually reduce the amount of fish being caught, and that's just my comments for the topics.

MS. WIEGAND: I'm seeing sort of, you know, pro and con on some of these lists. One of the things you mentioned, that I don't see on this list, is the fishing season, and just so -- I believe you and I have had conversations about this, to just make sure I'm remembering correctly, and, when you're talking about the fishing season, your thought was considering changing it so that essentially Florida would fish first, and then the North Carolina and Mid-Atlantic region would fish second.

That way, if there was leftover quota from Florida, they could use that transfer provision to transfer it to North Carolina, which they've been hesitant to do in recent years, because they fish second, and so they want to make sure all that quota is reserved for fishermen, in case they're able to catch it all.

MR. NEWMAN: Yes, and that's correct. Like I say, instead of starting the fishery season March 1, like say you start it October 1. Or November 1, because, generally, the majority of the fish are either in Florida or they're in North Carolina, and they're not in both places at the same time. Our fishery is paring down in the first of September, and that's -- I mean, the first of November, and Florida's fishery is just starting to begin the first of November.

MS. WIEGAND: Okay. I'll make sure fishing season gets added to the information we show to the council. Is there anything else anyone feels is missing from this list? Will.

MR. JONES: I think it would fall under the bag limits recreationally, but maybe like a vessel limit, to offset the six-pack boats that -- Like you maybe you wouldn't have to lower the bag limit as much if you had a vessel limit to offset, because that would offset the six-pack boats that are going out there and catching six limits, you know, and so --

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so vessel limits we can add to the list. Anything else missing?

AP MEMBER: I had a quick -- Just a question, because I don't remember. The recreational Spanish mackerel, are they split up in like a northern and southern zone, or is it just the whole South Atlantic recreational?

MS. WIEGAND: For recreational, it's the whole -- It's the Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic all in one quota. They're not split up into zones like the commercial sector.

AP MEMBER: I don't know if it would help, but maybe you could split that up into zones. If we get to the point where there's a season, and hopefully we don't, but that could prevent people from being shut completely out.

MS. WIEGAND: Okay. Regional quotas, or regional zones, for the recreational sector, as something to consider.

MR. NEWMAN: I agree with that. Yes, and I agree with that, looking at the regional sector too, because, like I say, right now, if everything stayed the same, there's a potential that, when the fish show up in Florida, the recreational industry wouldn't have an opportunity to land fish.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I'm not seeing any other hands jump up for Spanish mackerel, and so, for king mackerel, the list is a little bit shorter. There was a request to look at commercial trip limits for king mackerel, and then the sale of tournament caught king mackerel, and one thing I'm going to add to this list, based on conversation we had previously, is the recreational bag limit. It seems like there might be interest in having some more discussion about that. Is there anything else for king mackerel that you feel like the council should discuss? Mike, or John.

MR. MALLETTE: When we met last time, and we were talking specifically about the sale of tournament-caught king mackerel, we had talked about, with the pre-fishing of the tournaments and things like that, of possibly implementing some sort of regulations on how the fish are caught, or some of the tackle used, and things like that, and I remember we had talked about that, and was there any more discussion on that, kind of like with some of what the federal people do with billfish and things? I know it's hard, with tournaments being state regulated, but I didn't know if there was any more talk about that.

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, and so you're talking about sort of regulations, or sort of best fishing practices, for king mackerel, when they're pre-fishing, and the council, again, did not move forward with any of that, because they were waiting until after port meetings, and so, if that's something you think they should discuss, that's something that we should include on this list.

MR. MALLETTE: Well, it was something we had talked about, something we thought should be discussed, and so I just didn't know if we -- I think it was more or less kind of trying to figure out if there was any jurisdiction to do it, I guess, because of the tournaments being state run, and being recreational by the state, and so was there anything the South Atlantic could say, hey, don't use this, and this, XYZ, as far as the tackle use, because we were talking about, you know, a lot of these guys, you know, pre-fishing tournaments, and releasing kings, but they're using treble hooks, and leaders, and so, I mean, if they'll release these kings, is this king really going to survive anyway, or things like that, and we just came up with that, as far as discussion, and so we didn't know if anything like that --

MS. WIEGAND: So I think, and I don't believe we have anyone from General Counsel online, but, to my knowledge -- The council certainly can create gear requirements, for example, you know, and circle hooks are required in most areas for snapper grouper species, and there's been talks of requiring things like single-hook rigs, and so the council absolutely can require certain gear to be used.

I think one of the things they would have to grapple with, if the AP is recommending this just for tournament-caught fish, is why just for tournament-caught fish and not for the rest of the recreational sector, and the rest of the commercial sector, and so the council certainly can implement those regulations, but I think that's some discussion that this AP would need to have, and the council would need to have, to sort of justify why they were wanting to implement that

regulation, and so it sounds like something worth considering, or something we would be interested in having more discussion about. Mike.

MR. OPPEGAARD: I want to reiterate what Will said, and we were talking about the limit of king mackerel, and is it possible we could discuss vessel limits there as well? I mean -- Spanish and kings, and like we went back to, you know, three per person, and four clients, and do I really want to put twelve king mackerel on the boat?

MR. JONES: I'm not going to clean that many.

AP MEMBER: I agree with that as well. I think that's a good option.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Vessel limits for king mackerel on the list to consider. Will.

MR. JONES: Just going back to talking about the gear stuff, and I know we're not necessarily getting into specifics now, but, John, have you seen how, in Florida, a lot of the commercial guys fish with three single j-hooks, and they smash them together, and then they use heavy drag, and they horse them in and flip them in the boat? I mean, we could do that. You've done that? I mean, we could all just switch to doing it that way, and then we won't be killing all the fish that we try to release.

MR. MALLETTE: So just a quick comment. Just, on the commercial side, we're using mostly drone spoons.

AP MEMBER: Three-and-a half-drone.

MR. MALLETTE: Yes, and we're using -- Even with, you know, our skirts, or jigging or whatever, we're using single hooks, and we're not using a lot of treble hooks commercial fishing, and it's more the sport fishing, because we're using light tackle, treble hooks, multiple treble hooks to a rig type deal, and not only just for the fishermen, and, honestly, there's a really, really huge tackle business in the area, a bunch of people that make a lot of money off that, and so I guess I wasn't necessarily trying to say get rid of them all together, but if it was specifically -- When we were talking about tournaments, of these people going out catching lots of fish that they didn't need, and it was honestly who's going to enforce it, because we were talking about people selling fish under the table, with not having the correct permits, and how --

You know, we've told stories about people we know coming up from Florida, coming up to the tournaments, buying up tournament fish that was supposed to be donated, and a lot of shady stuff, and so it's just things like that, and it was just -- It was a lot of things that were talked about last time, and I was just curious if any of that took traction at all.

MS. WIEGAND: So, again, in the interest of time, because we've still got to talk about manta rays today, I want to make sure we're keeping it brainstorming, just for the list of things. I promise all of this is going to come back to the AP to have more detailed discussion on. I saw Tony and then Alana. Alana.

MS. HARRISON: I would like to see more discussion on allowing live baiting in the recreational fishery. I would like it to be -- I would like to have discussion on why it's allowed, first off, in the

for-hire rec fishery, and then I would like to have discussion on maybe potentially ending it, because it's not fair, first off, like for equitable reasons, for the commercial fleet to have the entire school of fish dragged away from them, because the live bait is obviously more attractive to the fish, and that happens daily.

Then, also, it's banned in many commercial fisheries, and so we're not allowed to live bait in several fisheries, including HMS, and so would -- I think that would be a good conversation, and then that would also help our numbers, if we -- By not allowing live baiting, you probably will see the catches go down, which is unfortunate, but, I mean, that's what our goal is.

MS. WIEGAND: Okay. Kevin.

MR. AMAN: I was just going to speak to Alana's point. In my -- From what I've seen in the field, you know, sampling fishing tournaments, talking with the public, talking to charter boat captains, things like that, it seems like the two sectors are targeting two different size classes of fish. You know, the commercial guys are kind of targeting the smaller fish of the population, and those fish are worth more, and they're -- You know, the market is hungry for those fish, and that's what -- You know, they're putting those fish on the market.

You know, the commercial, or not the commercial, but the recreational tournament guys are looking for, you know, the larger fish, and, you know, a lot of times, they don't bring a lot of -- There's not a lot of profit there, because the fish so large, and they're not a -- They're desirable, but they're less -- A lot less desirable than the smaller fish, and they're harder to -- They're harder to move around, and I just wanted to mention that.

MR. NEWMAN: I know the stock assessment is coming up for king mackerel, but can you remind us where the council is at on -- Are they talking about doing a framework amendment for king mackerel, or an interim amendment?

MS. WIEGAND: So this is all stuff for what I've been calling sort of the post-port meetings amendment, and so the king and Spanish mackerel stuff would likely be in one amendment together.

MR. NEWMAN: The king and Spanish will be an amendment together?

MS. WIEGAND: So there's -- All of the post-port meeting topics will likely be together in an amendment, and so there are some Spanish mackerel things and some king mackerel things that will be addressed in an amendment. The Spanish mackerel stock assessment may be in that big port meetings amendment, and it may be in a separate amendment. That's up to the council, and they'll likely decide that at their June meeting.

Any king mackerel amendment that comes out of the stock assessment that's coming up in 2026 will be entirely separate from this process, because this process will likely be starting to wrap up, depending on what the ultimate timeline is by the time the council is getting stock assessment results, because they wouldn't -- If that assessment is in 2026, we probably wouldn't get it at the council until sometime in 2027. I forget when in 2026 that assessment starts, but it -- That amendment to address that stock assessment would be entirely separate from this process.

MR. NEWMAN: Just to follow-up on that, and so how would they be looking at commercial and recreational trip limits without an updated stock assessment in this amendment?

MS. WIEGAND: So the council doesn't have to wait for a stock assessment to make changes to any management measures, and so the reason commercial trip limits for king and Spanish mackerel are included here is because, during port meetings, we heard interest in them changing. In Florida in particular, they talked about wanting to move from a head limit to a poundage limit, sort of keeping the trip limits the same, but not having them be measured as, you know, seventy-five head, and going to the poundage version of that. The council can make changes to those things outside of stock assessments, especially if they're hearing from stakeholders that those changes are desired.

MR. NEWMAN: Okay. That makes sense. I was just -- I was trying to see where the changes in trip limits comes from, but that makes sense. If you know an average weight of fish, you can give a comparable trip limit in pounds, versus number of head count, because I don't know how the guys in Florida do it, because I can't keep up with how many fish I catch. I could not count seventy-five, especially when they get biting.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Tony, did you have something?

MR. BENEVENTO: When will we be discussing all these things?

MS. WIEGAND: So it will depend on how the council decides to move forward in June, in terms of amendments. This AP is scheduled to meet in-person once a year, and we can also have webinar meetings outside of that, and so, depending on where the council decides to go with this, they might want a webinar meeting in the fall, or they might not, and it might be this next year, and that sort of really all depends on what direction they move with the amendment, because, oftentimes, there are certain junctures at the amendment, like when they're talking about specific actions and alternatives, that I anticipate them wanting the advisory panel's input.

MR. BENEVENTO: So the items that that Alana and John brought up, we're not going to be discussing them? Okay. Then I'll hold my peace.

MS. WIEGAND: I'll say not in detail at this meeting, though, if there's something you think needs to be implemented sooner, as opposed to later, you could sort of note that this should be something in a separate amendment that moves faster than the larger amendment, but, by and large, we'll be talking about the details of each of these actions at the next Mackerel Cobia AP meeting, whenever that occurs. All right. Any other additions to this list of possible amendment topics for king mackerel? Go ahead, Alana.

MS. HARRISON: What about a limited entry for the for-hire sector, to improve on the reporting? Is that coming in the next discussion?

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, and what a perfect segue into our next -- So there are two other possible amendment topics that I've included here that would cover both king mackerel and Spanish mackerel. The first is recreational permitting and reporting for mackerel species, and then the second one is limited entry for the for-hire permit. I have that in italics, because that's something that's already on the council's active agenda, and so it wouldn't be something that's included in the

post-port meetings amendment. because it is already included elsewhere for council discussion. Mike.

MR OPPEGAARD: Would the recreational permitting be similar to the highly migratory permitting as well, where we just call in and say, yes, we caught --

MS. WIEGAND: I have absolutely no idea, because, at this point, the council hasn't discussed it. This is saying that this is something we heard from port meetings, and so this is going to the council as, you know, hey, during port meetings, we heard discussion about wanting to move forward with recreational permitting and reporting, and do you want to include it in an amendment, and, if they move forward including it in an amendment, then we will start getting into all those nitty-gritty details.

All right, and so, before we wrap up this discussion, is there anything else you guys can think of for the mackerel fishery where you're like the council needs to consider this management measure when talking about this? It's a pretty big list at this point. Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: When I was going through the documents for the Snapper Grouper AP meeting you've got following this this week, you had in there a list of priorities, and one of them was a dedicated coastal migratory pelagic survey, a gillnet survey, or a sampling survey, and that was on the list of -- It was a management recommendation from pretty much every stock assessment we've had for the coastal migratory pelagics, and I saw that list was included for Snapper Grouper, but Spanish mackerel was mentioned. I think that needs to be a priority that the council needs to talk about, because we do not have a dedicated survey, a fisheries-independent survey for coastal migratory pelagics.

MS. WIEGAND: So that is something -- I know you guys haven't heard enough from Chip, and so he is actually, tomorrow, going to be presenting the research recommendations for mackerel specifically, and sort of what's in our briefing book is updated based on the version you saw in the Snapper Grouper book, and so absolutely that's something that should be considered, and we've got, I think, forty-five minutes blocked off tomorrow to talk all about research recommendations for king and Spanish mackerel, sort of separate from these management recommendations, and so good thought, but hold it until tomorrow.

MR. NEWMAN: Sounds good. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Then, with that, again, just a reminder that one of the things the council will be doing, in addition to all of those different management things that you could consider, is also updating the FMP goals and objectives. In the interest of time, I'm not going to go through all of these. They're a little too small on that screen for you to read anyway, but they're in your briefing book.

Like I said, the goals and objectives, which are meant to sort of drive management through the FMP, have not been updated since the late 1990s, and so are in need of update, and so the council will be sort of looking at these, in conjunction with the Gulf Council, to make changes, and these are really meant to represent sort of what is the ultimate goal of management, where do you want to see your fishery in five or ten years, and what should management be aiming to achieve, and so I imagine we'll be having more detailed discussions about these as well in the coming meetings,

and so I would encourage you to sort of look over them and think about what you think the ultimate goal of management should be for king and Spanish mackerel, which I know is a very big-picture -- It almost feels a little like an obtuse question, but I think an important thing to consider.

We already talked about the Spanish mackerel assessment, and then the other thing going on is the Gulf Council's stakeholder engagement meeting series, and they did this as sort of a complementary effort to our port meetings throughout last year, and they did it mostly virtual. They had an online feedback tool, and they did a couple of virtual webinar workshops, and then held special sessions focused on mackerel with a couple of their advisory panels.

They've created a report about that engagement effort, and that report is going to come to the council at their June 2025 meeting, and so, again, we will be presenting to the council summaries of information that was provided during port meetings on all those different identified management topics. We will also be including all of the additional topics that you all requested on that list. We're going to give them a similar update that you all got on that stock assessment, and then the Gulf Council presentation, and so, after that, we'll have more information for you on how the council intends to move forward and sort of where the Mackerel Cobia AP is likely to meet again to continue to discuss all of these topics.

Again, AP meetings are just one opportunity to provide comment. Every single council meeting also has a public comment opportunity, and you can also provide comment at that point as well, and so, while this AP may only meet once or twice a year, the council meets four times a year, and there are always public comment opportunities at all of those meetings for you all to participate in as well, and I would encourage you to do so.

That is all I had. I will open it up one more time, for any last port meetings questions, before I move us on to talk about manta rays. All right. I'm not seeing anything, and so I am going to turn it over to Jenny Lee, with the NMFS Protected Resources Division, and she is going to give you all a presentation on giant manta rays. Jenny, I've got you unmuted, and I'm going to go ahead and get your presentation pulled up for you.

MS. LEE: All right. Thank you. Am I coming through okay?

MS. WIEGAND: We can hear you loud and clear.

MS. LEE: Excellent.

MS. WIEGAND: Here we are. Take it away.

MS. LEE: All right, and you can just jump right to the next screen, or slide, and so I'm here today to provide you an update on the giant manta ray Section 4(d) rule development, which will be very brief, and then I'll take an opportunity to share some new information available on giant manta rays, their important habitat, and recreational cobia fishing impacts, and then I'll touch on our Section 7 considerations for the Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources FMP and pertaining to the existing Endangered Species Act biological opinion.

In December, we went ahead and informed the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council that NOAA Fisheries is considering developing protective regulations under Section 4(d) of the ESA

for giant manta ray to manage activities to help preserve and recover the species. I shared this news in December via the Protected Resources briefing document that I provide at every council meeting, and then Andy pointed it out on the record as well.

Our NOAA Fisheries Office of Protected Resources, and that's in Silver Spring, is leading this effort, with input from the regional offices, such as the Southeast Regional Office, where we are. Giant manta ray are listed as threatened under the ESA, and so take prohibitions are not automatically prohibited when a species is listed as threatened, and so, basically, these 4(d) regs that we talk about are our way of being able to customize what we think is important for that to preserve and recover the species, and you can define basically what is considered prohibited and take and what's not.

We started down this path. However, at this time, we are not pursuing publishing a proposed rule. We are still though continuing to collect information on activities that may take giant manta rays, to help conserve and recover the species. If something changes on this, we'll let you know, but, just because we gave you the update, we wanted to make sure to let you know that that's kind of where things stand right now, and we're collecting information, and not actively pursuing rule making.

This was a really good opportunity, and, since we had the time on the agenda, we wanted to make sure that you were aware of some new information on giant manta rays. Last June, Pate et al., and I think, if I saw correctly -- By the way, I should have -- I might want to point out that I believe Jessica is on, listening here, and so, if you have specific questions later, you could potentially, if she's willing, also be able to speak with her. She's the senior scientist with the Florida Manta Project and Marine Megafauna.

Back to the information here, and so, last June, Pate et al. published evidence of reproductive and feeding habitat for manta rays off Florida's Atlantic coast. Each spring, giant manta ray aggregate off the coast of central and north Florida, and so between the Indian River County, Florida and the Florida/Georgia border. Typically, individuals are observed during March of each year in coastal waters off of the Indian River County and then migrate northward, possibly coinciding with rising water temperatures.

This study observed courting and mating behavior, suggesting that this area may be important as a reproductive habitat, and so this is really new and exciting information about giant manta rays, and it's the first documented reproductive habitat in the United States.

We have always known that recreational cobia anglers interact with manta ray along the east coast, but our understanding of the extent of those interactions and impacts is really the new part, and a lot of this is stemming from this new study Braun et al. 2024, and so the study gathered data on angler knowledge, perceptions, and behavior in relationship to the cobia fishery in central and northern Florida, and so the same area we were just talking about that's really important, and its relationship with the resident and migrating giant manta rays and how they target cobia by seeking out the manta rays that cobia often basically follow, and associate with, and casting at or near them, and sometimes directly on top of them.

The study was based -- They had fifteen participants, and this included guides and charters as part of their sample group, and so eighty-six anglers interviewed indicated that they or their charter

clients had hooked giant manta rays. 91 percent indicated that they had seen manta rays with hooks. In fact, they go as far as to describe them as looking like Christmas trees, or Mardi Gras, just to kind of give you a visual image of the fact that there have -- You know, not just one interaction, but multiple interactions occurring with the same animals.

Let's see. Overcrowding, and they saw an average maximum of twenty-two boats, and a range of one to fifty, all around one manta ray, or, you know, where there are multiple ones together, and the increased participation in this fishing practice they believe has been fueled in part by social media. Anglers interviewed in the study indicated social media is the primary driver of the expansion, and also that, often, it's the novice anglers that are foul-hooking manta rays.

It's also notable that the study found that respondents generally supported conservation action, including willingness to engage with researchers and support management and enforcement measures.

I'm not going to play any of these video clips for you, but, if you do a keyword search with "manta ray", or "cobia", and in any of really the social media platforms, you'll come up with dozens of pages of videos where you have charter captains and different people promoting this practice. Again, Braun et al. noted that the experienced anglers pointed to social media as being a driver, and there's been some questions sort of as far as the consequences of this activity.

The hooks rarely cause any long-term injuries, unless they're hooked in the eye, but it's really the trailing line itself that's really problematic. The line can impair feeding and swimming behaviors, cause body tissue issues, and so, basically, the manta rays have some really fascinating feeding, and they feed, in part, by this sort of somersault and tight loops, and it's called barrel rolling, and, while they're doing this, if there's fishing line, of course, naturally, that's getting wrapped around the animal multiple times, where it actually begins to cut into the animal's skin, and so, over time, the end result can be as far as the loss of the cephalic fin, or part of pectoral fin, scarring, things like that, and then we already talked about the vessel strikes.

Just the risk there is, obviously, prop scarring, and then, again, the last thing I would just point to is that this disturbance of both the fishing practices and the vessels, while they're potentially aggregating for mating and reproduction, certainly could have potential negative ramifications.

Upfront, I had shared that there's no imminent 4(d) rule that's addressing this as one of the actions in the 4(d) rule, or in a 4(d) rule. The biological opinion that was done for the Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources FMP, we did an amendment looking at giant manta rays, when they were listed, as well as oceanic white tips at the time, which were new, and so it does like generally recognize the practice, but certainly the specific information here in these recent papers was not available then.

The BiOp did include that it was highly uncertain, large interaction numbers that were based really on MRIP, you know, basically logbook data, and some proxies, looking when trying to assess post-release mortality, and so we basically are working through, with our Sustainable Fisheries group, to determine whether or not we need to reinitiate that consultation formally to address this new information.

My first bullet there, where I said applying the ESA/MSA integration policy, if anyone here is not familiar with that, basically, we have an agreement, that we worked on with the council, saying that, for Endangered Species Act issues, we're going to try to work together and provide information upfront, so that we can address things through early coordination, rather than say us just going into our black hole, writing a biological opinion, and then, tada, here it is, and here's what it says, and what you must do.

The whole point of this presentation is to get really up in front and let you know that, hey, we have some new information, and we are looking at it to kind of assess where we are, and what we might need to do from an ESA perspective, and then, really, we want to get your experience, right, and we know we have a lot of people here, with a lot of experience, and so we would love it if you could provide some comment here, and, obviously, questions are fine too, but, you know, one of the things that we were looking at, and that we asked when we presented the same information to the committee, was that we were trying to get a sense of the scope.

Are these practices limited really to only Florida east coast, or is it happening more broadly, and the committee meeting did provide some information, sharing basically that really not in North Carolina, and I think really it was just Florida who said that this was more of a practice, or at least that was sort of the preliminary information there.

We're trying to get a sense of how far offshore this cobia fishing practice is, and does it extend into federal waters, and then I threw out the question of best practices. We do, and I didn't include it in the presentation, because, again, this was really just more of an update, to try to get some early input and ideas generated, but we have hook-and-line post-release -- Not post-release mortality, but just interaction release -- What am I trying to say? Best practices. Sorry for the little stumbling there.

We do have those available, and there's a link online, and I know Christina has it, and she can share it, and, you know, the paper has some suggestions and recommendations for best practices, but we really are here today just to make sure you have the information, and, you know, get some thoughts on it from you, and so I think that's about it, and maybe the last thing I'll say is I don't have a closing slide, and I just encourage some discussion here.

Then the last plug would be just to reach out to me and Calusa, or to our partners, to report and actively contribute to the research initiatives in the area, so that we're collectively -- You know, we all have the best available information to guide us as we work to develop effective management strategies and best practices. So that concludes the presentation, and it was nice and quick, and I'll turn it back to you all, and thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Jenny, and so does anyone have any questions for Jenny, or any feedback on what they're seeing in terms of this practice in their area? Mike.

MR. OPPEGAARD: We don't see manta rays. Do you guys see manta rays? I mean, we'll throw it the case, an occasional stingray, or the occasional sea turtle, but not necessarily a manta ray. It's something we rarely see, and, when we do, it's a big deal. We're like, hey, look there, and one jumped, but, other than that, that's it.

MS. LEE: Unfortunately, with our format of being just virtual, would you remind me please, and, when you're saying you don't see them, where are you fishing?

MR. OPPEGAARD: I'm fishing southeastern North Carolina.

MS. LEE: Thank you. Yes, and that would be consistent, actually, with what we heard at the council meeting for North Carolina.

MS. WIEGAND: Okay. I've got John, and then Melissa next.

MR. MALLETTE: Okay. A few things on this, and, to be clear, is this something that's already - - Just really quick, is this something that's already -- Is this just being discussed on being passed, or is this something that's already in the works?

MS. LEE: So we're discussing it here because -- Yes, and there is nothing that's been done. We're looking at the new information in regards to our requirements to reinitiate Section 7 consultation on the federal fishery when there's new information that there's adverse effects that we haven't basically properly -- Not properly, but that weren't included in the biological opinion, and so we haven't made a determination, but this is new information, and it's not discussed in the biological opinion, and so it may warrant some revisiting.

MR. MALLETTE: Okay, and I just wanted to clear that up before I made my comments. Kind of wherever -- I also fish in southeastern North Carolina, and I also fish a lot in the upper part of our state, above Pamlico Sound, and above Cape Lookout, and we sight fish cobia a lot as well on rays, but it's not manta rays, and we don't see manta rays. We don't have them nearshore, and it's cownose rays.

What worries me is just like anything else, is that this is a more of a Florida issue, but, if the federal takes this on, then somebody is going to take that, and just the slippery slope will be rays in general, and then they're going to say, well, you can't do this on cownose rays., and you can't do this on spotted rays, you can't do -- It's something that just opens that door.

I think this should be limited more to a state issue with Florida with manta ray, since most of it is happening close to shore in Florida, because I've done it, when I've gone to Palm Beach in the wintertime as well, and it's happening right on the beach, and so I think this should personally -- Just keep this as a Florida state thing, and not make it federal, or to the South Atlantic, going above as far as manta rays, because it's just --

Honestly, this is just one more thing where I feel like -- I'm on record for saying this a bunch of times, but I feel like Florida just needs its own separate thing anyway, out of the South Atlantic, and just have Florida completely, because it seems to always affect all the rest of the states more, because it's with -- The ecosystem, and the environment, and just Florida is so different from everywhere else, but a lot of decisions are made with it, and so this is just one more thing where I feel like Florida just needs to be its own separate entity, as far as I'm concerned.

MS. LEE: I would just add that we definitely are not looking to, you know, do anything across, you know, a blanket, giant area, and so, you know, that's why we're asking these questions, and I appreciate your feedback.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Next on the list, I've got Melissa, and then Tony.

MS. LEONE: I am right in the heart of where that is happening, and it's right on the coastline, and, when I first read about this, prepping for this meeting, I said this isn't even a federal water issue, and this is all happening literally on the beach, in state water, and it's a very brief amount of time. It happens sometimes for two weeks, and it's a water-dependent thing, or they're following this scum line that's going on, but it's a really brief thing.

I think, maybe two years ago, or last year, and they just upped the size of the cobia limit, and so I think you're not getting as many legal ones off of the bottom of these rays, and they just weren't big enough in the last couple years, but, yes, it was a very limited area that it's happening.

When we get into federal water, it's more of a turtle, or something else, or some debris in the water, that you might pitch something under, and you're not seeing these rays really far out there, but make the price of a bucktail expensive, and people won't miscast them so much, or use a weedless jig or something that they use -- I don't know, and I don't bass fish at all, but something they do with the weedless jigs for bass or something, so that it doesn't hook the fish, but I don't think it's a federal issue that should -- I want to put a motion that we take this off of the meeting.

MS. WIEGAND: So I will -- Just to sort of reiterate what Jenny has said, this isn't something the council is looking at regulating right now. Because they are -- Because giant manta rays are listed under the Endangered Species Act, and this new information, these new studies, just came out, what's possible is that what will happen is the Protected resources Division of NMFS may start looking at whether or not a formal Section 7 consultation is needed, and, Jenny, please feel free to jump in if I misspeak.

If reinitiation is needed, and, again, that's an if, and we're at not even the beginning, but sort of the pre-beginning, of this process. If that reinitiation is needed, the agency, the National Marine Fisheries Service would go through that Section 7 process, and they usually do this, like she said, in conjunction with the council, with the council providing them information.

Then, ultimately, there will be some result from that, that may or may not require the council to implement any measures, and, if the council is required to, it's because of that Endangered Species Act, and it would be a requirement, but that would be years, multiple years, down the road, and so, like Jenny said, this is the very, very beginning of the conversation, and this might not move forward at all, and it might move forward in some way, and they're just information gathering at this point, to figure out where to go. Jenny, let me know if I misspoke there, or if you would like to add anything, and then I'll go to Tony.

MS. LEE: Okay. I think both of that was pretty good, and so thank you, Christina, and so we are -- We are evaluating against our reinitiation criteria, whether or not we need to reinitiate to address this issue, and "by address this issue", it means recognize, you know, the information here in the biological opinion, and, you know, perhaps, you know, be clearer on best management practices related to it, for example, but, yes, the whole -- The whole reason why we wanted to make sure to get this information, and to have a council discussion, and an AP discussion, is, reading the publications, and thinking about it, it was not clear to us to what extent we knew -- We know that

it's a Florida issue, and it wasn't clear to us the extent to which basically the fishery extends into federal waters and follows.

At the council meeting, and during the AP meeting, we basically heard most states said, yes, and we really don't think this is an issue for us, and then we heard Florida essentially say, yes, this is an issue for us, and I think some people talked about, well, sometimes the manta ray -- You know, depending on where they are, people can follow them, but I did, again, hear that it is more of a state waters issue than a federal water, and just canvassing here, and we know you guys know a lot about these fisheries.

MR. BENEVENTO: In answer your question about only on the Florida east coast, this actually started in Destin, Florida, in the Panhandle. They do -- They've been chasing the rays, and getting the cobia off of that, and what Melissa said -- Basically, as fishermen up in northeast Florida, we'll look and see if they're catching them in Cocoa Beach, and then we know they're heading our way, but it's a very -- A two-week, or three-week, maximum type of thing.

The manta rays that we're pulling cobia off are the size of this table, and some of them -- Some of them will be, you know, 2,000 or 3,000 pounds, and so a jig head that got stuck in one of the wings is really not going to impair that giant manna for long. It's going to rust out, and so, from a best practice, you know, I can't think of anything other than, you know, telling people to try not to hook the manta, and get the cobia, but I really don't see this as an issue where the manta rays are being, you know, impacted that much, but --

MS. LEE: Thank you. I will add just a couple things. I think I noted we are less concerned about hooks than we are about line, and so one practice that we have in our existing hook-and-line best management practices, or advice to you all, is, wherever possible, to -- The more line, you know, you can get off, and like the closer to the hook you can cut the line, almost like if you had like your sea turtle release long line cutter, you know, something like that that you could use, without, of course, harming the animal, that would be good, because the main adverse impact we are seeing is the --

Basically, the line wrapping, and almost like amputating from the line, but, yes, we're not seeing any hook mortality, so to speak, and it's really been about the line, and then just concern of the behavior and the, you know, the vessel issue, when you have -- Again, some of these -- Some of what we've heard, again through at least closer, and more in the state waters, where you have a whole bunch of boats surrounding any, you know, animals, all kind of casting, and I think we heard stories there was recently an argument between two fishermen over like the whole issue, and so just a lot of fishing pressure on -- Like very focused in a tiny area, when that when it occurs. Anyways, I'm just happy to share kind of what I know too, and so that's what I understand it to be.

MS. HARRISON: I had a question, and I'm not sure who is best to answer, if you can answer, and, in North Carolina, we have to get an exemption from the Endangered Species Act for I believe Kemps ridley, right, Thomas, and is it Kemp's ridley?

MR. NEWMAN: The turtles?

MS. HARRIS: Yes, for gill netting, and so wondering, and is there any recreational fishery that currently has an exemption for ESA species?

MS. LEE: I think you're believing -- Or you're talking about what's known as a Section 10 permit under the ESA, and Florida currently does not have any Section 10 um permits.

MS. HARRISON: My question is does a recreational fishery qualify for one?

MS. LEE: Yes, and so, I mean, it's a state -- If a state is managing a recreational fishery, and having impacts, one -- The state could apply for a Section 10 permit.

MS. WIEGAND: Alana, are you talking about like incidental take permits? I think that's what they have for the turtles, are incidental take permits, and we -- Jenny, surely there are incidental take permits for recreational fisheries. Well, I say that, and I guess that's a question for you, is are there recreational fisheries that have incidental take permits that are federally managed?

MS. LEE: Yes. Federally, absolutely, and so, any time we do our consultations on our federally-managed fisheries, under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, we are subject to Section 7 consultations, which the end product is an incidental take permit, which is exempting take, and so certainly that is not -- We do not do that specific to one part of the fishery. It's -- You know, it's based on the impacts and for the managed fishery.

It gets a little trickier, and I don't know that we want to get too much in the weeds, when we're talking about state fisheries, and it sounded like the question asked was from someone who is familiar with a Section 10 permitted gillnet fishery in North Carolina, and so that's why I brought that up, but it's probably too in the weeds here, and I would be happy to talk about it offline, if it's better.

MS. HARRISON: I was just curious if this is going to have potential to impact the commercial fishery for cobia in the future, and so that's where I was interested in.

MS. LEE: Okay. So, I mean, so, like I said, where we are is we're just -- These two new studies came up, and they weren't out when we looked at the issue, and so we have -- We're doing our due diligence, and we're looking at the information, and what we previously consulted on for our federal fisheries under Section 7, and evaluating whether we need to reinitiate or not.

MS. WIEGAND: Melissa.

MS. LEONE: So just back to she said that the hooks weren't really the issue with the manta rays, and it was more the line, and so maybe just like some kind of a braid restriction or something, if they're going to manta ray fish, or something like that, or some kind of a leader, that would give - - You know, so they wouldn't have such a long following behind them, if it did break off or something, but I'm not a big fan of the braid to begin with, but that might be an easy resolution to the issue here.

AP MEMBER: That's what it sounds like to me, is we're talking about -- We're talking about a braid hook, right, trying to braid directly to the hook, because, you know, and I know, that, if I'm using forty-pound, or fifty-pound fluoro, if I break, it's breaking off at the jig, whereas, if I'm using braid, and I don't have that, just a section of fluoro or mono in there, then, you know, yes, it can break the braid, as opposed to the mono, because then you're throwing fifty-pound, or sixty-pound, braid.

AP MEMBER: Well, that's always the case, but, again, if you're actually chasing the cobia, you're going to have a leader. If you tie it straight to braid, you know, you're not a very good fisherman, but, again, even at that, we're talking about a 2-000-pound animal out there, with forty-pound mono, or braid, hanging behind it, and I don't think you're really impairing it that great, and so, I mean, I've seen these things move around and, to be frankly honest, I've almost had them jump into the boat with me, because they do elevate, and, you know -- So I think we're doing something that's not necessary here.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Does anyone have any more comments, or information, to provide Jenny? All right. I'm not seeing any hands pop up. Thank you, Jenny, for this presentation, and I will say that she did send me the link to sort of the best fishing practices manual they have for manta rays, and I will forward that out to everyone, so you all can see it.

So, with that, that is actually the last thing we had on our agenda for today, and we are back to being right on time, and so we will start tomorrow morning at 9:00 a.m., in here, and we're going to be talking about the for-hire reporting improvement amendment, and you're going to get a citizen science update, and then we'll get into that research and monitoring plan that I mentioned, and then, in the afternoon, you're going to be doing a practice run with us for one of our new stakeholder engagement initiatives called Lines of Communications, that I'll talk about in more detail tomorrow, and so thank you, guys. We did a ton of work today, and had a lot of really great discussion, and I guess I will adjourn us for the day, and we'll see you guys bright and early in the morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on March 31, 2025.)

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APRIL 1, 2025

TUESDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in North Charleston, South Carolina on April 1, 2025, and was called to order by Ms. Christina Wiegand.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so welcome to day two of the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel. We're going to start out the morning with a presentation on the For-Hire Reporting Improvement Amendment, and I will go ahead and turn it over to John Hadley.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you, everyone, and I'm happy to be here. For those of you that I haven't met, my name is John Hadley. I am on council staff. I'm the economist for council staff, and also the co-lead for the For-Hire Reporting Improvements Amendment, and so I just wanted to say good morning, and I'll get this teed-up here.

All right, and so I'll start off with a little bit of background on this amendment, but this is sort of just a -- Generally speaking, this is a comprehensive amendment that the council is undertaking at the moment, and the idea is to improve on the for-hire reporting program, and so the for-hire logbook, and this is a -- When I say "comprehensive amendment", I mean that it affects several fishery management plans.

It affects, of course, the Coastal Migratory Pelagics FMP, and so that's why we're speaking with you today, but it also covers the snapper grouper as well as dolphin wahoo fisheries, and so, to take a little bit of a step back, and there's some acronyms in here, but the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting Program, and SEFHIER, was launched in 2021, with implementation of the For-Hire Comprehensive Electronic Reporting Amendment, and so this is really the original amendment that implemented the for-hire reporting requirement in the South Atlantic.

The amendment was put in place, or it modified requirements for federally-permitted charter vessels, again in all three of the major finfish fisheries. Since then, overall, the kind of the crux of the issue, and the issue that's trying to be addressed in this, or partially addressed in this amendment, or there's really two major issues. One is the information that's being collected cannot be validated, and the other major issue is that overall compliance is very low, and so there's different ways of looking at compliance.

Some information in front of you here was presented from the National Marine Fisheries Service on 2023 information collected through the for-hire logbook program in the South Atlantic, and so, overall, you can see that top line there, and 83 percent of permitted vessels reported at least one time in 2023, but, when you dig into it a little bit more, and look at the overall compliance rate with reporting, it goes down considerably, and so many vessels were not necessarily meeting all of the reporting requirements.

They weren't necessarily reporting on time, or were not necessarily submitting did-not-fish reports, which is part of the logbook requirement, or some were not -- There were many reports that were just missing, and so maybe a vessel just did not submit all the trip reports for all the fishing trips, and so maybe just submitted one when, you know, let's say five or six were taken, five or six for-hire trips were taken, in a week.

When you look at overall compliance, that sort of bottom line number there, approximately 37.4 percent of vessels were assessed to be meeting all of the reporting requirements in the SEFHIER program, and so some considerable -- Considerably lower there, when you look at the total compliance rate, and so that's one of the major issues that the council is trying to address.

Within this, and a little bit more background, and so, in 2024, the council started an amendment to improve compliance with for-hire reporting requirements for both headboats and charter vessels, to make improvements in the reporting program, and so part of this was that the National Marine Fisheries Service did send a letter to the council stating their concerns over the low compliance rate and lack of validation.

Within this letter that was sent to the council, and this was both from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center as well as the Southeast Regional Office, and so the science and management side of the National Marine Fisheries Service in the Southeast, and the recommendations in this letter

included requiring logbook submission prior to offload of catch, a dockside intercept survey to estimate misreporting and non-reporting, require a declaration or a pre-landing combination, and so essentially a trip notification, prior to leaving, and also before coming back to the dock, require landing only at approved locations, and requiring weekly did-not-fish reports when fishing does not occur.

That list of items we're going to come back to, and you'll see kind of reoccurring themes through the different actions. Several of the actions in this amendment go back to that sort of bulleted-out letter that the National Marine Fisheries Service sent to the council, and some of the actions in this amendment address that.

We're not necessarily working in a vacuum here, and so we're looking at the east, the Southeast, and so the South Atlantic, but, of course, the Dolphin, Wahoo and Coastal Migratory Pelagics FMP expands up the east coast, depending on the fishery management plan that's being examined, but, also, the Gulf Council is undergoing basically a total overhaul of their for-hire reporting program. Their program was essentially discontinued by a federal court decision, and so they are starting from scratch, and they are in the process of re-implementing a for-hire reporting requirement in the Gulf of Mexico, and so they're working on their own piece over in the Gulf.

Then the Highly Migratory Species Division of NMFS is also revamping their for-hire reporting program, and so there's a few tables in this presentation that show sort of what's being considered in those different aspects in different regional areas in relation to for-hire reporting requirements.

One other kind of bringing you up to speed, one other piece of background to bring you up to speed to the council's most recent discussion, in March 2025, the council discussed changes to the Southeast Regional Headboat Survey in the amendment, and so both -- All actions don't necessarily cover headboats, but some do include changes to the headboat reporting requirement as well, and, overall, the council noted that it's important to maintain consistency in reporting requirements, to minimize the reporting burden on permit holders, and so trying to remain -- Particularly maintain some of that regional consistency between the Gulf and the South Atlantic, and then, at the same time, the data collected need to be usable for management.

Those are the sort of the two competing aspects here, minimizing the reporting burden, but the data needs to be able to be used in management. Otherwise, you know, the information is not useful, and so the council is really trying to make sure that the data collected can be validated and can be used in management.

Why are the changes needed? The changes are needed to improve reporting for the federal for-hire fleet, so compliance improves, collected data can be used directly in management, and there again, the reporting burden is minimized, and, again, keeping in mind those other aspects of Highly Migratory Species and the Gulf Council developing their own separate amendments, and trying to keep some sort of consistency there for permit holders that essentially could hold all three permits, or three types of permits, I should say.

Where are we in the process? Overall, it's fairly early. The council has discussed this several times. However, the council just approved this amendment for scoping, and so we're really sort of still in that conceptual phase of trying to -- The amendment has been approved for scoping, and so

send it out for public input, and we're getting input from the APs, and we'll come back to the council in June with that information for the council to help them further develop their amendment.

Another thing to keep in mind is that the concepts that are further in this presentation are a little bit more high-level, and they're not necessarily very detailed. The documents that the council has been reviewing are a little bit more detailed, and the reason being they're trying to see what the Gulf Council, who is ahead of them, is doing, and trying to keep in mind what decisions they need to make to keep consistency with the Gulf, if that makes sense, and so we're going to look at it conceptually speaking.

If you did have a chance to review the document in detail, you see there's some more details in the document. We're not necessarily going to be presenting those today, in this presentation, and it's more conceptually to get your feedback on the major topics that the council is considering, and so, assuming this moves forward, the council will continue developing this amendment and approving for submission to the National Marine Fisheries Service in June 2026, and so fairly early in the process.

A few of the possible actions in the amendment, there are really six overall, potentially six overall, actions, that will look at modifying the reporting frequency and timing, requiring trip notification, establishing approved landing locations, requiring participation in a validation and estimation survey as part of the -- As part of having the permit, revising reporting and economic data for charter vessels, and modifying did-not-fish reports.

Again, you can see a lot of those relate back to that letter that the National Marine Fisheries Service sent to the council and those set of recommendations from the service on how to improve the program for use, so the data can be used in management, and so, really quickly, I'm going to go over the first general action, or general topic, and then I'm going to turn it over to the AP for your feedback, but the first action in the amendment focuses on reporting frequency and timing.

Currently, federally-permitted charter and headboat vessels must report all fish harvested and discarded for each trip and submitted weekly. This information must be submitted weekly, and so, essentially, the council is looking at changing the frequency of reporting, and so stepping up how often those reports need to be submitted, or need to be logged, and then the timing of report submission, and so stepping up the deadline for a report to be submitted.

There again, you know, I mentioned that there's several different items going on in the for-hire reporting world regionally, and this table shows you what is being considered, or what is currently in place and what is being considered, for changes to for hire reporting.

Currently, the for-hire trip reports must be submitted weekly in the South Atlantic, and so that's that far -- Or almost the -- The second box to the left, and then, moving to the right, you have the Gulf, the Greater Atlantic Region, and then HMS, and so, currently, there is no requirement in the Gulf. They are working on it, working on moving towards submission of logbooks being -- They're considering logbooks being submitted prior to offload of catch, or within 30 minutes of a trip, or potentially another option that they're looking at is requiring daily submission of trips.

Then, in the Greater Atlantic Region, they have a vessel trip report requirement, where vessel trip reports need to be submitted within forty-eight hours after entering port, with the exception of the

recreational tilefish fishery, where there's the trip report must be submitted twenty-four hours after the end of a trip. Then, lastly, HMS, on the far right there, you can see that the electronic -- There's an option to report electronically, telephone, or other means, like catch cards. HMS is considering moving, or is likely moving, to an electronic trip report required twenty-four hours after the end of each trip.

This is where I turn it over to the AP, and we're looking -- We're asking for information and your feedback on the reporting frequency, and how should that change, or what should be the council's consideration, if they're going to move up that reporting frequency, and so should a trip be reported at the end of the day, or should it be reported after the end of every trip? Is there another frequency that should be considered, and then, looking at timing, when should trips -- Sorry. To the right is reporting frequency -- To the left is reporting frequency, and to the right is timing, and when should those trips be submitted? Twenty-four hours at the end of each trip, within forty-eight hours at the end of each trip, and an option that's being considered is within one hour of offloading catch, within thirty minutes of offloading catch, and so you can see there's a large range there, or prior to offloading catch. Is there some other timing?

With that, I'll turn it over to get your feedback, generally speaking, on what the council should consider as far as reporting frequency, and reporting timing, and potentially stepping up those requirements.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so I've already got a couple of hands up online. I'm going to go to council member Tom Roller first, and then, after Tom, Charlie Locke.

MR. ROLLER: Can you guys hear me?

MS. WIEGAND: Loud and clear. Go ahead, Tom.

MS. ROLLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning, everybody. I know I know most of you guys there. My name is Tom Roller. I'm a council member from North Carolina, and I've been a fulltime for-hire operator for twenty-plus years. So, before we really get off on this discussion, I just kind of want to give you guys just a couple things to think about here when we discuss the SEFHIER.

You know, as a fisheries manager, you know, in my role in the council, as well as in my involvement in the state, probably the number-one thing I hear from fishermen, and this is all stakeholders, commercial, for-hire, recreational, is that people don't like MRIP. They don't like the recreational numbers. They don't like being managed by estimates, and so, when we consider this program, and making it usable for management, it's really a zero-sum game here.

For hire guys, you can be managed by MRIP, or you can be managed by your own submitted data, that ideally will be a lot better and won't be underestimates, right, and we're not reinventing the wheel here. All these things that we propose, these have come from a lot of vetting, and a lot of information, and I know a lot of this will sound really difficult and annoying, for those who will have to report, but that's just really how it goes.

The idea behind this program, and when we consider it, and all the different options here, are trying to make a program that is as easily enforceable as possible and can provide the best data possible,

and so just something to consider here, and I hope that's kind of an overarching idea for you all. I'm going to end my comment here and listen to the AP going forward. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Tom. Next up, I have Charlie.

MR. LOCKE: Hi, guys. Charlie Locke here, Wanchese, North Carolina, commercial representative. I still think this is ironic, that we got 38 percent, or whatever it was, and, I mean, as a commercial -- I mean, I get a letter in the mail saying they're going to turn me over to OLE, Office of Law Enforcement at NOAA, when I'm a couple weeks late on my Northeast logbooks, and like, every time we go to renew our Southeast permits, if you don't have your logbooks up today, you don't get your permit, and so -- I don't say this to the recreational side, but, for the for-hire side, they're commerce, just like we are.

They have to have that permit to go fishing, and I don't understand why there's not a permit delay until they're caught up on their logbooks. I mean, that's what we have to -- That's the standard we have to abide by on the commercial side, and I agree with Tom Roller, and like -- This is like -- I mean, we have to get better information. I mean, we're -- I'm on the Bluefish AP for the Mid-Atlantic, and they're trying to do sector separation up there, and that's a big controversy right now, where the charter headboats want, you know, more allocation on black sea bass, flounder, and bluefish, and so they're looking into sector allocations kind of up there, and you log -- You know, landings requirements, logbooks, the same type of deal.

One of the comments I made up there was, you know, hey, I want -- I report -- You know, as a commercial fisherman, I report false albacore. I report sea mullet, because, if it were to ever come to a limited entry, or a -- You know, nobody wants a catch share in the Southeast, and we've always fought that, but, if they ever go to a catch share, you're only going to get your -- You're going to get your allocation on what you've reported in your logbooks. That's your only record of what you've landed.

I mentioned that to the recreational side, even up there in the charter-headboat, and it's like, hey, don't not report, because that's going to be your record of what you've caught, and so, in the future, if it ever comes to something like this, you know, at least you'll base your landings, or what your allocation is, on what you reported, and so I don't really know what the answer is to get better compliance in this, but to just say, hey, these charter guys need their permits to go fishing. They can't get their permit till they comply. I mean, it's, that's what happens to us, and so I don't -- I don't understand why that's never been looked into.

Then another thing I'll say is I've seen the date on this, implementing in, what, 2027, or 2028, you know, the final rule to come down. Why are we waiting so long? Like why are -- I mean, this is something we need right now. Like we need this info right now on all of our fisheries. We're all being squeezed.

I'm tired of giving quota to the recreational side, as a commercial fisherman. I'm very tired of it, because there's less and less and less of us, and the recreational side is growing leaps and bounds, unaccountable, and like there's got to be some accountability, and I'll say this, you know, on the record, and I've said it many times, that I will not give one pound -- I will not vote for one pound going to the recreational side until they have the same level of, you know, accountability as we do, and I think that -- Going forward, that that needs to be -- You know, that needs to be a major issue,

and it needs to have more of an emphasis. It seems like we're dragging our feet on this one, and so I'll let it go on that, but I appreciate it. Thanks.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so I'm going to look around the room for hands. I have John, and then Melissa, and I'm going to sort of point us back to the questions that John has put on the screen for us where the council is looking for feedback. I will say we've got a tight timeline this morning, and so I want to sort of circle back to some of those questions, to make sure the council is getting the input from you all that they need, and so John, then Melissa.

MR. MALLETTE: Yes, and so, as a commercial fisherman, a charter boat captain, and as a dealer, I kind of get it from all three ends, and I don't see why -- I know, in the South Atlantic, we already have the Bluefin data system that we do for our federal reporting, and what we do with the state of North Carolina, and I don't see why that can't be put in for for-hire, just like we do.

It's literally online. You put in what your catch is, but, when you're talking about an hour after offloading catch, or even twenty-four hours, and, I mean, we got life happens. We're fishermen. Sometimes we run two or three trips a day, and it might not get done. I'm not going to do all that, when I got to be right back up at five o'clock in the morning, but we can keep up with our records, and, once a month, we can just go online, and submit it with the dates, because it's going to show what date you caught this.

If I have a one lump sum amount of each fish I got, I can put that in and say, from this date to this date, this was caught. It doesn't have to be the exact date, but then you're still getting the numbers, and I think that simplifies things, and it makes it very easy for for-hire people to put their data in, just like we have to do commercial, just like I have to do as a dealer, at the time period that it works for us, and you still get the data, and it's that Bluefin system.

It's very simple. Anybody can upload as an app. You put your number in, and you're done, and I think that would be a very simple way, and what that does is, when you add that simplicity, it makes you easier to enforce compliance, because you made it so easy, and it kind of takes a lot of excuses out of the picture.

MS. LEONE: As a for-hire, at the beginning, you said that the information isn't useful, and we can't use the information, and it's because of the poor percentage, or it's because it's not validated?

MR. HADLEY: Really, it's both, and, if it was a poor percentage, and it could be validated, then there's a window there where it could be used in management, but the feedback that the council has gotten from the agency is that the compliance percentage is so low that that's problematic, and, also, the agency noted that the data cannot be validated right now. As it stands now, they cannot validate the data. Therefore, the Science Center doesn't deem it best scientific information available, and it can't be used in management. The default is to look at information coming from the Marine Recreational Information Program instead.

MS. LEONE: So why would we continue to develop this if there's no use for it?

MR. HADLEY: The goal is that it could be useful. It's that, if you could get that compliance rate up, and then also if the data could be validated, then presumably the agency would say, yes, it would be useful in management, and this would be the data stream, instead of MRIP.

MS. LEONE: So I consider myself pretty reasonable with using a computer, and I know I find it difficult for the two systems that we have to use. Just to get your number, or your account, you have to sign up, and then wait a week or two for somebody to email you a postcard, or I don't even remember, and it was a few years ago when I set it up, but some of the fishermen aren't even as computer literate, or capable, and I think some of the compliance issue is the inability to do it, or the resources to do it, to have to have internet, or put an app on your phone. Some of these people are using flip phones. They don't put apps on their phones. My phone doesn't have enough storage to add an app.

Then they want to track you in the ocean, which nobody wants to be tracked of what they're doing, or where they're going, and it kills your battery, but I think, if you could make the information you're looking for easier to report, that would maybe contribute to more fishermen being compliant, because it's just a capability issue for them.

MS. WIEGAND: Okay. I have Tom Roller next, and then Thomas Newman.

MR. ROLLER: What I want to respond to a little bit is what Charlie Locke said, and I encourage the advisory panel to listen to what Charlie says. He's absolutely correct. He's been -- You know, Charlie has fished a long time, and he's faced a lot of these issues from a different sector, but I will say, regarding the enforcement aspect, they are enforcing the permit in the way in which Charlie questioned it, and so, for example, if your logbook is not compliant, you can't get your permit.

The SEFHIER program is calling and reminding people that maybe they missed a week, and maybe they have a problem, or maybe they're not putting their entries in, and they are doing referrals to the Office of Law Enforcement for summary settlements. We've had this discussion on the council. Now, that being said, that's not necessarily the whole problem that we're facing here.

The problem that we're facing is that the data being submitted is also not good, because, the way the program is designed currently, it's really impossible to validate, and we heard this from -- We have a for-hire reporting advisory panel, and Melissa is on it, who just spoke, and the thing we heard, from a lot of people, virtually everybody on the panel, was that people are lying in their entries.

They're just putting in did-not-fish reports, just because it's easier, and because they can get away with it, and so this -- The issues, the each individual issues, that hopefully we can get some feedback on today, are what has been recommended to make this program compliant, and make the data better, so it can be used for management, and so I encourage the advisory panel to consider it in that form and fashion. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: Thomas Newman. Yes, and I've been following this at the council level for a while myself, and my question was -- We shared all the other for-hire, you know, reporting programs, and are any of any of those able to be validated and used for management?

MR. HADLEY: The way that the Gulf Council is considering their logbook, I believe it lines up with at least the requirements that the National Marine Fisheries Service has stated are needed to

validate it, and so, with the Gulf Council, once it's in place, that's likely. It hasn't been done yet, because it's not in place.

With the Greater Atlantic Region, and so GARFO, the Mid-Atlantic and New England, that information hasn't been validated, necessarily. They use that information selectively, and so they may not use it for catches, but, if there's, you know, a noted gap in data, they can go to that information source, and use that to fill in that gap in information, and so they use it selectively, but it's not necessarily validated. HMS, their intent is to -- It seems to validate it, but, to my knowledge, it has not been validated yet, but, again, they're looking at kind of upping their requirements, so it could be validated, in theory.

MR. NEWMAN: Yes, and that's just kind of the point I was trying to make is, you know, it's already been well advertised that, you know, we can't validate this data, and there's no penalties for not reporting correctly, and so a lot of people, even if they're not reporting did-not-fish, they maybe just say that I caught one fish, just to say they reported something, and so I think your compliance is probably lower than what it's actually showing, because you say people are lying for that low level of compliance you've gotten.

I think what the council needs to do is develop something, like the Gulf is doing, that they know can be validated, and then go forward from that process, instead of asking people to create a program that they don't know whether or not it's going to be validated. You have to have some user buy-in, you know, early on, and I think that's an important point.

I mean, we talked about it last night, you know, sitting around the table, and it was like we all want better data, but we've got to come up with the ideas and get that data out there, because, even like you were saying, John, and, if you can just fill in some of those data gaps with information, that's -- You know, that's huge, you know, even if it's not 100 percent validated, and, if you can validate enough portions of it, where you can fill in some important data gaps, I think that could get some more buy-in from stakeholders.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. So on my list I have Alana, then Will, then Melissa, and, again, I just sort of want to circle us back to the questions that Hadley has on the board, John Hadley has on the board. We have a couple of other topics to get to related to for-hire improvement, and so I want to make sure that you guys have the opportunity to comment on all the different aspects that the council is considering, and not just the timing. All right. Alana, Will, Melissa.

MS. HARRISON: I think it's important to remember that the Gulf of Mexico has a limited entry on their for-hire permits, and so they have a better way to encourage compliance, because they have such a large buy-in. I believe the six-pack starts at \$35,000, all the way up to the -- Like the twenty-six-pack is like \$250,000, the last time I heard.

Anyway, so I think that the only way to truly solve the issue would be to have limited entry, and then to have -- But then my question is like, okay, if you have limited entry -- Right now with the commercial sector, and so like I'll give you an example. My brother was late with his logbooks, and the Permit Office says you can't have your permit until we process all your logbooks, and so the weather was beautiful, but he couldn't go fishing, because he didn't have his permit, right, and the fish dealer is not going to buy your fish without your permit.

Like my mind is like, well, the for-hire, you don't have that card to play with them, you know, and so, even if you did have a limited entry, and you were encouraging compliance that way, how would you not -- How would it not just turn into people ignoring that, and running illegal charters, which we have an issue with already, and so you would have to probably link up with the Coast Guard, and the state marine patrol, to have like a list of people who haven't renewed their permit, but that's getting into the weeds.

You could validate through observers. I mean like, in my town, we always have makeup charters, because the weather was bad, and so there's always open spots, and so you could just call an observer when you have a spot on a makeup charter.

Then the timing, and I want to touch on Melissa's point. Like there's nothing more frustrating than a young person trying to explain to your parent how to do something on their phone. Like I'm sure everybody -- Like I don't know about you all, but like my mother -- Like I will show her the same thing a hundred times, and she cannot -- She'll just call me, and so I think we -- Definitely not having yourself locked into an app on the phone.

Like, if there's a website that you can access, and I find that my parents are a lot better with a computer, and a website, than they are with an app on a tablet, or on a phone, and then I think twenty-four hours. I mean, twelve hours would probably be the shortest amount of time after offloading, because you have like thirty minutes of -- Where I'm at, there's no internet, and like the internet is so bad, and the cell service is so bad, and people live so far from the dock, because we have -- Hatteras is the only inlet on my island, and so there's some people who live an hour away from the dock, and so they won't even be able to make it home in time to get on their computer to do the reporting.

I think that's very -- It's much too short of a time period, but you definitely need to figure out a time period so that you don't have the issue of this year-long backlog of reports, because then the fishermen get upset, because it takes the Permits Office so long to validate, or to process their logbooks, but it's like, well, you waited and sent us 200 logbooks like at the end of the year, and so it's -- I think that there definitely needs to be like a time limit, but I think that an hour and thirty minutes is much too short.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I've got Will, then Melissa, then Jat.

MR. JONES: I guess I just want to say that I think, rather than going after reporting frequency and timing, when we have an issue with -- You know, right now it's -- You have to -- You're supposed to submit the report weekly, and we already have a really low rate of compliance for that. If we up -- If we make that more stringent, I think you're just going to automatically lower compliance, and I don't want to sound -- I don't want to just sound like I'm just making up a whole bunch of excuses, because I understand the argument from the commercial side that they have a lot of requirements, and what they have to do is much more in depth.

You know, we basically -- You know, we don't have to do nearly as much reporting, or, you know, we don't have as strict of requirements, and that's not necessarily fair, but the for-hire fishing, the charter fishing, industry is just a completely different animal. You know, when we get back to the dock -- You might have two trips in a day. You got -- You're talking with your clients, and cleaning the boat, getting ready for the next trip, if you have another trip.

You have emails, phone calls to answer, that you missed while you were out on the boat, wife and kids at home, and we have that on either sector, but I guess I think we should go -- And we also have the problem of -- I can't speak for all areas, but, in Morehead City, there's a lot of small vessel charter guys that don't have these SERO permits to begin with.

If we could maybe attack the problem first, and, I mean, I think going for frequency and timing would eventually be a good solution, once we get to the point where all the for-hire vessels have the permits to begin with, but, right now, we're not even meeting the weekly requirements, and we don't have -- You know, with the small boat guys, most of them don't -- Maybe not most of them, but a lot of them don't have the permit to begin with, and so we need to have some way to -- A way to convince more of them to actually have the permits, and maybe streamline the app, because that's one thing that I get frustrated with.

Again, I'm trying not to just make a whole bunch of excuses, but I -- You know, if I make time to deal with the app, and report the same day, you know, and it's asking like the date, the start date of the trip and the end date of the trip, and, for for-hire vessels, it's a one-day trip. It's a four, six, or eight-hour trip, and I think you just need to decrease the amount of fields of entry on there and streamline it maybe for the for-hire guys. That would make the guys that are trying to be compliant have an easier time being compliant. I don't know, and I think I touched on everything I was thinking of, but I'll think of more, I'm sure.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Melissa and then Jot.

MS. LEONE: I think that the timing is already -- A week is plenty long enough, and twenty-four hours is not long enough, but the people who are complying with that is -- I don't think the timing is an issue, or making it any more frequently would be helpful, but, the data for the commercial, they're just collecting what is harvested, and, for the for-hire, they're asking every fish we've discarded, and there's a lot more questions there, that -- If it's not validated, but the timing, yes. I think, if you want to up the compliance, ask less questions, and you'll get more compliance, and then, little by little, you want to add a question back in, down the road, when people are used to it, but the commercial logbooks are done on paper. Can the for-hire people do it on paper, and mail it in, to touch back to that timing thing of the older people not using a computer well, but I wouldn't adjust the timing. If anything, make it -- Keep it as long as it is, or make it longer.

MS. WIEGAND: Okay. Jot, go ahead.

MR. OWENS: Hi, everybody, Jot Owens, southeast North Carolina, for-hire industry, about -- A little over thirty years now involved. Timing-wise, it's a double-edged sword, in my opinion. For me, as a fishing guide, running, you know, two or sometimes three trips a day, and I'm a single operator. I'm not sitting upstairs, as a captain, with a mate downstairs that could take notes, and I see the problem is two ways. If we don't take notes, days start coming together. You know, how many redfish, how many flounder, how many Spanish mackerel.

So, for me, I feel like forty hours is enough, and the reason I say that is because -- I've talked to other guides before on this, and, if you wait too long, then you come right full circle back to the rubber stamp scenario, where I think I caught ten Spanish, and I'll put ten Spanish, you know, and so it's -- You know, I think timing is important. Making it easy to use, as a lot have said, is the

most important thing, so it doesn't get rubber stamped, but, if you go too long -- I mean, I have to go back and look at my notes. I take notes, but not everybody else does. I have to look at my book and see what I caught, you know, to make sure those numbers are right, and so I wouldn't get too far outside forty hours, in my opinion, to make sure we cut down on the rubber stamp. Thank you.

MR. HADLEY: All right. I appreciate that. I'm going to move us along. You know, I think that's great information for the council to consider, and, again, that -- I think that's going to help them. Kind of what we're thinking about here, you can think about kind of setting your bookends on what you want to consider, and so I think that information that you just relayed to them was very helpful for that.

I'm going to switch gears a little bit here. This is another action that's being considered, and so it would require a trip notification, and so, essentially, this is a hail-out scenario, and so, currently, there are no trip notification requirements for the for-hire sector. The possible changes include requiring trip notification when the vessel is used for fishing, and so, looking at for-hire fishing, bait fishing, and so, you know, if you have an eight o'clock charter, going out at six and catching bait, and being back at the dock for the clients, and private recreational fishing or commercial fishing.

Then another sort of set of activities that the council is considering is requiring a trip notification as well when other for-hire activities are taking place on that vessel, and so the vessel is used for activities involving paying passengers, and so examples of that could be a sunset cruise, or dolphin watching, or a beach day for clients, that sort of thing, and so, anyway, does the -- You know, looking -- Kind of the ask of the AP is does the AP have feedback, or recommendations, on modifications that the council is considering as far as trip notification requirements?

You know, the idea here, you know, thinking of what can this be used for, this is looking at validation, and so knowing that, you know, if a port sampler shows up, and the vessel is gone, you can see it was gone on -- It was on a for-hire fishing trip, and that trip can be validated, and so that's kind of where this is coming from, as far as improving the ability for the logbook to be validated, but I'll turn it over to the AP here, looking for feedback on requiring a trip notification prior to a trip.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. First up, I have Charlie, and then, followed by Charlie, Jot.

MR. LOCKE: So I would be very careful on the trip notification, and one reason being -- We have this in the shark fishery, the HMS shark fishery, and, when they first came up with the idea, I think they thought everybody had an eight-knot, steel-hull boat, that didn't make any speed, and I've got a pretty fast boat, and they needed a -- I want to say it was a two-hour notification, and so, if I was going to leave the dock at five, I had to notify them by three in the morning, and I was still asleep.

You know, I don't like -- I don't like hail-in and hail-out. I think that's terrible. I mean, to me, I think this is -- I don't think you should have to notify them when you go fishing, and just notify them when you land. That way, you're explaining what you did all in the same reporting. You're already having low compliance, and I think this is just adding another layer that nobody is going to do. Thanks.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Next, I have Jot, and then Tom Roller.

MR. OWENS: I would highly advise against the other activities, cruises, dolphin watching and stuff. We're trying to get fisheries data here, fishing data, and maybe down the road, but that's one more scenario that's going to keep compliance low, in my opinion, if you're adding stuff like that to it. It's just not really important, at this time, for the data and the management of fisheries.

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

MR. ROLLER: So, you know, we've had a lot of discussions about this at the advisory panel, as well as at the council level. It's important to note that commercial and recreational, or commercial and for-hire fisheries in this case, are very, very different, right, in how we interact with the resource and what we do in the sense, and like, you know, commercially, you're going to bring catch back, and you're going to take it to the fish house. That's where a lot of validation is done on commercial logbooks.

On the for-hire, you know, we come to the dock, and the clients take the fish away, and that sort of thing. The idea with the hail-out is to make it enforceable, because, if you were hailing-out, that means that the dockside samplers can potentially come and sample you that day. That means law enforcement knows that you were running a fisheries trip, and so the idea is to make this program as efficient as possible, or let's put it this way. To make this enforceable with as few resources as possible, and, if we do that, that's going to hopefully drive compliance here, and so think about it a little bit differently, is kind of the suggestion that I have.

I know it sounds really inconvenient, but the idea is that, if it can be--- If you can make it enforceable, in this degree, that will, you know, have a lot more people doing it, because a big complaint I hear, from fishermen as well is, well, I'm never sampled at the dock, or, well, I'm never sampled at my marina. Well, this sort of activity is what allows that to happen on a day-to-day basis.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Next, I've got Thomas. and then John.

MR. NEWMAN: Yes, and that's kind of the point I wanted to make, is what Tom was talking about. I mean, this doesn't have to be like a physical phone call. This could be simply opening your app and starting your trip. I mean, I do it commercially a lot with my e-logbooks for the Northeast. I go ahead and open my fishing report, and I pre-fill some of my data in, so that, when I'm coming in in the evening time, I don't have as much time to finish filling out my report, but this, you know, hashtag call-in could be simply opening the app and saying -- Just push a button and saying you're starting a trip.

It's like Councilman Roller said, and, you know, if you want somebody to be there at the dock, they need a little bit of a heads-up to be able to survey your catch, and validate some of this data, and so, if you can start your trip, and tell them that you're actually fishing that day, you know, they can have observers there ready at the dock to measure your catch and to validate some of this data.

MS. WIEGAND: John.

MR. MALLETTE: I'm going to say I'm against a hail-in and hail-out, personally, just because there's just so many other things that we do with our boats, and not just that, and, you know, if

people up the compliance on the reporting, you'll get the data on -- Probably as much of an estimate on when we're going and when we're not going, and so, if law enforcement wants to come check, they go, but then who's going to enforce it?

When I leave the dock, and let's say they want to come check me, and they say, oh, he didn't say he was out, but they drive by the dock and the boat is gone, and are they going to wait until I come back, just to double-check to see if I hailed out, because we use our boats for other things. I use my boats for military training, where I'm at, doing role-playing and things like that, where I shouldn't have to report that.

I shouldn't have to report if I just want to take my girlfriend to go down to a restaurant to go eat. Do I have to report that I'm leaving the dock, because I had a charter earlier that day, and then I decided to go just for a boat ride, on my personal boat, later that afternoon, and they come by and see it's not there, and they're going to assume, oh, he did another trip, and he didn't report it, and what's going to stop that?

I get it. I get the gist behind it, but I also see it leaves a whole lot of room for misinterpretation, that could cause more problems, where, if you get the compliance, and get the reporting better, from the actual charters that you're running from the actual for-hire sector, that will take out a lot of the need for the hail-out and the hail-in.

MR. FREEMAN: Can I respond to that? I don't think it's going to be an enforcement issue, like they want to write you a ticket because you didn't start your trip. I think it's more of a data collection need, and, you know, we have our APAIS surveys, where they intercept anglers at the dock, and, if they don't know you're fishing, they can't intercept your anglers, and so, if you could do something as simple as, like I say, open your app when you crank your boat up in the morning, while it's warming up, and if you could open your app and say "start trip", you know, that would alert -- That would alert not the authorities, but that would alert the data collectors that you're going fishing that day, and, if somebody is close by, and they want to sample your catch, they know round about what time you possibly will be coming in.

It's not -- I don't think it's an enforcement issue, saying we're going to write you a ticket if you don't, you know, go fishing every day, because you didn't -- It's more of a data collection need, and a need to validate this data.

This is the biggest problem with this data, is we can't validate it, and, if they could catch you on one of those trips coming in, and then what you're reporting matches exactly what hits your dock, they can say, hey, man, John's stuff is 100 percent, you know, and we can validate his data, and maybe we can assume some other fishermen are reporting accurately as well, and that's what this is more of an issue about. It's not, hey, we're going to go slam John, and we've seen his boat out, you know, today, and he didn't say he was starting his trip. I don't believe that's where NOAA was trying to go with this.

MR. MALLETTE: Just very, very fast. When the person does come around, and I'm going to use New River Marina in Sneads Ferry. When they would come around and do that collection, I got his phone number. The guy that did it, I got his phone number, and I put it in my phone, like, hey, I'll let you know when I'm coming in, and this one is coming in, and then I didn't need that, because, at the end of the day, with what you're asking for, that's great, but look at how many for-hire people

there are. They're not going to hire that many people to get everybody, and so they're not going to be getting the big majority of people anyway.

If there's a way I can let the guy know -- You know, the first time he hits me, hey, man, and I'm running today, and, if you're going to be around today, today would be a good day. If he's around, he's around. If he's at Wrightsville Beach, or Morehead, or somewhere else, then it's a non-issue. I'm just saying that, because, obviously, we'll just look historically, and we already don't want them knowing everything. You know what I'm saying, but, if you give something -- If you don't give something, they'll take everything. That's been proven, and so we give you as much reporting as possible.

I just think it's one more thing that where you're opening it up for people not to do it as much, and, if they say, well, hey, we didn't get a lot of compliance with this, and you didn't follow the rules, and we'll just get one thing right before you add something else. Maybe bring this later, when the reporting clients for the actual charters, and the actual fish, is what really matters, and it gets higher, and then try to add something else. Don't try to add more while the main issue of how much fish you're catching is already low. If you want more people to give you how much fish you're catching, quit adding layers to it. Get that right first, before you start adding more.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so I've got a list of names going. I'm going to go to Councilman Tom Roller, then back to Thomas Newman, then Alana, then Melissa, then Will.

MR. ROLLER: I think John just made a really good case for hail-out, even if he didn't intend to do that, and the point I'm making here, or the point -- The idea of hail-out is to do exactly what he said, right, and there's only going to be so much sampling. There's only going to be so much enforcement, and the idea is to get a percentage of it, to validate the data.

If you do a hail-out, that's essentially the same thing as calling the guy and say, hey, I'm fishing today, and you're doing it in a much easier and streamlined fashion, so that, if you were to be sampled, you could be sampled that day, and I also think it's important to note the way this program is being discussed isn't to report every time your boat leaves the dock. Absolutely not. The idea is to report when you are planning to fish in federal waters for any of these species that are permitted.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Thomas, then Alana, then Melissa, then Will. Yeah.

MR. NEWMAN: I wanted to further that point. I mean, it's not about getting us at the table to do it, because everybody here at this table goes above and beyond. This is to get the people who aren't reporting, the ones that we need to be validating, and, also, as we were talking, I was kind of thinking, too.

With the commercial logbooks, you get randomly selected, every so many years, to do a discard logbook. If you all wanted to do a random sample of maybe 10 or 20 percent of the for-hires, and say those 10 to 20 percent have to do call-ins for a year, and then maybe that could ease the burden of the whole for-hire sector, and just select a random portion every year to participate in the hail-out program, versus having every member of the for-hire community participate in the program.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I've got Alana, then Melissa, then Will.

MS. HARRISON: I think that maybe there's a simpler solution. I know, at least in my town, like the for-hire fleet is like very successful, and so they're usually having trips booked like a year in advance, you know, and so like, when someone goes on a trip, they book their trip for next year. Can't they just send in their booking calendar maybe like once a month, you know, and show NMFS like, okay, these are the trips I have booked for May, and I'll let you know if they get canceled, or if the weather is bad, and maybe make it easier, to tell them something like that, than having them call in every trip, because, you know, it's like -- Could you imagine like you have to call your mom every time you get in your car to go somewhere? It would be so frustrating, and so something easier.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Melissa.

MS. LEONE: I just think that this hail-in and -- I'm kind of against it, for it's a little bit of an overreach to report every time your boat is out of its slip, for whatever reason, but especially with weather and things, and you could have every intention of fishing tomorrow morning, and then the weather is bad, or you come in and you pick up a second trip. If the idea is that you can have a dock intercept, this might not be the best way to go about it. A lot of these boats are at marinas, and there will be days when there's an observer sitting at the marina, and it's blowing, and it's nasty.

There's no boats out, but she's just sitting there all day long, and so there's kind of got to be like a commonsense thing about when the boats are going to be out, and when they're going to be in, but I'm kind of -- I'm against the hailing-in and hailing-out. If you just listen on any of the VHF radios, you can hear the slew of boats that are out there chit-chatting with each other, and you can know, and so if it was something as simple as having someone listening on a radio, and you just turn to some channel, and you just say whatever it is, and you could even report your catch that way, but, even if you had this dock intercept, you're only going to get half the data you're looking for, which is the catches, which you could easily get from me taking a picture of my catch and sending it to you, without all of this extra workload.

You're not going to get any of my discards. You're just going to have to take my word for it, or you're going to put somebody on my boat, if you really want to get accurate data that you believe, and so I'm against this hailing-in and hailing-out.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Next up, I've got Will, and then I think, unless there's someone who hasn't spoken, that would like to speak, I'm going to move us to the next topic.

MR. JONES: I can see the reason for doing this, and I would have originally been against it, but, hearing you all talk about it, I can see the vision of why we would do something like this, but -- Not to repeat myself, but I think, before we go after something like this, like John was saying, adding extra layers of complexity, I think we need to attack the problem of, you know, the compliance for the logbooks, that people already aren't meeting weekly, and, again, go after the guys that don't have -- Or some way to enforce compliance, as far as actually having the permit in the first place, because, you know, like I said earlier, I know there's a lot of people that don't even have the permits to begin with, and so I don't know.

Just like what John was saying, and adding something like this to it is probably not the right way to go about it. Maybe if we can tighten up the app, and, you know, get compliance on reporting tightened up, and then maybe we can go for something like this, because I mean -- Like I said, I understand the point of this. This seems like something that would really help with the data, and, you know, validating it, but I just don't know about going after something like this yet.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. One last quick point from Thomas, and then we're moving on to the next topic.

MR. NEWMAN: You know, you were talking about the dock sampler sitting there during bad weather. I mean, that's the MRIP survey. That's the survey that nobody likes, and you want to get away from, and that's a random sample of an APAIS site that they had to go to that day, no matter what the weather was. The for-hire data can get you away from some of those bad MRIP practices that nobody likes, and that dockside sampling, that would validate this program, would be outside of the APAIS sampling from the MRIP program, to my understanding.

You can tell me if I'm wrong, but, you know, the dockside sampling to validate the for-hire data wouldn't be that dock sampler who is sitting there in bad weather, with no boats around, not doing any work, and so, you know, just keep that in mind when we're having this discussion. It's like, if you want better data, you have to give them that data, and that data has to be validated, or else this whole conversation, this whole program, is going to be a waste of time, and that's the point that the council is trying to get to. They're trying to get to where they can validate this information and actually make it usable for stock assessments.

MR. HADLEY: All right. I appreciate that. I'm going to move along. We're running a little short on time here, and so I wanted to get through the other four major topics. Looking at landing locations, currently, there's no requirement to offload fish or passengers at a preapproved landing location.

Essentially, the council is looking at requiring a preapproved landing location, and so require that federally-permitted for-hire vessels land at an already approved location or submit a landing location in advance of approval, and so the idea here, just to think about how this would be implemented, and it was implemented in the Gulf previously, and so there's -- In the Gulf, there was sort of a preapproved large landing location, and a lot of that matched what was already in the MRIP program, and so, if you saw an MRIP sampler, it was already kind of in the program, and then they had an approval process where for-hire captains would say, you know, I'm offloading at this ramp, or this dock, or this person's house, and it could be a private location, private residence, and then that could be preapproved, and that would need to be preapproved.

That's something that's being considered in this amendment, and, essentially, what would be needed is the actual street address of where the fish and passengers would be offloaded, and so it could be a public location, or it could be a private residence, or a dock slip in a marina. With that, I'll turn it over to the AP for your feedback on that.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I've got Will.

MR. JONES: I don't know how this would be possible for anybody except for the like six-pack, like sportfishing-type boats, that do the half-day Spanish trips. Everybody else is -- It's just -- Not

to say the same argument over and over again, but, you know, the small vessel guys, which is a large bulk of the charter-for-hire fleet, at least in my area, and I have two boats. I have one in a boat slip that at the yacht basin in Morehead City, and that one would be going in and out of the same place most of the year, and so that's possible, but, with my bay boat, I launch it all over the county, and sometimes, you know, at other counties, and different boat ramps, and, you know, I see where you're going with it, but, you know, I don't think this would be something that would work, at least for the small vessel fleet.

I mean, I don't know how you would deal with the difference between the six-pack boats and the bay boats and, you know, small center console guys. Like I don't know how you deal with that difference, but, for what I do, and for what a lot of my colleagues do, this just would not be something that we would go for whatsoever.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Next, I've got Tom Roller, and then Mike.

MR. ROLLER: I'm going to touch base on this real quick, just to expand a little bit on what John Hadley said. You know, when this initially was talked about by the agency, I was kind of opposed to it, until I understood it. The idea of this isn't something that you're going to do every single time.

This is just to make sure that where you're unloading your boat is in the system, right, because for-hire operators tend to fish from different places than recreational fishermen do, in general, and we are also kind of outside the scope of sampling. I think this is going to be one of those things that -- First of all, the folks at NMFS have said the idea of this is, when you have a location approved -- This is something that they want to get done I think within -- I can't remember if it was twenty-four or forty-eight hours.

They just verify it on Google Earth, just to make sure it exists, and this is the idea, that so you can get sampled, if it's a public location, and it's going to be one of these things. Most of the locations are probably going to be approved already, but say you're leaving from a really small marina, or you're leaving from a small boat ramp or whatnot. That way, you just make sure that these areas are within system, and, when you report your logbook, that they know where you are leaving from, potentially, for sampling.

I think it's going to be one of these things that, after the first year or two, no one is even going to really think about it anymore, once those locations are in the system, and, again, it goes back to a previous comment I said, is a lot of people say, well, I never get sampled in this place, or that place, and, well, this is an answer to that.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Next, I've got Mike, and then Steve.

MR. OPPENGAARD: I'm going to reiterate what Will says, you know, because, for me, I pick a lot of my clients up at their dock, and take them back to their dock, and I understand what Tom' is saying about, hey, let's get a better sample. My pickup locations are so scattered, and I have a hard time seeing how I could possibly get all of those approved in time. That's it.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Steve, and then Alana.

MR. SAUNDERS: Good morning. Yes, and the same thing goes for here in Charleston. I know all the six-pack guys here -- You may be picking up this morning at Kiawah, and you may be dropping them back off at the end of the day at Shem Creek. I mean, it's going to be all over the map every day. I kind of agree with the other folks, and, by the way, sorry that I'm not there. I'm feeling well today. I've got a little cold thing going on, and I'm sure nobody wants it, by the way. Thanks.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Steve. I've got you next, Alana.

MS. HARRISON: Can we do like the commercial trip tickets, or logbooks, and just have a location for them to fill in on the logbook of where they unloaded their fish, and their party, and then it could become an approved location down the line? Like once it's been in the logbook system one time, they can approve it, or something like that?

MR. HADLEY: That's something that could be a suggestion, that we could -- You know, an AP recommendation for the council to consider. All right, and I'm going to skip through the next couple of slides, because they were on landing locations, and go into participation in a validation survey.

So, essentially, the idea here is that, once this revised program is put in place, there would be a validation survey to make sure that the data is usable, and it could be used in management. The council would essentially consider an action that would make participation in that validation survey mandatory as part of the permit, and so, if you held the permit, it would be kind of a stipulation of that permit that, if you were sampled within the validation survey, you would participate in that.

Right now, it would just be a voluntary survey. Permit holders could refuse participation, and so it's sort of a choice that currently there is no requirement to participate in the validation survey, and then the council would consider making participation again in that survey part of -- A requirement as part of holding the for-hire permit, and so looking for AP feedback on that.

MS. WIEGAND: Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: I mean, this is a no-brainer. You've got to validate this. I mean, if you can't validate it, we're wasting our time.

MR. HADLEY: All right, and so it sounds like, you know, that that's something that that's fairly favorable. Christina, I think we have a hand that went up.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve, go ahead.

MR. SAUNDERS: Great. I'm unmuted now. What's the frequency and the time required for the survey? I think one of the things you have to think about is what's the overhead for the person doing the survey, and the frequency of that, and I know somebody mentioned earlier about, you know, some folks are out there with flip phones, or whatever else, but, you know, I think you have to kind of think about, you know, some folks could, you know, struggle with some of the surveys, if they're difficult, or, you know, it requires, you know, heavy computer skillsets, which some people don't have.

MR. HADLEY: Yes, and that's a good question. From the way that this has been discussed, I think it would be -- One thing is it would be temporary, and so it's not a validation survey that goes on forever, and so it would be, ideally, you know, a set amount of time that the survey would be taking place, and you would say, okay, this information is validated, and this logbook program is good to go, and we're going to use it, you know, moving forward.

There's an end time, so to speak, for that validation survey, and not that it can be reimplemented years down the road, but, as far as the survey itself, you know, the way that this has been discussed is, you know, if someone is waiting at the dock to sample the catch, to validate that logbook, then that catch could be surveyed, basically, and so hopefully, ideally, it would not be a large burden on the permit holder, but it would essentially remove the -- If you wanted to keep the permit, remove the ability to say, you know, you can't sample this catch right now to validate this logbook, if that makes sense.

Hopefully it gets back to your original question, and the idea is that the burden would be likely to, and ideally would, be low on the permit holder, but it would just be sort of a mandatory participation in that survey, or in looking at the catch, looking at the information that's provided.

MR. SAUNDERS: Yes, and I agree, and I think one thing to think about, as I know, having somebody sit down and do a thirty-five-minute survey, once a year, or whatever, versus one that takes two, three, four or five minutes, but you got it several times a year, and I'm just using that as an example, and that's much easier on most folks.

MS. WIEGAND: Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: Just I've just got to reiterate the point of, you know, if you all want good information, if the for-hire sector wants good information, you have to -- You have to buy this validation. You have to do it. You have to require this validation, because, without it, we're all wasting our time, and the council is wasting their time, and so, if you cannot give whatever amount of time it needs to validate this, you might as well go ahead and make a motion to do away with it, because you're just pissing in the wind if you're doing all this information and not validating it.

MS. WIEGAND: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Are you talking to me, Christina?

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, I am.

MR. ROLLER: Okay. Just making sure. So I agree with Thomas, 100 percent. What he has said is what has been discussed at the council, is, if this program can't be used, what is the point of having it? I mean, personally, and I'll speak for myself, as a fisherman, I think government overreach is asking people to supply information that we know can't be used, and that is the synthesis of all these things being considered, is how to make this program usable, because, if it's not usable, there's no point in having it, and you may as well just be -- You may as well just be managed by MRIP, and we can sit around and complain about that, and so that is a well-taken point, and it's one I hope you all think about, because that's the whole idea behind the changing this program.

MS. WIEGAND: Alana.

MS. HARRISON: Right now, for the commercial observer program for snapper grouper, we get a certified letter in the mail, and then you have to respond to it. I mean, it's certified, and you have to sign for it, so they see that you signed for it, and so then you have -- I believe it's like X amount of days to reach out to the observer listed in the letter, or you're found out of compliance.

That -- Wouldn't that process work for our validation estimation survey, and like send them a letter and say you have to notify us at least forty-eight hours in advance, if you plan on not fishing this day, so we can meet you at the dock, and I still don't see why we can't send an observer on the boat. I mean, that's what these guys do for a living, is they take people out fishing, and so I think that maybe -- Even if that has to be the point like where there's some sort of compensation for taking the observer, and I don't know how that looks, but -- Because they are going to have to sacrifice a spot on the party to take the observer, but I don't see why we can't have eyes on the boat.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, guys. I just actually want to respond to that, and I am very happy to say that, for the last several years, the State of Florida has been able to have an observer program in their for-hire sector, and, starting later this year, South Carolina, Georgia, and North Carolina all received federal funds to initiate a dedicated for-hire observer coverage program in our states, and so you guys will be hearing from your state partners asking, if you hold a federal permit under SEFHIER for these species, you might be able to participate in that, and so be on the lookout for that. South Carolina is in the initial processes, but North Carolina and Georgia also received that funding, and so we're really excited.

MS. WIEGAND: Melissa.

MS. LEONE: Yes, and I was just going to make a comment to the same thing. We do have that right now in Florida, but it is on a volunteer basis, and you do have to go through a little rigmarole, providing some insurance and different information to the person, the observer, to get on your boat, and then, once you're qualified, they do compensate you for it, but it is voluntary, and she is only sampling you X amount of time. She's trying to get a variety of samples, but I think that that could be expanded to where, instead of just getting one sample for the day, they can get more samples, from more boats, to get a better --

Then my other question was what percentage of compliance are you trying to get to with this? If it said 83 percent up there, where would you guys be satisfied at, what percent? Are we trying to go all the way to 100 here?

MR. HADLEY: So that's a great question. We, as staff, asked that of our SSC, of our Social and Economic Panel, and the council has asked that as well, and, you know, long story short, there's no exact number. The idea is to improve compliance, and, if that is a representative sample, and so, if that's considered a representative sample of the for-hire fleet, then that can be used, and so, if it's 40 percent, but it's a representative sample, that can be used, and so there's not necessarily a target. It's not 100 percent. You know, you're never going to get there, but it's improving that compliance rate, overall compliance rate, and so, you know, improving it beyond where it is now, and then also being able to validate it, and so that's the other part of it.

If it can be validated -- If you can validate a lower, you know, say 50 percent, but it's validated, and it's a representative sample, that can be used in management, and so I hope that's helpful, but so there's not an exact percentage target, but better than now, and then that validation component. Those are the two key issues.

AP MEMBER: Since we're talking about observers, I'm not necessarily opposed to that, as long as it's volunteer, if it's on volunteer basis, because, once it becomes mandatory in the for-hire sector -- Just because charter fishing with customers is just such a different animal than commercial fishing, and I'm not trying to draw like a huge distinction, and get special favor, but, you know, a lot of the trips that we take, we just can't have an observer on the boat. It just makes the boat more crowded, less safe, you know, and I wouldn't -- I definitely would not support having observers, you know, mandatory, but like having that program volunteer, on a volunteer basis, it would be great to validate data, like you all are saying, and so I'm not against that at all.

MR. HADLEY: All right. I appreciate that, and we're going to move along. We have two more issues to go over, two more topics. One is revising the reporting of economic data for charter vessels, and so, currently, charter fee, fuel usage, and fuel price is required on each trip for all federally-permitted, South Atlantic federally-permitted, charter vessels.

The council is looking at scaling that back a little bit, and so looking at reporting economic information only if selected, and so, annually, a subsample, and so not all vessels, but a subsample of permitted vessels would be required to submit the economic information on a trip basis, and then that subsample would change each year, and so the idea --

You know, if you think of what's in place right now for the commercial economic add-on, or the commercial discard add-on, sort of moving from a census approach to a sampling approach, and, overall, the idea of decreasing some of the reporting burden, at least on the whole for-hire fleet, and so, with that, I'll turn it over to AP for your feedback on moving from essentially a census approach to a sampling approach for the economic component.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I've got John, and then Melissa.

MR. MALLETTE: As far as the reporting of the economic data for charters, I have to put -- As a dealer, what I buy commercially, and even what I catch myself, and I still have to run it through my dealer program, and we have to submit what we're paying the fishermen for the fish, so that it shows what they're making, kind of keeps up with things, and I have no problem with the reporting of the charter fee.

I really don't see a need for the fuel usage and fuel price, because that's going to be equated into what I'm charging for a charter anyway, and that fluctuates, and I might burn a lot of fuel, or I might not, or I might not do my fuel each day. I might only fuel up once a week, depending on how many charters I have, and I might fuel up every two day, and so I think that leaves a lot of variation, but just reporting your charter fee I think is fine. I think that would give you everything you would need, and I don't think the fuel usage or the fuel price needs to be in there.

MS. LEONE: I kind of agree that we don't need the other economic information with each trip report, and I know the argument is that then they get federal funding for disaster relief, or different

reasonings, and I've been a recipient of that, but I was able to gather all of the information they wanted from my tax returns, which have all of that information on it, because it is very difficult to figure out my fuel usage for one trip, or one day, because I am -- I hold a couple hundred gallons, and I fill up, you know, every few days and I hope to run as many trips as I can.

Each one, that's too tedious of information to try to remember, and to reiterate the fact that the information they're asking for is an awful lot, what time I left, what time I come back, and it's for-hire. None of them are twenty-four-hour trips, and so if you simplified the --

AP MEMBER: The vast majority of them.

MS. LEONE: Yes, a great majority of them, and I don't know, and they do some thirty-six-hour trips somewhere in the Gulf, or wherever, but, a vast majority, you would -- I believe you would get a lot more compliance if you had less questions, and, if you wanted these select few to do -- You could get it annually, off a tax return, any of the other data you want to get.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and I've got Will, and then Tony.

MR. JONES: I just want to agree with what they were saying about the charter fee and/or overall revenue being, in my opinion, sufficient for economic data, you know, for the for-hire, and this kind of goes back to simplifying the app, which is one thing that -- You know, I'm not trying to say it's like super complicated, and it's impossible to figure out, but simplifying it as much as we could, including removing certain things that we have to enter in would -- You know, I'm just going to be honest, and it would make me better at submitting the reports on time, and doing them more frequently and whatnot, and so I can imagine that people that don't even have the permits right now, that hopefully eventually will, and it will -- You know, it will be a lot less of a barrier to entry, to starting the report and whatnot.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Tony, and then Steve.

MR. BENEVENTO: I'm reading Alternative 2, and it says that it would use a stratified random sampling, which basically might include Melissa, or might not include William, which, to me, it sounds like a simplified way of doing this, and so I would suggest that the AP adopt Alternative 2.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Next up, I've got Steve.

MR. SAUNDERS: Yes, and I would like to second the other comment earlier, that I think somebody said, about just the data that is not beneficial to the reporting. If there's a way to simplify the applications, and really work on the applications, or the apps, on people's phones, and the websites, and I think that's going to make people want to -- It takes less time if the app is simple, and it doesn't take a lot of time.

If I'm putting in charter fees, and fuel usage, and all of that, and, if you're not utilizing it, let's remove it. Let's make it simple, quick, and easy. I think that will help users be able to take less time to be able to put their data in, and I think, you know, people are going to -- You know, they will have that burden of, oh God, I've got to go in that app, and it's terrible, that kind of thing. Just a thought.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Well, I appreciate that, and I'm going to move on to the last topic that the council is considering in this amendment, and it's modifying the did-not-fish report requirements. Currently, did-not-fish reports, or DNF reports, are already required in the program, for both charter and headboats, and they must be submitted weekly, and they can be submitted up to thirty days in advance.

There's no specific changes that have been thought about at the council table, but, generally speaking, looking for the AP's feedback on this, and looking at what's considered, or what's required, in other programs. Did-not-fish reports, as mentioned, are already required in the South Atlantic. The Gulf of Mexico SEFHIER program, and so the Gulf program, is thinking about monthly, and so monthly did-not-fish reports. In the Greater Atlantic Region, did-not-fish reports are not required, and they're not going to be required, at least in the foreseeable future, and HMS is considering moving to monthly as well, with no limit to how far in advance did-not-fish reports could be submitted, and so, if you know you're going to have your boat on the hill for a month or two, that could be submitted in advance, and so, with that, I'll turn it over for the AP's feedback.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I've got Thomas, and then John.

MR. NEWMAN: What was the rationale for letting them submit in advance, because that just seems counterintuitive to getting data, and it also seems intuitive to not reporting.

MR. HADLEY: I think the idea is, there again, if you know that your vessel is going to be out of the water, or say you're going to be out of the country, or something like that, and you know you're just not going to be around, that you could submit it in advance, but, you know, point taken on that, that it does decrease the utility a little bit, but the idea is just so people don't -- You know, if they're going to be out of the country, or just, you know, not around, and they know that their vessel is not going to be fishing, they can just go ahead and put that in ahead of time.

MR. NEWMAN: Yes, and it just doesn't make sense to me. I mean, because, theoretically, if you're not fishing, then you can't be penalized for not reporting, and so I think that thirty days in advance, that -- It's not going to help your non-compliance issue.

MR. MALLETTE: I think this kind of falls back to like the very first topic of the reporting in general, where I was talking about how, as a dealer, where we have to report, and then you can basically put a start date and an end date. As long as you put something in a month, somebody is not going to call you. I mean, and I'm glad they do it, because I'm a busy person. I've got six other businesses, and you know what I mean and so I'm running, and somebody at Marine Fisheries will call my cell phone and say, hey, John, I ain't seen a report come across like that. Oh yeah, and I got you, and so I go into my office, and I've got my notes, and I can report what came in, and I send it in.

I see if we could simplify the first part, on just submitting the official catch, and I think that automatically eliminates a lot of the things we've talked about, like the did-not-fish. If I'm submitting a report for thirty days, and I only sent you fifteen days, or this date and this date, then, the data for how many days left I didn't fish, you automatically get that right there.

Like you said, there's going to be times where I might need boat work, and the boat has to go to the boatyard, or even a small boat might blow an engine, and might do -- There's a lot of things. If you do did-not-fish, if something happened, it would be easy to put a little comment section on what happened of, hey, blown motor, and so, that way, that doesn't get used against me, saying did you just not go fishing, or you couldn't fish, and you know what I mean? I think there's some -- You got to leave some interpretation, because there's so many variables with fishing. There's so many variables with commercial fishing, to where there's just so many more variables with for-hire fishing.

I mean, even going back to -- Not trying to go back and forth, but, even with the whole call-in and call-out, and, I mean, if that's not being used to do an estimation of how many fish I'm bringing to the dock, then what's the point of it, because at the end of the day, this is -- This whole purpose is to try to show how much fish is being harvested and how we need to -- That's the whole point of all of this, and so, if that's not being used for that, then there's no point in it, because, like I said, what if I take somebody out fishing, and we're running offshore, and they get seasick, and I turn around and come back in, and does that count against me having a trip? Does that average go off of how many fish I'm supposed to catch this month?

I mean, there's so many variables that I think it just -- If we just get a lot more compliance with the fish reporting, catch reporting, and make it a lot simpler, and get a few questions, but not go into a lot of depth, I think you'll -- I think a lot of these extra things will be answered automatically, without needing the extra stuff.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Well, that's all I had for you this morning. I appreciate the feedback, and I know the council will as well, and so thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, and I'll add that I know I rushed you guys through that a little bit. If you have additional questions, you can always reach out to John Hadley, or Myra Brower, who are the leads on this amendment, for more information, and please don't ever hesitate to do that, and so, with that, I'm going to give us a quick ten-minute break. I'm going to ask that we try to keep it to ten minutes. We're running about thirty or forty minutes behind schedule, and, because of our afternoon activity, we do have to get through all of these agenda items this morning, and so ten minutes, and come back, and we will have Julia talking to us about citizen science.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. WIEGAND: All right, everyone. It's 10:40. If we could start making our way back to the table. All right. I am going to turn it over to Julia Byrd, our Citizen Science Program Manager, to give you all an update on recent citizen science activities.

MS. BYRD: So good morning, everyone. We're going to switch gears a little bit and talk about the council's Citizen Science Program. For those of you who I haven't had an opportunity to meet, I'm Julia Byrd, and so I kind of manage the overall Citizen Science Program, and then there's another council staff over there, Meg Withers, and we have two staff that focus on the Citizen Science Program at the council.

In general, what we try to do is work with fishermen and scientists to develop projects to help fill some of the data gaps that we have in the South Atlantic, and so, this morning, I'm going to just

update you guys on a few of the projects we have underway. It's been a little while since I've updated you all on what's been happening with the program, and so that's my plan this morning.

Most of what I'm going to do is update you guys on specific projects. We have three projects that are underway right now, and then I also will update you guys a little bit on some program evaluation work that we've been doing over the past couple of years, and so, to start off, I'm going to talk about the evaluation work.

With our Citizen Science Program, one of the things we really want to make sure that we're doing is making sure the program is doing what the council wants it to do, and what our fishermen and our scientists and our managers want it to do, and so one way we do that is through evaluation, and not just of individual projects, but the program in general.

The program works with lots of different folks in the fisheries community along the South Atlantic coast, but there are three groups that we work a lot with, fishermen and scientists and managers, and so, in order to evaluate the program into the future, one of the things we were interested in doing is trying to get some initial information from fishermen, scientists, and managers about their knowledge about, their confidence in, and their trust in the citizen science process to collect data that would be used for fisheries management.

We were able to work with a couple of researchers to help us gather this information, one of which was this fellow on the screen named Rick Bonney, and Rick is a citizen science expert, and has been providing our program kind of guidance since its inception, and so, in order to get information, the first thing he did was he talked to kind of six fishermen, six scientists, and managers, just to collect some information and help us inform kind of what questions we would want to ask folks to get this sort of information.

Then, over the next several months, he developed an online survey, where he was gathering information from a broader group of scientists and managers, and then we were really lucky to work with another group of researchers, led by Jennifer Sweeney-Tookes, who is at Georgia Southern, and, to gather information from a much broader group of fishermen, she and her team did interviews with forty-one different fishermen across the South Atlantic.

One thing I wanted to mention, that I wanted to make sure to mention this to you guys, was, because with the fishermen interviews, they were concentrating on trying to interview folks in the snapper grouper and the mackerel fisheries, and so I don't know if any of you guys may have been contacted by Jennifer and her team, or may have participated in this project. If you did, thank you very much.

Another reason I wanted to mention it to you, and I'll mention that there are links in the presentation that will take you to reports from each of these kind of steps, but one of the things that I thought was super valuable about this kind of process, this evaluation that they did, is it helped us better understand some of the barriers to using citizen science data that scientists and managers have.

We learned a lot about trust issues, which I'm sure you guys are aware of the trust issues between scientists and fishermen, and managers and fishermen, and so we learned a lot about that, but, from the interviews they did with fishermen, some of the most valuable things we learned is we're learning more about why fishermen may participate in citizen science projects, barriers why they

may not want to participate in citizen science projects, and then one of the cool things we were able to do was learn from fishermen the types of projects they might want to participate in.

Then we learned, from scientists and managers, the types of projects that they thought citizen science would work well for, and so we can look at those things together, and it can help our program kind of figure out what data gaps we should shoot for, and so, again, we don't have time to get into this in too much depth, but I just wanted to let you know it was there, and, if any of you guys participated in this, I can't thank you enough, because it's super valuable information for the program.

What we hope to do is we gathered this kind of information now, and then we want to try to do it again in five years, or ten years, to see if folks' attitudes about citizen science are changing, and so that's a little bit of program information, and, next, I want to update you guys on three of our different projects.

The first one is a project called SMILE, and this is a project that's being led by a group called REEF, and they are kind of a citizen science organization that's been working with recreational divers for a really long time, over several decades, and so, for the SMILE project, what this project is doing is it's partnering with divers to collect length information from some of our data-limited species, using kind of a laser-mounted underwater camera, which you can hopefully see a little bit here. It's just a normal kind of underwater camera that you can buy, and then you mount a laser on top of it, and you kind of get the laser on the fish. You can see the laser on the fish there, and then you take a burst of photos, and then those photos are analyzed to get fish length information.

This project is kind of a pilot. They've done some field testing in the Keys, for kind of two seasons. The second field season is wrapping up I think this weekend, and they'll be doing some dives, and then they're processing the data right now to get lengths out of what they've collected, and one of the other cool things that they're doing is they're introducing kind of artificial intelligence into how they're processing and analyzing the data, so that they'll be able to get the lengths out of these photos much more quickly in the future, and so that's the SMILE project.

The next project I wanted to update you guys on is one called FISHstory, and this is a project that uses old historic fishing photos to help us learn more about kind of what was caught, and the size of the fish that were caught, back in the kind of 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and even early 1990s, kind of before catch monitoring programs were in place. It's focused a lot on the for-hire, the headboat and charter sector, and so I think, a couple of meetings ago, I kind of shared data from the FISHstory pilot project with you guys.

It was really successful, and so what I wanted to do was update you guys on what's happening with the project now, and so just a quick reminder that the project has kind of three parts. One is just trying to digitize and archive historic fishing photos from across the South Atlantic region. For the pilot project, we just had photos from the Daytona Beach, Florida area, and so, in order to make sure the data from the photos is more representative for the South Atlantic, we need photos from all of the states along the South Atlantic.

The second component of the project is kind of analyzing those photos that are archived to help us get kind of catch information, and we do that using an online crowdsourcing platform called Zooniverse. It's just a website where you can kind of upload your photos, and develop tools and

training materials, so that anyone in the world can help you kind of identify and -- In our case, identify and count fish in photos, and so we have volunteers that have helped us analyze photos.

Multiple volunteers look at each photo, and, when there's a lot of volunteer disagreement, we have a validation team, that's made up of fishermen and scientists, that help us confirm what's in a photo. I know we've had some Mackerel AP members on the validation team in the past, which is awesome. We really appreciate that.

Then the third component of the project is we've developed a method to estimate the size of fish in the photos, by using the lumber in the leaderboard where they're hanging as kind of a scale, and so we did the pilot project. It worked really well, and we were able to get some additional funding to grow the project, and so the first thing we really wanted to do is try to grow our photo archive.

In order to have data representative of the South Atlantic, we need photos from across the South Atlantic, and so, at a past AP meeting, we've done kind of a photo scanning event, where folks have brought photos, and I'm excited to say that we have -- From the pilot, we had around 1,370-ish photos, and now we're over 2,300 photos, that have been contributed by fourteen different photo providers. We have photos from the Outer Banks down through the Florida Keys, and so that's really exciting. We're always looking for more photos. I'll say a little bit more about that in a second.

If you look at kind of the photos that we have by decade, the largest majority of our photos are from the 1960s, followed by kind of the 1980s, the 1970s, and the 1950s, and, if you look at the kind of percentage of our photos by month, you can see that we have the most photos representing trips between April and August, and that likely mimics kind of the effort in the headboat and charter fleet during kind of that time period that we have photos on.

As I said, we're always looking for more photos. I know this group has not only provided photos in the past, but a lot of people have recommended other groups for us to reach out to, whether it's a restaurant that you know that has photos, or there's a museum, or an archive, or a library. It's been really helpful.

The majority of our photos are still from northern Florida, and so we're really trying to bulk up the number of photos we have for other regions, and so, if you guys have any suggestions, I would be all ears for those, on where we might be able to find some additional historic photos. When we're looking for photos, just -- Not all photos we've collected can be analyzed.

We still think it's important to archive those photos, because I think they tell a lot about the history of fishing, and we can use those photos for promotion of the project, for our kind of outreach materials that we develop, sharing results, that sort of thing, but what makes a photo good for analysis in FISHstory is that the picture has to be taken at the end of the trip, where the harvested catch is kind of displayed with the anglers who caught it, and we need to have a year, and a ballpark year is fine. If it's somewhere between 1980 and 1985, that's great, and we can use it.

We need to know kind of the state that the photo was taken in, and then we like to just gather kind of photo provider name, just so we can let them know what's going on with the project and what's going on with their photos.

What makes a photo even better for analysis is if the fish are hanging on that leaderboard. If they are, then we're able to estimate size, and then, if we have more specific data information, we can do seasonal analyses, and we always love to learn more about kind of the city, or the dock, that the photo was taken from, or the kind of captain, or the vessel, the boat, just to kind of learn more about the fishery during that time period, and so, if any of you guys have suggestions for where we may be able to find photos, please let me know. I would love to hear more about that.

We did a pilot project. We've gathered all these new photos, and then we needed those new photos analyzed, and so we launched FISHstory again, or relaunched it, I guess I should say, back in July of last year, and we learned a lot through the pilot, that we needed to simplify what our FISHstory volunteers were doing.

At the pilot project, we had folks identifying sixteen different species of fish at once, and that was a little too much, and so we've broken it down into bite-sized chunks. Since the project relaunched, we've almost analyzed all the photos in our archive right now. I think we have four levels, where people are identifying different fish on each level, and now I think we're up to kind of 96 percent complete on the last level, Level 4, of photos, and so we've almost kind of gotten all of our photos analyzed that we've collected over the past eighteen months, our new photos. We'll be reaching out to validation team members, to help us verify data in some of those photos, soon.

Then the last thing I wanted to say is, in the photos that we've collected for the pilot, we focused on measuring king mackerel in the photos, and you guys have seen kind of the results from that, but this kind of graph over here is just kind of the median size of the fish from the pilot photos.

We are just about finished measuring king mackerel in all of the new photos we have archived. We have about fifty photos left, and then we'll be able to produce new king mackerel size compositions, and then we've also measured all of the red snapper that are in these historic photos, and we're putting together size compositions from those right now. There's an upcoming stock assessment for red snapper. We'll be sharing kind of the length information for FISHstory with that assessment, and then the king mackerel assessment I think is in 2026, and so we'll be sharing the length information from photos for king mackerel with that assessment as well.

Then the last project I wanted to mention is one that Meg is kind of in charge of, and leads, and it's called SAFMC Release, and I know you guys are here at a Mackerel Cobia AP meeting, and this is a project that's focused more on snapper grouper, but I'm guessing many of you may also bottom fish some, and not just kind of troll for king mackerel and those sorts of species, and so I wanted to update you on the Release project as well.

This is a project that works with recreational, for-hire, and commercial fishermen to gather information on released shallow-water grouper and red snapper, and so those kind of eleven species you see on the screen are the species we're collecting data on through the project.

We use a free app called SciFish to kind of gather information through the project, and so participants, over the past several years, have been gathering information on these eleven species of fish. Over the past several months, there's been a lot of focus on outreach, and Meg has been leading up the charge on our outreach, along with a lot of our kind of council best fishing practices staff members, and so they've been visiting a lot of fishing expos, going to fishing clubs, making presentations, sharing information on best fishing practices and information on our SAFMC

Release project, and really trying to get more and more people signed up for the project. We were actually in Daytona Beach over the weekend, at a fishing expo, talking about release and best fishing practices.

Also, each year, at the end of the year, we do an annual data summary, and we share that with our participants, and then, after our participants get a few weeks to look at it, ask questions, that sort of thing, we'll post it to our webpage, and so it's been recently posted to the webpage, and so I was going to share some highlights from the data our participants collected in 2024 with you guys in a second.

Then the last thing I want to update you guys on for projects is kind of a new Sea Grant partnership that the Release project is doing, and so, in the data summary, we look at -- We include information like looking at the number of released, or percent of released, submissions by state, by fishing sector, kind of what species information was submitted on. We do length composition information for some of the key species in the project, look at things like shark depredation, and release treatment by depth.

The project also has a participant recognition program, where we kind of celebrate, or highlight, the achievements of folks in the program, and so, each year, there are a certain number of milestones, and, when someone meets a milestone, they get recognized, and we're really lucky to be able to partner with Sea Grant, so Sea Grant can provide some thank you packets to folks when they reach Sea-Grant-related milestones.

If you're interested in checking out the whole data summary, there's a link at the bottom of the screen here that will take you to the whole data summary, but I just wanted to kind of highlight a few things.

In 2024, if you look at where our Release submissions came from, we had the largest majority from South Carolina, followed by Florida, then North Carolina and Georgia. The large majority of submissions came from folks who are private recreational anglers, around 80 percent, and then we had about 20 percent of our submissions from those in the charter sector. If you look at the releases logged by species, about 64 percent of the release information logged was on red snapper, followed by gag grouper, and then red grouper and then graysby and scamp.

If you look at the hook types that were logged through the app, almost 77, just under 77, percent of our submissions logged, the fish were caught with non-offset circle hooks, which is great. Those hooks are less likely to catch a fish in a lethal place, and we're also excited to see that 93 percent of the releases logged were fish that were hooked in the jaw, which can help inform kind of -- It can help us better understand how many of those released fish survive.

Then one other thing we're really interested in learning about from kind of our participants is -- I'm sure you guys are familiar with barotrauma, and so, when you pull a fish up from deep, there's a -- Barotrauma is a pressure-related injury. Its swim bladder will expand, and, if the fish is thrown back, or released into the water, without some sort of treatment, it will float on top of the water, and so we were interested in learning more about kind of when people were using kind of venting tools or descending devices.

Barotrauma occurs more frequently in deeper waters, and so this graph shows kind of treatment level, and so the dark blue is no treatment, and then when people vent, when people descend, or when they use both treatments, and we are really excited to see that, as you move towards those really deeper depths, more -- We're seeing more people kind of treating their fish, whether it's descending or venting their fish, and then I just wanted to highlight a few folks.

You might recognize a name or two on the screen, but these are some of our participant recognition milestone winners this year. We kind of do the largest and smallest of all the fish within the app, and so the largest and smallest submissions we get, and then we have what we call the Around the Reef milestone, and that's when you submit entries for all eleven species in the project, and, right now, Jake Harmon is leading that. He has submitted -- He's done submissions on four different species. Then our 2024 Release Champion, who submitted the most information, was Mark McWaters. He's a private recreational fisherman out of the Jacksonville, Florida area.

The last thing about Release that I wanted to share with you guys is something we're really excited about, the Sea Grant Release Rodeo, and so we're partnering with Sea Grant on kind of a Release rodeo, kind of a tournament, is what we're calling it, and so Sea Grant, and it's led by kind of Greyson Webb, who is our Sea Grant Reef Fish Fellow, but they're really trying to get best fishing practices gear in fishermen's hands.

The Release project wants to encourage more people to submit information, but we also want more entries that can be used for data validation, something that you guys just talked a lot about, and so, if someone submits a photo of their released fish in the app, we're able to verify the species that was submitted, and, if the fish is on kind of a ruler, or kind of there's an item of known measure in the photo, then we're able to validate that size of the fish.

Grayson had this wonderful idea, to kind of pair up for the Sea Grant Release Rodeo, to get best fishing practices gear into angler's hands, and then also to help us try to get more entries with photos that can be used for validation, and so we shared information on the Release rodeo with our participants yesterday, but you guys are the first group that we're sharing it with, and so it's hot off the press.

The way that the rodeo works is it starts May 1, and it will run through July 31, and so any fisherman kind of participating in the Release project, and you could be commercial, for-hire, or recreational, who submits an entry between May and July 31 -- If you submit an entry into Release in the SciFish app with a photo, you get a Sea Grant prize raffle ticket. You can submit four entries per month.

However, if your photo has a ruler, or something of known measure, with your fish, then you can double your entries and get eight entries per month, and Sea Grant will draw two names each month to give away some best fishing practices gear, and then, at the end of the tournament, there will be kind of a grand prize drawing, where, anyone who submitted entries, all of their raffle tickets will get entered, and Sea Grant will pick a Release rodeo raffle grand prize winner at the end of the month.

So if any of you guys are interested in participating in the rodeo, and aren't signed up for Release, just let me know. I'm happy to get you all signed up, or, if you know other folks in your community

who might be interested in participating in this, please share information with them, and so that's Release.

Then the last thing I wanted to mention is just a new online tool that we have available on the council's website, and so it's called the Citizen Science Project Idea Portal, and all it is is it's a way that anyone in the kind of fisheries community can submit an idea for a citizen science project to us, and so we have a lot of ideas for citizen science projects, but you guys, as fishermen, are on the water a lot more. You see things that we don't know about. I'm sure you all have a lot of great citizen science project ideas that we don't know about, or that we haven't thought of yet, and so this is just a way to kind of share it with us.

It's an online form. It will take less than ten minutes to fill out. You just kind of describe your project idea to us, and then what we're going to do is use those project ideas to help us update our citizen science research priorities.

The research priorities we have kind of narrows the focus from all the data needs that we have in the region to kind of tangible ideas that would work well with the citizen science approach that are important to our fishermen, our scientists, and our managers, and so they really drive the types of projects that we work to pursue, and so, a little later, Chip will be talking to you guys about the council's overall research and monitoring plan.

We take the information from that plan and distill it down more to ideas that may work well with citizen science, and so, if you guys have an idea, I would encourage you to submit it in the portal, or just talk to me, or, when you're kind of talking about the research and monitoring plan with Chip, if there are certain ideas that you think fishermen would be interested in collecting information on, please make sure to share that, and I'll kind of jot it down, so that, when we update our research priorities, we'll make sure that your ideas are considered, and so that's just a little bit about what's been happening with the Citizen Science Program.

I'm happy to answer any questions, and I would love if you have any thoughts on where we may be able to find more FISHstory photos. I would be all ears to hear more about that, but I'm happy to take any questions you all might have.

MS. WIEGAND: While Julia takes a minute to take a breath, thank you for that presentation. I do want to note -- So the Release rodeo slides were not in what is online, because it was just brand new, hot off the presses, this morning for public consumption, and so, when I send a follow-up email after this meeting, I will include information on how to get involved with Release, where to go to get information about the Sea Grant rodeo, and Julia's contact information as well, to make sure that you guys have all that, and, Tony, I see you've got your hand up.

MR. BENEVENTO: Florida has a project called Release 'Em Right.

AP MEMBER: Return 'Em Right.

MR. BENEVENTO: Return 'Em Right, where you do like a five-minute little thing on the internet, and then they send you this tool, that's sort of like a Boga grip, and it goes down to fifty feet, or 10 feet, or 150 feet, and then it opens up, and you set it, and so all you have to do to get this, and it's free, is sign up on the website, and, like I said, you go through the little five-minute test.

What my suggestion was is that you tie the rodeo to that website somehow. You know, in other words, like, now that you've got the tool, you know, because it's FWC, you know, the State of Florida, but I've got to believe, you know, if you've got the tool, then here's, you know, something that people can have fun with, you know, with the rodeo, and so I would suggest contacting FWC and seeing if you can get a drop-down or something, you know, tied in to their website.

MS. BYRD: Thanks, Tony. The Return 'Em Right program is -- It's an awesome program, and we have worked closely on a lot of outreach events with them, and so, because the rodeo is -- So Return 'Em Right is -- I think Florida Sea Grant kind of runs that program, or it's out of Florida Sea Grant, and this is a Sea Grant Release rodeo, and the webpage for the rodeo is actually kind of under Sea Grant's kind of webpages, and so there's a connection there.

Return 'Em Right is focused more on Gulf anglers right now, although they are looking to expand, and so we have been in communication with them about that, but a lot of what Greyson is trying to do, with some of the monthly raffle drawings and things like that, is getting some of those, like those devices that you're mentioning, the SeaQualizer, that allows you to set a depth where kind of the fish will be released, is get those into anglers' hands, and so there are connections there.

We're talking to Return 'Em Right. Since they're more Gulf focused, and this is more South Atlantic focused -- You know, we always can point people to the Return 'Em Right website, but there's kind of a little bit of a disconnect there, but, yes, I think that was good feedback. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: Thanks for the presentation, and I was interested in the rodeo program, and I'm also super interested in AI. Like I know I talk about it a lot, and I know you all give out little doodads all the time, like little whistles or whatnot, and send devices, and all those have -- You know, all of them are the same size, essentially, and if you could somehow figure out how to incorporate those into the fish photos, then you also have a standardized set of measurements inside that fish photo, and you don't have to lay that fish on a ruler.

I didn't know if that's something that, you know, you all could start using with the photos, and I think it's going to be important with the, you know, coming up for-hire reporting, and possibly private rec reporting, if you -- Instead of laying that fish out on a ruler, and stressing the fish even more, if you could figure out some sort of standardization of some little doodad that you give out with these permits, or with the program.

I mean, you all go to tackle shops and give out, you know, promotional items from the South Atlantic, and that could be a quicker way for the fish to be photographed, and documented, thrown back in the water, and then you can use that as a scale of measurement on that fish photo.

MS. BYRD: Thomas, that's a great idea, and so, in the past, we've had towels that we've shared with some participants, where there's a ruler on the bottom of a towel, or we actually have a ruler. It's a -- We call it our shallow-water ID ruler. It has kind of tips and tricks for how to identify some of the different shallow-water groupers, and so we've given away some tools, which we get in photos, and I know that Meg and I have done some verification using kind of items like, you

know, a soda can, or like other things that are of known length, to try to just kind of verify length within the photos, and so we're encouraging folks more and more, and are hoping that the rodeo is encouraging, that it will encourage folks more and more to kind of take photos of their releases with items of known measurement, whether it's a ruler or something else we can use to help with that kind of length verification.

I'll also say too the app that Release is in is called SciFish, and, at one time, we were trying to see if we could take a photo of a fish and it could estimate the size of the fish, but on a -- Like, when we tested it, you're, you know, moving on a boat so much that it didn't do very well, but there may be technology like that coming down the line that could be helpful with that sort of thing, too.

MR. NEWMAN: Yes, and, in the Northeast, they're -- I mean, they're already doing that. They have onboard observer cameras, and they're working with, you know, onboard live observers measuring fish, and then the camera is also photographing these fish, but, I mean, these cameras are on set stations on the boat, from a set distance from where you're hauling your gear over the side, but, you know, that technology is being developed right now to -- You know, to go ahead and estimate those sizes from a live camera feed. I mean, it's there, you know, and so it's still being developed.

MS. HARRISON: On the slide for your Release, with the statistics of people who had like the biggest and smallest fish, is that something like in the app you can see, like a leaderboard?

MS. BYRD: We don't have a leaderboard, or something like that, right now kind of in the app. What -- I'll give Meg credit, and she does a monthly newsletter that goes out to all of our participants, and it doesn't kind of track all of the milestones that we have, but, basically it's -- We have like a first fish club, or kind of your first release five-fish club, kind of -- Then different milestones, the silver jig, the golden jig, the diamond jig, things like that, and so those are tracked in the monthly newsletter, so people can see them, but we haven't done anything where you're kind of tracking the smallest and largest of a fish or something like that, and so that's something we haven't done, but may be a good idea for us to do.

MS. HARRISON: I have -- For my dog, I have a GPS tracking collar, and they have a leaderboard at like how many minutes his activity is, and let me tell you what. My boyfriend takes my dog on a four-hour walk so he can beat the other people in the leaderboard, and so it's all like -- I tell you, and I'm competitive too, but I'm not like competing with people I don't know, like with dogs on my island, or whatever, but I was thinking charter boat fishermen are highly competitive, you know, and it's all about the biggest fish and, and it would be fun for them to be able to like -- I think it would encourage participation, if they could see like that the boat next to them was on the water for an extra two hours that day, or call an extra -- Like, you know, it would just, I think, encourage more participation.

MS. BYRD: Yes, and that's a great idea, and something we haven't really thought about too much, and so thanks, Alana.

MS. WIEGAND: Charlie, I've got you next on the list. Go ahead.

MR. LOCKE: I just wanted to -- Since we're talking about science, and citizen science and all this, as a commercial fisherman, I want to -- I don't know if there's a way we can express this to

the council, and I know this is an AP setting, but there's a lot of call for funding to be cut from a lot of these grants, especially Sea Grant here in North Carolina.

We just had to do a bunch of letters to our senators and stuff to, you know, keep the funding for Sea Grant. They do a lot with commercial fishermen, and they do a lot with recreational fishermen and, you know, science, to me, is a big deal. I kind of live and die by it, and so I'm really supportive of science, because it's what we have to do to make our quotas and this and that, and I don't know -- I mean, I can't really speak on this app, because it's not really pertaining to me, but I would like to -- You know, I would like to definitely speak on keeping funding going for stuff like this, to get better data, data collection, and I don't know if the council can reiterate that, you know, at the federal level, about how important, you know, funding is for stuff just like this, and to keep it rolling, so we don't lose it. Thanks.

MS. WIEGAND: Melissa.

MS. LEONE: It just came to mind that maybe talking to like some like fishing clubs and stuff, and they keep records, so that they have somebody who wins this stuff for the end of the year, and all of that data has to get verified, for it to even get into the entry for the fishing club or something, and so you might be able to get some data by reaching out to a fishing club, and like ours is a the Halifax Sport Fishing Club, where I am, but I'm sure every area has one.

They just do it like as the members for the year, and they want to catch the biggest whatever, get the most points, or -- But you might be able to collect some verifiable data, from that recreational people that you're having the hardest time with, so far that way.

MS. BYRD: Thanks, Melissa, and I'll -- Before I kind of answer, but comment, on your great suggestion, I just also want to say thank you, Charlie, for what you said. I think kind of the -- There's a lot of funding uncertainty going on right now, certainly for a lot of kind of scientific things, and so kind of I appreciate what you said, and your support, and I agree wholeheartedly that it would be great to try to find ways to continue this sort of funding.

Then, Melissa, great suggestion, and I think we've started working more and more with fishing clubs, or going to reach out to different fishing clubs. We were actually at the Halifax Sport Fishing Club this weekend, at the Daytona Show, and we were in kind of the kind of next generation angler zone, with a lot of folks from your club, which was great, and I think we've gotten Release signups from working with fishing clubs, and we've gotten a ton of different kind of historic photos from working with fishing clubs, and so I think great idea of kind of looking to see what sort of tournament data are available.

It's tricky, and I guess I would need to talk with more scientists about -- So tournament data is often very focused on just the largest of whatever species it is, or maybe some are smallest or different -- I don't know enough about all of the different kind of tournaments that are going on, but figuring -- Talking to scientists to figure out how you could use those sorts of data, before developing a project or digging into things like that, and Chip might be able to add more to what I'm saying.

DR. COLLIER: Well, what I will say is we do have scientists presenting next month, at our May seminar series, talking about using tournament data to look at size distribution of -- Changes of

size distribution of dolphinfish over time, and so it's going to be a pretty good presentation, and it will be May 13, and we'll send out a link to this advisory panel.

MS. LEONE: Well, just to clarify, I'm not talking necessarily just about the tournaments that the fishing club does, and our fishing club does like a fish of the month, and every member of the fishing club can go fish for it, and they have to verify that they actually caught it, through a photo or bringing it in, and then I think it's some kind of a point system, and you can get like up to ten points, if you catch ten of that fish, but every month it changes, based on kind of the fish of the month of what's in the area.

A lot of them are some of the inshore fish, but there's probably some offshore fish in there too, but I don't mean like a tournament they're having, but it's just more of like the club, just like you're saying online, and they create their own competition, for just the members, you know, wanting their own bragging rights or whatever, and so you might just be able to -- If pompano is the fish this month, and it's not useful to you, then it's nothing, but, if there's a month there's a fish in there that is the fish of the month that you want data for, you could probably get multiple fishermen's data through that club, because they're already collecting it, and it's verified.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Next up, I've got Steve.

MR. SAUNDERS: Earlier, I think somebody brought up the point about some level of competition within the app. I think the app could be upgraded, and I think one of the big things is lots of people forget what their password is, and if you have the ability to cache the password, or keep my password in there, and I know, each time you open it up, it wants you to put your password in there, for one thing, but then also make that application where it's not just one way, but it's two-way, where you guys can push some news down, and maybe publish that, hey, the biggest this fish, or this fish is, you know, so far for your -- You know, this many inches, or this many pounds, you know, and I think there could drive some competition in there, you know, where buddies are like, hey, look I made the app kind of thing.

MS. BYRD: Steve, those are great suggestions. Right now, the app -- You can't do push notifications with it, but I think that's a great suggestion for things we could look, and so the app we use, SciFish, is administered through the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program, or ACCSP, but I think that's a great idea to suggest, and that might be one thing to look to upgrade the app to in the future.

Then we looked a little bit into the kind of caching of passwords when we were developing the app, and they're -- Depending on the type of phone you had, it's like it was hard for us to do it in the app, so it would work for an Apple or an Android sort of phone, but you can save passwords kind of on different phones within your app for it to be kind of cached in there, is what someone told me on an Android.

I don't have an Android phone, but that's something we looked into, but it was a harder issue for us to solve on the app side of things, but we'll still keep looking into it, because I think that's a great point, that people often forget passwords. I know I forget passwords to apps all the time, and so thank you, Steve.

MR. SAUNDERS: Yes, and just hit the checkbox, or maybe even do away with the password, something like that, because I know lots of fishermen that don't post in there, because they're like I can't ever remember the password for it, or I've got to call and get the password back, and, if you can make the data entry easier, you know, maybe it would help. I'm not sure why there's a -- Just a thought, but, if you need help with the app or something like that, maybe that's something I can help with. I know a ton of developers. I work for a technology company, and so I work for Microsoft, at least for the next few weeks anyway.

MS. BYRD: Thanks, Steve. I imagine we might be reaching out.

MR. SAUNDERS: Sounds good.

MS. HARRISON: Or maybe you could even do like the where they text you the code, you know, like the one time, if that's possible, where you don't have to have a password, but they can text you the code to log into the app, and then like, you know, your phone like auto-populates it, and so it's really easy that way.

MS. BYRD: Thank you all so much.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so, next up on our agenda, Chip is going to talk to you guys about research and monitoring priorities for the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries. I will note we do have a hard stop at noon, to make sure you guys have time to get lunch before we start our afternoon activity, and, with that, I will let you take it away, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: So you're saying speak quickly. I did want to start off by saying I misspoke yesterday on the recreational landings for Spanish mackerel. It looked like recreational landings are around four million pounds for the past couple years, as opposed to the around the ten I had mentioned. The ten was for Gulf and South Atlantic combined, and so that's where my mistake was. I was working too fast, and not being as thorough as I need to be, and it causes problems, and so we'll dive into the research and monitoring plan.

I don't believe I have brought this to this AP before. What we're trying to do is get feedback from the experts on the water. You all know the issues that you're seeing with the fishery management plan, and maybe we can develop some research recommendations, or monitoring ideas, in order to make the fishery management better for you all.

I want to integrate this with as many advisory panels as we can, and so I have this broken out between Atlantic king mackerel, as well as Spanish mackerel, and it starts off -- Both of them have about eight or nine sections, and I believe it's nine sections, if you include the conclusions, but just trying to make sure that, you know, we're looking at the objectives, why we're trying to collect this information, and then breaking it down into the different pieces of information that's being collected, to make it more tangible. I feel like our old research and monitoring plans were not fun to read. They weren't fun to write, and so hopefully this is going to make a little bit more sense.

I'm not going to read the introduction or anything like that, but you can see the objectives. What we're trying to do is improve stock assessment accuracy through comprehensive data collection. We've heard that loud and clear through much of this meeting, that we need better data collection,

and we're going to go into that in Section 3.1, but we also want to enhance these fishery-dependent and fishery-independent monitoring programs.

We realize that these are key not only for stock assessments, but also for developing management measures that come out of stock assessments. Whether we're developing season length or bag limit analysis, it's important to have accurate data that can be used to analyze these impacts.

Going into the impacts, as I just mentioned, you know, it's looking at the fishing regulations on the stock health, the sustainability, and on the fishing communities. We need this information at a finer level than what we're getting right now, and so it's going to be key to getting to the objectives of this research and monitoring plan, getting down to the community level.

We need research priorities. We need it for habitat, migration patterns, and environmental influences. I feel like you all have brought this up quite a few times as well. We need to know the habitat. Is it expanding into the Mid-Atlantic region? Are there new areas up there that these fish are using? Are they changing their migration patterns? We've heard some indication that they might not be going as far south, at least Spanish mackerel, as far south in Florida as they had in the past. Are these things changing? Are they moving more northward?

We need to understand these patterns a little bit better, and especially it seems like a lot of changes are occurring now, more now than they had in the past, and then there was some discussion of the environmental influences, whether it's water temperature, salinity, different things that are impacting Spanish and king mackerel, and then, finally, we need to strengthen cooperative management and stakeholder engagement. One of those stakeholder engagements, you're going to be practicing on this afternoon with the lines of communication, and the other one Julia talked about with citizen science, is getting folks engaged in the Citizen Science Program.

Getting down into the details of some of these fishery-dependent collection programs, and what I'm thinking here is, as we go into each of these in finer resolution, if you all have any comments that you think we're missing anything, please raise your hand, and I'll be happy to stop and add into this.

Starting off with commercial landings and effort surveys, continue mandatory reporting of commercial catches through state and federal programs. I think that's pretty self-explanatory, and, once again, we're talking king mackerel here. Utilize the Marine Recreational Information Program for angler catch estimates. Consider new methods to collect recreational data sources, enhance angler reporting through mobile applications, and citizen science initiatives. I feel like you guys just talked about that, and so I wrote this before you talked about it, and so it sounds like we're on the same page. That's good.

Observer programs, this was mentioned as well, and looking into expanding coverage to improve bycatch estimates and validate self-reported data. Electronic reporting, enhance electronic reporting to improve timeliness and accuracy of data. We have biological sampling in there, conduct biological sampling at landing sites to assess size, age, and reproductive status, and then we get into the social and economic data. Continue to collect social and economic data on recreational and commercial fisheries needed for stock assessment and amendments.

With all those, do you all think there's additional components of fishery-dependent data collection, and what I mean by fishery-dependent data collection is this is information that we are taking directly from commercial or recreational fishermen, based on their fishing trips.

MS. WIEGAND: Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: Well, we need to take into account the historical context of these fisheries, because, a lot of the -- You can't just look at commercial landings, you know, because we've changed our trip limits over time, and there's market considerations, and there's less fishermen in the commercial fisheries than there was in the past, and we also had to have -- You know, look at the communities where these fish are being harvested and brought into, because, you know, the truth is that these communities are fading, and, if they lose any more access, they're going to be completely gone.

You know, like I say, we -- You know, Florida, for the longest time, was a fifty-head limit on these king mackerel, and you can't look at past landings and compare them with future landings, just for that one reason alone, but then you take in market considerations, and weather and everything else, you know, and those need to be considered in this document.

DR. COLLIER: All right. Not seeing any other hands raised, we'll move into the fishery-independent data collection, and I have this broken up into three different parts. One is we need information on adult surveys. It would be great to have a fishery-independent adult survey. Right now we're looking at age-zero and age-one being collected through the SEAMAP survey.

We have juvenile monitoring, continue estuarine and nearshore ocean nursery habitats, monitoring there, and then we have distribution and migration and stock structure, just trying to understand where the mixing zone of king mackerel is, making sure that it's still remaining down there off Florida, and there is still some mixing going on. It's important to know where that might be, given the environmental changes could influence that. It's important to monitor where it is. Any additional suggestions for fishery-independent?

MR. NEWMAN: We have to get a standardized fishery-independent coastal migratory pelagic survey. We do not have one, you know, and this is -- You have heard, time and time again, how important this fishery is, from kids that are one or two years old, all the way up to ninety-nine, as well as a commercially-important species.

It is a crying shame that we don't have a dedicated survey to track these coastal migratory pelagic stocks, and we have to have one if we're going to go forward, and we have to start using the information we have. I don't know that the Northeast Science Center has a whole lot of king mackerel data, but, if they do, we need to be -- We need to get every ounce of data that already exists before we go gathering more too, and I'll add more to that in the Spanish discussion.

DR. COLLIER: All right. Stock assessment enhancements. We have the SEDAR process, ensure regular benchmark and update assessments, and what we mean by those is the benchmark assessments. Those quite often have -- This was a historic term for some of our stock assessments, and what the benchmark would have would be a data workshop, making sure all the data going into the stock assessment is reviewed by a panel of experts, whereas the update assessment is a

quicker assessment, that takes less time, and it's not as many people looking at the data, but it all still gets reviewed by the SSC.

The second part of this is improving age-length keys, or continue age and growth studies through otolith sampling. It's very important for these fish. It seems like some of the otolith collection may be decreasing. I'm not certain if it is for king mackerel as bad as it was for Spanish, but we also have something on spawning potential ratio proxy, in case there's not a stock-recruit relationship, which is key for many of the stock assessments.

We want to we want to investigate potential proxies for estimating maximum sustainable yield, and I realize some of this is getting down into the weeds, and it's not very exciting to talk about, but we're trying to make sure we're as thorough as possible and getting -- Well, Thomas is excited. All right. There's one oddball like me.

MR. NEWMAN: I'm not as familiar with the king mackerel stock assessment, but I know, in every other stock assessment the age-length distribution models -- I think we need to start looking about possibly getting away from those, because I think that's constraining us for management reasons. We have a lot of age-truncated species, that are -- They have a really high abundance, and that management always hangs up on needing those older fish, and so I would like to possibly look at getting away from the age structured distribution in future stock assessments.

DR. COLLIER: Was there anything else on stock assessment? Nothing else? All right. Moving into regulatory impact evaluation, I think this is important for everything that we do. We need to make sure that the rules on the books are actually effective. We talked about that for SEFHIER, where it was having some issues, and ways to improve it, and so looking at quota and size limit effectiveness, bycatch and discard mortality, and those are important for king mackerel. Discard mortality isn't as important for Spanish -- As it is for Spanish, but it still is important.

Economic impact assessments, looking at the -- Or tracking the secondary wholesale and retail prices for king mackerel could be important, and also investigating changes in price due to recreational tournaments. We've heard in the past where the price of king mackerel could drop, due to the volume of fish coming in on some recreational tournaments, but we also need to look into the value of the recreational tournaments themselves as well.

Trip limit analysis, Thomas had mentioned that fifty head are potentially changing the trip limits down off Florida, and so investigate the social and economic effects of the changes of this trip limit. Any suggestions on the regulatory impact evaluations? All right.

Going into the habitat side, and I had mentioned this earlier, but it's important to map the habitat that's available, but also knowing where the fish is -- Knowing which habitats the fish is using is very important, and so we are looking to update our EFH for several of these species. King mackerel and Spanish mackerel are two species we're going to be looking into for updating EFH.

Understanding climate change impacts, model temperature, and oceanographic effects on the distribution and productivity of the stock is very important for this. We need to know where the babies are going, where the fish are spawning, and all that type of information is important for king mackerel.

Predator-prey interactions, and you all have talked about this, whether it was barracuda or sharks, and so I feel like we have this information in there. We just need to understand more, on the ecosystem side, how all these things are balancing out. We haven't focused on this too much in the mackerel cobia fisheries, but I think it's important to start understanding a little bit more.

MR. NEWMAN: I just want to overemphasize the climate change aspect and the fish moving. We have to look outside the South Atlantic. We can't just stop at the South Atlantic waters. We have to work with the Northeast Science Center, because these fish are in the northern waters, and they have been there for quite some time, and, if we do not coordinate these efforts with the Northeast Science Center, we're going to be missing a big piece of our data for this habitat and ecosystem information.

AP MEMBER: How would you propose to look at the prey and predator interactions? I'm just curious. I mean do one out of three fish get cut or --

DR. COLLIER: So I think there's a couple different ways to look at it. One is we need information on how often this is occurring, and is it changing? There's some research being done off Florida, where they're looking to see how frequent these interactions are, and I think that's very important, but then it's also tying it into some of these newer models that have information on the entire food chain, and they can begin to look at, all right, let's say sharks are now feeding on some of these species, and maybe not through the fishery context, but, in their regular feeding, sharks are now eating these species.

We would be able to understand the dynamics of how changes in one species could be impacting the changes of another, and so trying to think of the entire ecosystem, and not just looking at single species assessments. Did that help at all? It's kind of nebulous. We're not certain where we're going with this, but I think it's very key to understanding how this entire food chain works.

AP MEMBER: Well, anecdotally, everybody in here would agree that the shark issue has become critical. You know, the last five years has not been anything like the last twenty-five years. The last five years, the sharks are eating a lot of the fish that we bring to the boat, but I was just curious how you would determine that.

MS. WIEGAND: Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: As far as the habitat changes too, another important point is to look at the offshore component. A lot of these the king mackerel especially have pushed offshore, to cooler waters in instances, or to get away from pollution, and so I think offshore is an area where we traditionally don't fish, and really look for king mackerel, but there are strong indications that that is where that body of fish is moving.

DR. COLLIER: All right. The next action, or next section, we're looking into is stakeholder engagement and cooperative management, and so Christina is going to be talking to you all about the workshops that we're proposing, and so enhance stakeholder involvement, through meetings and training programs, support cooperative research, to incorporate industry knowledge, and then we also have interstate and federal cooperation, strengthen partnerships with state agencies and federal entities, and, Thomas, if you think we should spell out, as opposed to just "NOAA" and put Southeast Fisheries Science Center and Northeast Fisheries Science Center".

MR. NEWMAN: Yes, and I think that's super important. I mean, you know, going back to the first slide, you know, we have a very big dataset of observer coverage data in the Northeast Science Center in North Carolina, because we don't get any South Atlantic observers in the state. We get -- All our observers are Northeast observers, and that data has been sitting up there for two decades, not being used, and, like I said, there's a lot of a lot of information, I know for Spanish mackerel, and I'm sure there's -- There should be some king mackerel information there as well, and so the Northeast Science Center has to be coordinated in all future management for the coastal migratory pelagics.

MS. WIEGAND: Melissa.

MS. LEONE: I don't really know where it would fit in, and maybe on the environment or something part, but, when you mentioned that the fish are moving offshore to cooler water, and, the windmills and stuff that are going on in the Mid-Atlantic, does that do anything to generate warmer water, like some of the nuclear power plants do, to kind of attract manatees, or do something like that? That could -- I don't really know, because I'm not up there, but I don't know where that would fit into, environment or something, but maybe some effect of the windmills, or some of the stuff they're putting out in the ocean is having an effect on some of this migration of these fish, or not just these fish, but some of the other fish too.

MS. WIEGAND: I'll say that was brought up during port meetings a lot, and we included it sort of in the habitat and ecosystem area for port meetings. Thomas, go ahead.

MR. NEWMAN: One of our advisory committee meetings, we spoke with the windmill people I believe, and maybe it was our last one, but there's a lot of funding available in the wind industry to support fisheries projects, as part of their agreement with the government, is they have to support research and environmental impact statements and whatnot, and so that is something that, you know, we could probably incorporate in, and maybe get some funding to fund some of the studies, to see if any of the coastal migratory plastics were having an effect.

I don't know that they really increase the water temperature, but, I mean, it will create structure, and the fish -- It fish cause fish to want to congregate to them, as opposed to where they traditionally congregated at as well, but that's something, you know, we definitely should keep in the back of our mind as a good funding source possibly in the future.

DR. COLLIER: To your point, Melissa, I think, at the junction boxes, there is some temperature differences, because it is bringing a lot of power through there, and, where those things are coming together, it might be warmer, and that's where I've heard of lionfish kind of being around those junction boxes.

MS. LEONE: I feel like there's some kind of noise pollution or something in the water that's like messing with some of the other animals, but it's got to have -- It's got to create some kind of difference than what was there previously, and even just the digging to put it in place probably destroys some of the natural bottom, or some of the habitat, that was there.

MR. MALLETTE: I just want to make a comment about -- When you was talking about stakeholder engagement, Thomas had brought up, you know, being more involved with the

Northeast. I think also dealing with the dealers up there, because there's not a lot of exporters. Most of the few seafood exporters we have are from the Northeast, and, even though we're catching the Spanish mackerel and the king mackerel and stuff down here, the majority of the fish that we catch here are going up there, to be exported into Canada and other places like that.

That's a wealth of -- It's, obviously, a treasure trove of data of what's coming. Even though it may not break down to the exact state, you know it's coming from here, and so how much king mackerel and how much Spanish mackerel is being exported through the big markets up there, and the big fish auctions, that's coming from here, and that's a lot of data right there that you could get your hands on that would help out a lot, because, a lot of times --

You know, as I say a lot, trying to mitigate a lot of things to help out will -- That's a lot of information on how much weight, and how much poundage of fish, is coming from the South Atlantic, and not even needing a fisherman's info, but it's right there.

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, and I was -- Chip, sorry if you don't mind me jumping in, and I think that's an excellent point, and I will say I know, as the Mackerel Cobia FMP lead, I don't necessarily have connections with those people, and so, if there are people that you can put us into contact with, so we can help get them involved in the process, and talk about, you know, some of the information they have, that would be incredibly helpful for us.

DR. COLLIER: All right. Going on to monitoring and compliance enforcement, enhanced coverage for commercial and recreational landings verification, regulation awareness campaigns, better outreach essentially, to make sure folks are aware of the different rules and regulations that are out there on the water. I feel like we've made a push for that in the South Atlantic region, trying to increase some of our education and communication, and so that's been a big focus we've had over the past few years. Any suggestions?

Then future resource priorities, and right now I just have listed climate resilience strategies. Right now, we're looking to fund a proposal, looking at developing adaptive management measures for climate-driven stock shifts, to better understand what's going on with the fishery and who might be most impacted due to climate changes, whether it's increasing sea level rise, and the old dock couldn't sustain anything anymore, or if it's just fish are no longer in that area, and they're having to shift to different fish, or even get out of the fishery.

MS. WIEGAND: Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: Just to follow-up on that, we definitely lost a lot of infrastructure, and that's a lot to do with it now. I mean, you could completely open all regulations right now, and say, you know, have a free-for-all, and we would be on a five-day a week lay days, and, you know, you're going to be able to work two days a week, because we don't have the infrastructure to handle the fish anymore, and so that also plays into what I was talking about earlier, how you -- You know, you can't really compare commercial landings now to what we did in the past, because the market, and the infrastructure, has completely changed, but I also think it's worth putting another bullet point in.

We have to have a dedicated fisheries-dependent coastal migratory pelagic survey, and like it floored me when I found out, five or six years ago, we don't have one, and how can you assess a

fishery without a specialized survey to sample that fish? You know, we have -- Without that survey, it's impossible to manage these fish.

DR. COLLIER: All right. Not seeing any other hands raised, I'll just jump into Spanish mackerel, and much of this is very similar between the two. I will point out where we do have slight differences. One is improve the estimation of shore-based catches for Spanish mackerel. That has a really big impact on the stock assessments and the estimates of catch, and that's why it's listed there.

Like Thomas had mentioned, we do have the suggestion of improved methods to track abundance along the east coast with NEAMAP and SEAMAP, trying to make sure that those datasets can be calibrated to together in order to give an index of abundance. For Spanish mackerel, we also have developed methods to integrate data collected through multiple state surveys and federal agencies. This can be a challenge, and there's a lot of different surveys that are going on at it at the state level that might vary slightly, that could give you different estimates of what's going on in the stock, and so we need to figure out how to incorporate those together.

Another difference here is I added natural mortality into the stock assessment process, and the reason for doing that is this was a pretty big discussion at the last Scientific and Statistical Committee meeting, where they were talking about the Spanish mackerel stock assessment, and they indicated that there might be -- Updated values might be needed for the natural mortality of Spanish mackerel, and that could lead to quite different results in in the stock assessments.

MS. WIEGAND: Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: I was curious too, and have we have we looked at like a -- Like doing an MSE on Spanish mackerel, because I feel like a lot of fishermen have a lot of -- You know, with this last stock assessment, and with our quotas, a lot of fishermen are like how can we only have, you know, a six-million-pound quota for the whole east coast, and, I mean, we had historical fisheries that caught this in one port in Florida, you know, in the roller rig fisheries, and that ended thirty years ago.

The biomass of fish is huge, and, you know, a lot of people don't believe that, you know, we're severely constrained our harvest with these quotas, but I'm just curious if an MSE would be appropriate to look at underneath the stock assessment.

DR. COLLIER: So I'll just leave at to develop MSE for now, and then fill in a little bit more afterwards.

MS. LEONE: Again, I don't know really where to put it in on this bunch of bullet points, but, down where we are right now, we have like this shoreline restoration projects going on, this beach renourishment, and they're doing a lot of dredging, and I don't know how much that's affecting the Spanish mackerel fishery, or where those fish are avoiding that, or what they're doing, but that may have some impact, just on currently, for the last few years, because of the amount of beach we've lost, and that's right in Canaveral I think right now, is where they're actually doing that initially, and they're moving up the coast, and so I don't know if that is something to acknowledge for this.

MS. WIEGAND: Alana.

MS. HARRISON: I heard that at the port meetings, and remember there was that fellow from Florida, who had come up to North Carolina, and he was saying the same thing, that the dredging from Florida was apparently like -- The sand like traveled along the coast, and it was wild.

MS. LEONE: We lost like four or five foot of beach, and so, finally now that all the seawalls are rebuilt, they're starting to dredge the water from -- Dredge the sand back from offshore nearer shore, but then they're also dredging in our rivers, or in our inlets, and dumping it out back onto the beach too, and it's going to move around, but it's got to have some kind of effect, when you're murky up all the water and doing that.

MS. WIEGAND: Charlie, go ahead.

MR. LOCKE: Just to touch on that, I haven't been gillnetting down in Canaveral since 2012. I used to go down there every year, but, when I was down there in the past, there was a lot of -- There was a lot of concerns about the casino boats, that were just sitting on the three-mile line, and they -- You know, there was -- I'm not sure, and this was all speculation, but if they were dumping their, you know, sewage, or however it works, you know, once they're outside three miles, but it seemed like, you know, with the cruise ships and everything, the dredging, and those fish quit using those shoals like they used to, especially in the spring, and like there's hardly any spring gillnet fishery there anymore.

Well, you have shark problems now, and the bull sharks are so bad that nobody can even work, because the sharks just eat your net before you can even, you know, get the fish out of it, but, yes, that's something to definitely be looked into in Florida. It seems like there's a lot more problems down that way with possible pollution, especially around the Cape and the shoals, that those fish really use, where they used to be caught, and it could be affecting some of the landings in that area.

MS. WIEGAND: Thomas.

MR. NEWMAN: Before we get off the stock assessment stuff, I just -- I don't know, and maybe you already added it, but I just want to make sure we kind of look at the age-length distribution model for the Spanish mackerel as well, because, like I said, that was a big hang-up in the stock assessment, and I don't know -- It's such a fast-growing fish, and such a fecund fish, that, you know, we really need to be focused on if we're just, you know, lacking in one age group, one or two age groups.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and things that are mentioned under Spanish, or under king mackerel, I'll move them down under Spanish as well. All right, and Christina is probably getting ready to hit me, but we've got four minutes left, and we only have just two more two or three more sections to go, and so we're timing it about right.

Looking at engagement and cooperative management, we have similar statements to before. I'll add the Science Centers here, like I did for king mackerel. Some management strategies. Regulatory amendment and management measures, these are a little bit different. We need to look at things like seasonal closures and bag limits. We need to improve bycatch reduction strategies and enforce gear restrictions.

The other one that we added in here is the management, adaptive management, framework, and this kind of ties into what you were saying, Thomas, where, if we have a management strategy evaluation, we could have a more adaptive management framework, where we would be looking at certain key pieces within the fishery to determine what condition the stock is, whether or not we could move the catch levels up or down, and so we have that listed here for this, and we also listed Atlantic States as an important collaborator for this, given that they're also managing this stock with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. Any questions on this?

MR. NEWMAN: Chip, should we have like some representation from the Atlantic States on this AP, because that's -- I mean I was going to ask you about that to the side, Christina, but --

MS. WIEGAND: So there was a discussion about that, back in 2020, I believe, 2020 or 2021, and I know we were still doing virtual meetings, and the decision was made that, for Spanish mackerel, given that they are sort of jointly managed with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, or I guess "joint" is not the right word, but they also manage Spanish mackerel in state waters, but that, when there was a topic coming up where we would be delving deep into the Spanish mackerel fishery, we could actually have joint meetings with their -- I think they call them planning teams over there, but their stakeholder team as well, and so we would bring this group and that group together to talk about some things.

That's likely something that's going to come up as we move further along with this port meetings amendment, because I know the commission has been sort of waiting for the council to start working to move forward with any changes for state waters, and so there is a process in place for that, that I imagine we'll be implementing for the first time not that long in the future.

DR. COLLIER: All right, and, just going through the last two pieces, we had similar information in Spanish mackerel as we did for king mackerel. I added in there developing an adult survey for Spanish mackerel, and other pieces are similar, and so if there is anything, other pieces of information, that you feel like we missed, and quite often we get bogged down into the details, and sometimes we miss the big picture things, and so, if you all think there's something that we need to include in there, that would make your fishery better, please let us know, and we'll get it incorporated, and don't feel bad if you miss something here.

We can try to get it either incorporated in this this one, before the June meeting for the council, or we do this every two years, and so, if we miss it here, we can put it in two years down the road, and we're just -- This is a very different process than what we've done in the past, and so, you know, I expect us to make a few hiccups along the way, but it's going to get better over time, and it's going to be a much better document I think in the long run.

MR. NEWMAN: I had forgot about the possible year start change, and I think that needs to be listed in there. I mean, we brought it up earlier for both, or mainly for Spanish.

MS. WIEGAND: John.

MR. MALLETTE: Real fast, as far as future research priorities, and I know we talked about it yesterday, and I would say have more research done into the economics of the for-hire and recreational fishers for Spanish mackerel, being how we talked about how most people really

wouldn't want to go offshore for bigger fish, but, due to the cost of fishing, the cost of the boats, the cost of fuel, a lot of people are resorting to Spanish mackerel, because they're, like I said, basically a low-hanging fruit, easy to catch and close to shore, and how much more interaction are we having with it, and, you know, just getting those numbers right, because of economic impact.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Thank you, guys, for that and thank you, Chip, and so we are right back on track with time. I know I rushed you a little bit this morning, and so thank you for your patience, and, as a reminder, you can always reach out to me, Chip, John Hadley, and Julia, if you have questions about any of the stuff that was presented this morning, and I'll send out all their contact info, and it's also on the website, and so please always feel free to reach out with us for questions, and so, with that, you guys are off for lunch. Please be back at 1:30 to start our Lines of Communication practice run. Thank you, guys.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. WIEGAND: All right, everyone. Welcome back from lunch, and so, for the next three hours of this afternoon, we are going to be running through a new stakeholder engagement initiative developed by the council that is called Lines of Communication: Conversations with the Council, or, more simply, we've just been calling it Lines.

This program was originally developed -- We've done stakeholder efforts in the past, and you guys -- We just talked in detail about port meetings for mackerel, and we did the snapper grouper revisioning workshops back in 2013, or 2014, and I'm looking at Myra. This was little before my time. Also, some of you have been to the dolphin wahoo MSEs, and those are often sort of like one-off opportunities to have more of a conversation with stakeholders than traditional public comment allows. As you know, with public comment, there's usually a management idea on the board. You come up, and you have three minutes or so to say your piece and sit back down, and the council really wanted to find a way to formalize an opportunity for a more discussion-based, a more conversation-oriented program.

They wanted it to become something that we did regularly, and not just sort of the one-offs like port meetings or snapper grouper visioning, and so Lines of Communication was developed, and, again, the goal of this is to go out in-person, meet fishermen in their communities, to have discussions around what's happening in fisheries, and they're meant to be forward-thinking, and so, when we're coming to your community, there won't necessarily be a proposal for a specific management measure for, you know, say king mackerel, or dolphin, and it's really meant to have a discussion around what's happening in council priorities.

The council developed a couple of goals and objectives, and I'm not going to go over them in huge detail, but the overall goal is really to work to build relationships with fishery stakeholders. We've talked about it around this table, that fishermen don't always feel their voices are being heard, and the council understands that stakeholder engagement, and getting stakeholder input, is a key part of the fisheries management process.

It was designed in a way to prioritize information, and public input, from fishery stakeholders, and so this effort is really meant to be an opportunity for fishermen to come together, talk to council members, and have a conversation about what needs to happen in fisheries that are important to them.

To do this, again, we're hoping to provide an opportunity for open dialogue and mutual learning, where you all can learn from council members, and council members can learn from you all as well. An opportunity to increase knowledge of the fishery management process, to encourage stakeholder engagement and council initiatives, things like being on advisory panels, like you all are, participating in public comment, working on citizen science projects, and then do -- You know, in doing that -- The fishery management process can be complex, and, when we brought this idea to the Snapper Grouper AP, they talked a lot about how they felt people in their communities needed to understand the process a little bit more, and so an opportunity to learn about fisheries management, with the hope of increasing involvement.

Then providing an opportunity for you all, as stakeholders, to bring your concerns and observations forward directly to council members, and you're going to see sort of council staff running through things with you today, but, once we actually implement this program, it won't be council staff that's running all of these different activities that we're going to go through, and it will actually be the council members that are running the activities, and so this is really an opportunity for stakeholders to have conversations with their representatives that are at the council table.

Then, last, provide an opportunity for council members, in turn, to share information on salient management issues, things that council members know are hot topics, and we'll be in communities in-person, ready to share that information, and so, again, really get getting back into that mutual learning, where council members can learn from stakeholders, and stakeholders can learn from council members, by having conversations.

The council plans to do a couple of different things with this information. First, to identify topics that should be on their radar, but, for one reason or another, haven't been. They're also going to use it to set workload priorities. If you've ever been to a council meeting, you've seen sort of this brightly colored spreadsheet that is brought up that has all of the different tasks the council is working on at a time, and they have to prioritize. There's a limited amount of time in a year to get stuff done, and so using this information to understand what stakeholders are saying are most important for the council to be working on.

Then, finally, while these are meant to be sort of forward-looking and proactive, it's inevitable that topics will come up that are actively being worked on right now by the council, and so to guide -- To use this information to guide some of those things, what they should be considering when discussing actions that are already on the table, and so, if you came to port meetings, you've seen this slide before, but we'll also be driving at home with anyone who attends a Lines meeting.

It's not public comment. the council is not coming to you with a specific management proposal. Instead, they're taking a step back and saying we want to have a discussion, and let's talk about what is important in fisheries moving forward, and so what we are going to do here with you guys today is practice.

We're going to be holding meetings later in the year, but staff would like to sort of get a feel on how some of these activities actually are going to function when we have fishermen in a room, and so we're using you guys sort of as our guinea pigs, to practice, and how we'll work it is we'll run through one activity, and then we'll come back to the table, and there will be an opportunity for you guys to provide feedback to us on how that activity went, how you feel like people in your

community would or wouldn't be willing to participate in it, and if you feel like it's allowing you to provide information to council members that you want to provide.

As we're doing this, I want to note a couple of things. This is, of course, the Mackerel Cobia AP, but we know, when we're having these meetings, there will be people from mackerel cobia, snapper grouper, dolphin wahoo, shrimp, spiny lobster, and, you know, any sort of federal species, and so don't feel like you have to just talk about mackerel and cobia, this one time, during this one process. Snapper grouper, dolphin wahoo, spiny lobster, you are welcome to bring up any issue that's going on in fisheries.

However because the purpose of this is just for staff to practice, the feedback you're providing won't necessarily go to the council. We will be providing them the feedback that you guys provide on the structure of this, and so, if there's something that you bring up during these discussions that you think this actually really does need to be on the council radar, I ask that you bring it up under Other Business.

Then the one last thing I want to note for our participants online, and so this is meant to be a program that's done in-person, and so, when we break out into activities, you won't be able to hear on the webinar, but, when we come back to provide feedback on those activities, we'll broadcast on the webinar again. I've got the times sort of up on the screen, and I will keep a more detailed one up, so you know when the AP is going to come back to provide discussion. With that, are there any very quick questions, before we just run right into our first activity? All right. Well, then I am going to turn it over to Myra, Julia, and Nick to run through the first activity, and, everyone on the webinar, we will see you back at 2:05 p.m.

(Whereupon, the AP went into a Lines of Communication session that was not transcribed.)

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Thank you, guys, for participating in the first of three activities that we're going to do today, and so this was the sticky wall activity, and so, for context, for anyone who is online, that was not able to hear, during this session, what we had the advisory panel members do is sort of talk broadly about what was working in their fisheries, what could use improvement, what changes are needed, and sort what they've seen over the last five years or so in their fishery.

We put those ideas up on a sticky wall, and then worked to categorize them, and so what we're going to do now, and we've got about twenty minutes before we'll start our next activity, and what we're really looking for from the advisory panel is feedback on how you think that session went, and so keep in mind part of what we're aiming to do with these Lines meetings is have a two-way conversation, build relationships, and this was really meant to provide Lines attendees at the start of a meeting an opportunity to, you know, tell council members right away what's working and what's not working in their fishery.

Our experience at other meetings, like port meetings and snapper grouper visioning, is that sometimes people, you know, come in with an expectation of a meeting, and this really sort of helps people get their thoughts out right away, before asking them to have a bit more of a structured, smaller discussion, and so, from you guys, we would be curious, and did you find that activity valuable? Did you feel like you were able to express the information you wanted to get across to council members?

Then think about fishermen in your community. If they show up to this meeting, are they going to be willing to participate in the sticky wall session, and I'll encourage sort of Julia and Nick and Myra, as the ones that were leading this, and, if you guys have specific questions as well for the AP, please feel free to come up and ask.

I will add that this is a really great time for some constructive criticism. We are genuinely looking for that, so that we can make sure, by the time we're doing these meetings for real, later this year, that we've worked out all the kinks. I see Will, Mike, Thomas.

MR. JONES: I think, by doing that exercise the way we did it, we figured out that we could start with those topics, like commerce, economics, environmental, outreach and education, and then maybe current management strategies, and how people feel about those things, positive and negative.

Instead of kind of having those questions that we were answering, you start by bringing up, okay, we're going to talk about the economic and market factors, and how do you feel about the positives, and then how you feel about the negatives, and go at it that way, instead of instead of doing it in the order that we went about it, and I don't know if that makes any sense or not.

MR. OPPENGAARD: My only worry is that the guys who are going to show up tend to be the ones that have an axe to grind, and I have a hard time seeing how it won't devolve into a bitch session, and trying to get something constructive, if that makes any sense, because we all know nobody shows up to a fisheries meeting until, oh my god, you're taking this away from us, and now I've got to go tell you that you're wrong, even though the process has been twenty-four months, and it's been happening the whole time, and that would be my only worry, is how you keep it from devolving into that, and try to keep it constructive, because that's where I see the big issue is, is that, you know, the fishermen who show up tend to be the ones who really want to complain.

MS. WIEGAND: Thomas, and then John.

MR. NEWMAN: Just responding to you, Mike, yes, and I understand that too, but this staff is really good. You know, I've seen them work, and they're really good at deescalating those kind of situations, and I've got full faith in the staff, that they will be able to work back with that, because they are used to seeing those things at the meetings, but, you know, my experience -- I've not been directly to these meetings, but my experience, from hearing people at the meetings, is like the staff runs really good meetings, and they can change that conversation from negative to pretty quickly.

As far as my opinion, it was I liked not having categories in the beginning, because, depending on where you're at up and down the coast, and depending on who you're talking to -- I mean, we, for one, didn't have a whole lot of private recreational opinions up there, because there's only one private recreational fisherman in our group, or, well, two, I mean, but you're state staff, and so, I mean, you're kind of a double seat, but, you know, I like you letting the participants lead where the conversation goes.

You might have to help them out, and give them some ideas, which you all did with us, but I like not having set categories to talk about, because environmental conditions are going to be probably bigger in areas like Florida, whereas, further north, that's not going to be an issue, and then, if

you're talking to the recreational sector, you're not going to be worried about a market factor, and so I would just leave it open and kind of see where the -- Where your participants bring you.

MR. MALLETTE: I was going to, actually, and not trying to disagree with Thomas, because it makes sense, and I was actually kind of saying the same thing, but leave -- Like how you did the ones in purple, and I think you all can use those three, but, as you do more of this, that could turn into nine, to where, when it's more recreational, you have more of those, and what that does is, instead of having all the blue, when you go to a new place, if you have like the main one to start, and it will lead the conversation as whoever is hosting explains it. Then it keeps the people on track of what we're doing, because, even with recreational commerce, it could be, you know, how much --

AP MEMBER: Access.

MR. MALLETTE: Access to the water, the fuel, the tackle shops, and all of that is involved, and getting the people involved, because, going to the port meetings, which this seems a lot like a port meeting to me, and I think it went a lot better than what I thought it would, when I went to the one in Wilmington, because, I mean, yes, there mean, there were some people bitching, but it's the same people that's always bitching online, and they're going to bitch no matter what, and it was the same ones, and so I wouldn't expect anything from them.

I'm not going to have a snake and be mad when it bites me when I grab it, and so, I mean, why would -- You're going to get some people that you're just going to expect it, but I did see a lot of constructive stuff, and I think this could work really well, but I think having the -- Like what you have in purple, and it kind of like leads people into something, and it keeps them more from going astray, and that's why you directing it. If some people do get somewhere, just bring them back. Also, at the port meeting, having law enforcement there helped a lot, too.

MS. BYRD: We did something kind of similar to this back when the snapper grouper visioning stuff was done, and they're kind of similar meetings, and so Nick and I were writing down things, and one of the things we talked about was like giving Post-It notes to you all to be able to write down things on, and is that something that you think you would like to do, or did you like Nick and I kind of taking charge?

AP MEMBER: (The comment is not audible on the recording.)

MS. BYRD: Okay.

MS. HARRISON: I kind of would like to have been given like a notepad, and like ten minutes, so I could have jot down my thoughts, and I felt kind of like rushed, and kind of pressured to come up with something, and you asked -- Like your first question was like what's going well, but like every fishman I know never talks about what is going well, and so like, you know, it was kind of like you all -- It was kind of like putting us on the spot, and like now we got to come up with something that's going well, but -- Like I survived my last fishing trip, and like you know what I mean? These guys are so -- So like so a notepad.

MS. WIEGAND: So I'm going to jump in with another related question, and then I'll go to Thomas and Mike, and so we tried something similar at the first two mackerel port meetings. We gave

people a sheet of paper, and gave them -- We sort of said take two minutes, and write down your thoughts on this topic, and then we'll come back and discuss, and we found that people weren't really interested in doing that.

We also had opportunities for them, sort of separately during breaks, to go put answers to questions up on walls, and so I would be interested in feedback from you guys on if you think that would work, and, if you do think that's a good way to do it, how we can encourage people to actually write stuff down and put stuff on walls for us to see, and so Thomas, and then Mike.

MR. NEWMAN: I mean, you're -- It's going to be hard to get guys to write stuff down in the evenings, especially after you've had a long day, and to think, and I think we brought it up at the mackerel port meetings, like a little a half-page, or a one-page, agenda ahead of the meeting, and it will give you chance, if you if you have some ideas you want to go ahead and pre-write those down. I mean, I like -- Like I said, I like seeing an agenda myself, so I can kind of know what to expect, and you don't have to have like a big handout or anything, but just like a rough agenda to say, hey, these are the general topics, but we can still talk about whatever you want to talk about, but --

MR. BENEVENTO: Going back to my corporate experience, we had a moderator, which was the leader, and then we had scribes, and then we didn't -- We had flip charts, and the one thing that you didn't do, and I was guilty of it, is like you're -- When you're brainstorming, which is what this amounted to, you're not supposed to be judgmental about what gets up there, until you get to the evaluation stage. What you're trying to do is get ideas up on the board, and then come back and rework the ideas, and get everybody's input, you know, and like I disagreed with the hurricane issue, and I'm not supposed to do that in true brainstorming rules.

MS. LEONE: If these are all done in-person, most of the people that are going to go to your meetings, they've got something on their minds, and so maybe a question like what did you come here to talk about today would give you another question too, because that's the only thing that urges people to go participate, is they've already got an agenda, kind of.

MR. SMILLIE: I was just wondering if you all liked the questions, and I know there was -- It was kind of hard to lead off with the, you know, what do you think is going well in your fishery, because often people are coming to these things to complain, and we wanted to start it off on a positive note. Were the other prompting questions that Myra asked -- Were they helpful in helping you all come up with things, or are there other ideas?

MR. NEWMAN: Well, maybe you could say what was going better with my fishery, and like maybe say, the historical aspect of my fishery, that was better than what we have now, and it's X, you know, because I know you're going to hear that anyway, but that might spur more conversation.

MR. MALLETTE: I was going to say I like the questions, what you were just asking. I like the pointed questions, because, when you ask questions, if you noticed just how it worked right there, people will piggyback, because it pops in their head then, and so, if you just initially start out saying, hey, what do you want to talk about, a lot of times, everybody is quiet, and then like the first one starts, and then somebody starts talking about something, and then, boom, it pops in, and then you're like, oh, and then that's how all that happened.

If you notice, all those blue sticky notes started showing up, like right within minutes, once it started going, you know, and I think asking those initial questions -- I really like the questions, and that's what gets it started, and that's what gets people's mind thinking, and then they're like, oh, now it pops up, because, just putting them out of nowhere, you might be like I don't know, but then somebody will say something, and then it's just going to start it rolling, and so I like that. I think it went real well.

MS. BROUWER: So I'm trying to imagine the different locations that we may end up, right, and so, here, we had a small space, audience-type seating, and we could hear each other fairly well. I mean, do you guys envision, or do you have any suggestions, for the types of spaces that would be more appealing to members of your communities where we could have an exercise like this, and like where should we be looking to gather?

MR. MALLETTE Just as an idea, because we were already talking about, you know, the outreach and education, and I would say do something similar to like what we do at NC Catch and what I'm doing with Aramark with the colleges. Blow it up on social media, and let people know it's coming, and just have virtual signups, and that will let you do it a month in advance. Then you'll know, by how many people signed up, what type of venue you'll need, and that gives you enough time to make sure you have a place that can accommodate.

You might only need twenty in one city, and you might need 200 in the next, but you don't know, and start -- Use social media to your advantage, you know, and hit the Facebook and Instagram. People already have it, and just blow it up and just try to get people to sign up online, things like that, because it's going to be free, and so people like free, and so, you know, just get that, because we've had to learn it. Everybody that signs up isn't going to show up, but it gives you an idea, and I think that's the easiest way to do it, and do it far enough in advance so you're not scrambling and trying to find a spot.

MS. LEONE: I would work to work with places that these fishing people already are at, and like do it at a fish house. You know, the boats usually all come back the same time, or early in the morning or something, or maybe leave a suggestion box, that they can drop something in for a week, and then pick it up, or at a fishing club, or, depending on what market of people you're looking to get, and we have boat clubs in our area. It's just -- So, if you go to where it's easiest for the people that are they're already congregating, you'll get the best results back, rather than making people go out of their way to go somewhere.

MS. BYRD: We're hoping that we can get a mix of commercial, for-hire, and recreational people who would want to come to these sorts of things, and so, when we're trying to think of locations, we're trying to think of places that would be welcoming to people from all sectors, and so do you -- Like would a fish house be welcoming to a recreational angler, or like I'm trying to think of -- You know, we're trying to figure out places where everyone would feel comfortable coming, and so I'm just curious about you all's thoughts on that.

MR. NEWMAN: I think it would just be kind of the same places as you went to the mackerel cobia port meetings, like the community centers, and, you know, just places where the community already gathers, you know, broadly. That way, they're already comfortable there, or libraries, you know schools, community colleges.

MS. LEONE: For all those independent places, you'll get some people from all of them, but, if it was like one of those captain's meetings before a tournament, you're getting all of those entities registering in a tournament already, or if you could just piggyback on some other already ongoing fishing things going on, but I'm sure a fish house wouldn't mind having thirty people congregate, if they're potentially going to buy some fish dip, or they're potentially going to buy some -- You know, somebody is going to buy something, if it's just at a -- Just on a dock, in front of -- Not a boat ramp, but --

MS. HARRISON: Personally, if you were holding like this port meeting at like my Hatteras Marlin Club, I wouldn't go, because I just don't feel welcomed in that environment. I do feel welcomed, but I don't feel like I fit in, necessarily, and I do know I fit in, but you know what I mean? Just it's like you hesitate, and like it's going -- It's like you know like there's a bartender at a restaurant you don't like, and you know what I mean? It's just like you just avoid it, and so I would -- I think that your upside here is that all your meetings are going to be on the coast, and most of the places on the coast have like wedding space, and I think that's your best bet, is look for places that host weddings, and it's usually like -- Like, in my town, it's at the community center.

It seems, at least where I am, most every town, or two towns apart, like a firehouse, and like we have a lot of local meetings in our firehouse. They have like an event space, where they host dinners and such, and like the -- We just -- Oregon Inlet just built a new fishing center, and they have an event space, where they host weddings, and so I think that there's a lot of places that people are familiar with that is more neutral, but that's just my perspective.

MR. BENEVENTO: Kind of the same sentiments as Alana, but I was thinking more sticking with the community colleges, things like that, spaces that they ain't going to charge you for it probably, especially since it's through the state, and it ain't going to cost you nothing, and like I said, I can't speak for Florida, but I can tell you, up here, commercial or recreational, and you get these dudes, and I'm going to tell you right now that you don't know what they did before they got there.

Most of these dudes are already going to come there with some beers in them and stuff, and then you just asking for trouble, and I'm just being straight up. Neutral ground, and don't get them at a fish house, and it don't need to be a recreational spot, because something is going to happen. You're playing with fire, whether it's right or wrong, and it just is what it is, and so I'm just -- I'll tell you right now, and so that neutral ground, in like a community building, like I said, and, like I said, it doesn't hurt having a few marine fisheries guys there to -- Actually, have the marine fisheries guys, officers, participate, but also having them there also keeps some of the ignorant ones in check, on both sides.

The reason why I was saying -- Because, like she said, a lot of the coast, the truth of the matter is a lot of the recreational fishermen, that spend the money, don't live at the coast, and they live in Raleigh, and they live in places inland, and then they come to the coast, and so, if they're going --

If you're far enough in advance that it's worth for them to come, they will, but definitely that neutral place, like the community centers, because, even the king mackerel tournaments, they have at the community center now, but like the community colleges have enough space, places like that, and I think there's other places, but just neutral ground. I wouldn't -- Don't put in the emphasis

where it's going to be, and there might be more commercial guys here than recreational, or a place where it might be recreational, and just this is an in-between, kind of a neutral ground place.

MS. WIEGAND: Okay, and so we have to move on to our next activity, but we can circle back to this at the end, and we're going to talk about outreach a little bit, and so I think we can also circle back to places to hold meetings, and so I know I saw a couple of other hands up. Hold those thoughts, and we're going to come back to them at the end.

(Whereupon, the AP went into a Lines of Communication session that was not transcribed.)

MS. WIEGAND: We're going to switch gears, and so now we're going back to look on feedback about that session, and so this was structured a bit more like we did mackerel port meetings, where everyone is just sitting around and answering sort of some questions that we have, and I have some questions that I would like to ask of you, but, sort of first, just to get your perspective on how effective you thought it was to have a conversation just like that in a small group for a meeting like Lines, or if you think a different structure would work, just sort of for what we're calling a topical discussion, and so the specific topic for this one was trip satisfaction, and it might change, based on where we are or what year we're doing this meeting in, but thoughts on having everyone in a small group, having a discussion on specific topic, and if that's effective? How did you guys feel about the questions that were asked? Did you feel like they were too broad to provide feedback, or too narrow?

AP MEMBER: I think, in some ways, they were a little bit too broad, but that kind of lets you narrow it down from the beginning to the end, but I'm not so sure how it doesn't just end into a rambling kind of not necessarily what you're looking for.

AP MEMBER: I think we found out, based on what Alana was saying and the discussion we had after that that, that, for commercial and for-hire, you can -- You want to look at satisfaction, or profitability, through the course of a season, and then I think, for recreational, and maybe I'm not thinking about this right away, but, for strictly recreational, it's probably fine to look at -- Look at it more narrow, in terms of, you know, what makes a trip satisfactory.

It's probably okay -- It's an okay question to ask for the recreational sector, but for the for-hire and commercial, it's about were you able to make a living this year, you know, because we don't want it -- Like the idea is not to have to start other businesses, and get other jobs, and like we're trying to make a living as a fishing guide, as a commercial fisherman, you know, and, if you had to get other jobs, that would conflict with your ability to make fishing trips, whether it's charters or commercial trips, and so then that's how, you know, the working waterfront dies, and charter captains, and fishing guides, go out of business, et cetera.

MS. LEONE: I would agree with exactly what he said, that, in our area specifically, there's a ton of firemen that are underpaid, and they took up fishing to fill what they're underpaid from already another market, or they might have been a family fishing anyway, but we just -- We just see a ton of crossover from firemen who are fishermen as well, but, yes, avoiding having to get another job to just -- One is plenty.

MR. NEWMAN: Yes and I just -- That was a good point from both of you all, and that's important. You know, not everybody can get those side jobs, and, like I say, if everybody has a side job in

the wintertime, they're going to rent that slip to somebody else, and then, when it comes time for you to come back get your slip, it's not going to be there, and so we need the fulltime, you know, commercial fishermen, and for-hire fishermen too, and, you know, we can't all be getting side jobs, and selling fish on small markets, and so we've got to remember to keep the fulltime guys there, too.

MS. WIEGAND: Okay, and so it seems like -- Sort of getting back to feedback on how this session went, it seems like it's really important for us, when we're structuring these questions, to make sure that they apply to all of the sectors, or, if we're asking a question, we're being specific and acknowledging sort of the differences between for-hire fishing, versus commercial fishing, versus, you know, private recreational angler fishing. I'll say, John and Allie, please feel free to jump in.

I was also curious, and so we've done the note taking that Allie was doing a couple of different ways, and we've done it like she did here, where she just has the flip chart on the table, and was taking notes, and we've also done it, you know, more formally, with an easel and standing at the front of the room taking notes, and we've gone back and forth about which way is more effective.

When you're sitting at the table taking notes, you're sort of part of the group, versus standing up in front of everyone more formally, but, also, I know, like Alana, you can't see what Allie is writing down, and so I'm curious if you guys have any thoughts. We want to make sure we're taking notes on a flip chart, to show that what you guys are saying is being captured, but I didn't know if you thought it was better to have people sort of with you around the table or standing up in front of the room, and I would be curious your thoughts on that. Tony, and then Thomas.

MR. BENEVENTO: Absolutely she needs to be standing up, so that I can see that she's capturing my thoughts, but, you know, which I'm not being critical of you, Allie, and you may have got it perfect, but, you know, that's the whole idea of the flip chart, because, otherwise, you can just record it.

MR. NEWMAN: I guess it just depends on what your output is going to be. If it's going to be something similar like the mackerel cobia port meetings report, where you summarized the report, and then you sent it back to the stakeholders and let them edit -- You know, have the opportunity to edit that draft, before it becomes finalized, or what kind of information you're going to carry to the council from these meetings, and it would depend on what you need to do.

MS. WIEGAND: I'll cover that a little bit at the end. There will be a report, and we haven't talked about whether or not we'll send it out to stakeholders to have an opportunity to provide edits on, before we send it back, and then council members will be giving oral reports at the next -- At the subsequent council meeting, and I'll talk about that in a little bit more detail later, but there will be some kind of output from this.

MR. NEWMAN: That's what I felt like, is this is more generalized, and I know a lot of ideas came from mackerel, and the mackerel port meetings were specific to the Mackerel FMP.

MS. WIEGAND: Alana, did I see your hand up?

MS. HARRISON: Is it possible to just do a Google Doc, and have her typing as people talk, and it be on the projector, because then we could -- You know, it's a lot faster, and you can also even do like the Sticky app, and you could do your stickies on the desktop as well.

MS. WIEGAND: So we -- That's interesting, and that's something we hadn't thought about for this. We would need -- I think some of it would depend on the size of the room, because, in this, we would have people in breakout groups, and so there could be one group, two groups, three groups, and so we would need then projectors and everything for those three groups, and so, unless it was a very large room, that might present challenges, but we have used Google Docs for other workshops before, and so that's interesting. It's certainly faster to type than it is to write, and it would make it easily visible for everyone, and so I think that's something to consider.

MS. LEONE: There was there was some tourism meeting we were at where they had a projection screen, and then they asked everybody to brainstorm something, like you got you guys just did, but you put it in your own phone, and then it ended up on the board, as like a brainstorm thing, and so then all the people who said the same comment -- It just made that word bigger, and that might be functional for what this is, because then you would get an idea of how many people in the room are off of that one topic, because it would be much bigger than the other word would be. You did have to do it off your phone, but --

MS. HARRISON: That would be cool, because it surveys people as well, because the word gets bigger, and then that would be cool for your -- For your little word chart thing.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, guys. This this has been beyond helpful, because it's just very new to council members as well, and staff have done a lot of the leg work, and we're learning through a firehose right now as well, but I want to go back to something that you said, Melissa, and it kind of gave me a little cause for pause, and it made my heart go -- No, and it's good. This is all good. This is really good, and so do you have suggestions on ways that council members could translate to the folks that are at this table, that are at public meetings, and that will eventually be with us at Lines of Communication that we do fish, and that we care about what we do, and we care about the science and the management.

For your record, I'm a big billfish girl. The bigger the fish, the happier I am when I go fishing, and so there's like write-ups on the website, and we have personal communications with folks all the time, but is there something else that you think that might be really helpful for council members to kind of bring forward, to make sure that that you know we're engaged and that we really do care?

MS. LEONE: I think a majority of people are just not involved, is why they don't even know how fishing regulations get made, and they look at the council just as an enemy, just as a natural, and they are going to take more away from us, and so I don't -- I don't know how you would create those communications, other than you kind of have to rebuild some trustworthiness between the fishermen, because the second overwhelming thing that --

I called some other kingfish people I knew before I came up here, to try to get a scope on things, and they said just be careful what you say, because, no matter what we tell them, they're going to use it against us, and so I'm new to getting involved myself, and I'm a little bit younger than a lot of the fishers in our community, but that's just what they're used to, and so it leaves a bad -- You

know, I'm hesitant, and I was hesitant of what to share, but then I don't have an answer to tell you how to get that, to build that, but they definitely --

I definitely hear people say, and I am guilty of saying this too, is this app -- They want us to use this app because they're managing from a desk, and they're used to these apps, but the guys in the fishing boat are not all this computer literate people, and I couldn't even make a presentation like what you guys are doing, and I think I'm okay at using an app, but they don't want to hear that you guys probably fish, because they're looking at you guys as like an enemy already, kind of, and I'm just --

MR. NEWMAN: I'm going to pull an Ira plug here, and, I mean, that's MREP, you know. The more people that go to these Marine Resource Education Programs, the more you learn, the more you learn that it's not just that one council person sitting in that seat, and it's a collaborative effort between NMFS, and it's between the Science Center, and it's between state staff, and you've got South Atlantic staff, and you've got -- You've got the councilmen, and I spend more time explaining the difference between staff, council, NOAA, and I do it to people that are on the water every single day.

Then, the next time there's a meeting, three months from now, I'm having that same conversation, with that same person, and so there's so much disconnect between how the process works and who the people are in the steps of the process that, before we can break that barrier of trust, you need to have an education barrier, and a lot of it is -- Like you say, it's generational, and it's hard-headedness, and it's an excuse, and it's a scapegoat, and it's -- A lot of it is -- It's not really ignorance, and it's laziness.

It's just the easy out, just to stick your head in the sand and blame someone, but, the more people you get involved, and the more people that go to the MREP program, like Ira would suggest, you know, right now to do, and the more people that can understand the process, and you get to have -
- To build personal relationships with people in the council.

When I went to MREP, Alana was there, and there were two council members there from the South Atlantic, and there was a council members there from the Gulf, and you've also got, you know, Andy Strelcheck with the Science Center, and he was there to talk to, and it's a -- It's a good environment, to where you're just sitting there, and there's no -- There's no meeting, and there's no issue up there, but it's just you've got to spend the time with the people, and see what's going on, and you've got to listen to meetings.

I have so many people go and tell me what they're going to do, and tell me what they're going to do, and I was like, well, did you listen to any of the meetings? No, and I was like, well, how do you know the answer to this problem, that they've been working on for a decade, when you've never ever listened to a single meeting, and you cannot fix the problems without having information.

I mean, just sitting on this AP, and I encourage AP members all the time, and I'm like listen to the council meetings, because the council members -- You're there to advise the council, and you're an advisor member, and that's the thing, is like you need to be talking to Ms. Dukes, and you need to be talking to Ms. McCawley, because you are there -- They put you in this seat to advise them what you're seeing on the water, and then you're also the bridge to your people fishing in your

town, and so you have to go out there, and you're the you're the connection to that council, and so, the more you know, the more you can help your -- "Constituents" is not the right word, but the more you can help your community members know, but I'll stop.

MS. DUKES: That was beautiful, and I appreciate you. A hundred percent, that was beautiful, and you're right that we are very much a part of this group, and we want to be engaged, and so, Melissa, you and I are going to become good friends.

MR. MALLETTE: I mean, it's -- Kind of Thomas pretty much kind of hit on what I was going to say, was it falls back to kind of like what I said in the little group thing as well. Getting in touch with the people, because, like Melissa said, the people I talk to at home -- They know I sit on the board, and the first thing they're going to say is, man, they're just going to take everything, you know, and I was like, look, here's the deal, because I've told you all to your face that the main reason I'm sitting right here right now, the main reason I want to do it, is because it would be very easy for me to sit at a bar with my friends, or drink beer at the fish house and complain, but, if I've got a problem, I would rather just look you all dead in the face and have a problem with the people that actually make the decision, because then I'm actually doing something.

All these people that want to bitch and complain and sit there and do nothing, they ain't doing nothing, but it makes them feel better, but when you really tell them to, all right, put up or shut up, then they get quiet, and a lot of it falls into -- I'll say some other things I ain't going to say, but a lot of it falls into that they don't have that trust, and, like I said, at the end of the day, try to put more emphasis on we want to help, and not take, because all you see -- You have to admit this, and, if you look at all you see is what's being taken away, what's being taken away, honestly, at the end of the day, this is politics.

Whether it's true or not, just say, look, we want -- The more information you give us, it's the best chance you have it getting more quota, getting more fish, getting more stuff, but, if you give -- If you give them nothing, and you're just tight-lipped, and, if you don't trust them, then why are you making it possible to for them to make decisions without any information, and we need everybody's help, and that's what I tell them, that we need your help, and so, instead of -- I just think there just needs to be as much emphasis as possible, and not necessarily -- Trying to not necessarily sugarcoat it, and I won't say the words, but we want to help.

Give us as much of -- Where a lot of it is - All people here is what's being taken away, and just get more -- You get that, and I think you've got a much better chance, and that all falls down to the nuts and bolts of what we're here for in the first place, is to get information, to help the numbers, to get the stuff, and I think it's build that trust. Do as much possible to build that trust with people that you're trying to help, and not take away from you, especially on the commercial side, where everybody needs money, and all they see is what's going away. Now recreational is seeing stuff going away, and, well, we've been dealing with that for years, and now they're doing it, and now you're now you're seeing what's happening.

MR. NEWMAN: Yes, and I'm involved with this as a member of the public, and I'm also paid to represent commercial fishermen in our state, but I was involved in all this before I started, but, if you would go to these meetings, and you would listen to the council members talk about this stuff, and you see how big of a struggle they have when they're cutting things, and, I mean, it's not easy.

I mean, I went to a lot of these meetings, and you get to know these council members face to face, and they -- They want to do what's best, but they're legally obligated to do certain things, and they also have to conserve the resource and look to the future, and none of them have any malintent whatsoever. They're doing the best they can, and they struggle with every single decision they make, and it's a pain.

It is a painful process, and it's hard to listen to sometimes, but it -- Before people can judge, you need to at least hear what they're saying, and I'm one of those people that, you know, if you don't have any skin in the game, you really shouldn't be making any comments, and, if you're not listening to these meetings, you don't have any skin in the game, and so, you know, encourage your people to listen to these meetings, and I encourage the advisory panel to listen to these meetings, because I'm on these meetings all the time, and I look, and I hardly see any names I recognize on the meetings, because, I mean, it shows you who is listening in, and you hardly ever -- There's a few people that I see on the advisory panel on there, but it's not very many, but, the more you listen, the more you learn, and that's a really good motto for fisheries management.

MR. MALLETTE: Real quick, I was going to say that I get that, and I understand it, but, also, you've got to remember that everybody doesn't have the time to do that, and you can't expect everybody to do it. In a perfect world, everybody would be at a meeting, or would be able to listen in on a meeting, but they're not and, that's just not -- Honestly, with people's lives, and human nature, it's not it, but, through the social media, and through the council, that's what I'm saying, is what -- As long as you're projecting to the public through the other avenues besides meetings, that - You're doing your best to do good, and not just take, and that's what people are going to hold on to.

People who aren't going to sit down and listen, and spend two to three four hours of the day sitting at a meeting, and most people are not going to do that. they're going to take bullet points, or they're just going to hear little bits and pieces, and that's what they're going to run with, and, with the little pieces that people see they run with, the conversation is all bad, and so I'm saying that, if there's more good things put out there, that people could take that little bit and run with, that's how you're going to get to the people that don't have the time to sit and listen to the meetings and stuff like that.

That's my point. I mean, obviously, listening to the meetings and doing stuff is the number-one thing to do, and it's just not a realistic expectation for the general public to do, and even, honestly, council members, or AP members, on a regular day, but you're going to read bits and pieces, and those bits and pieces tend to always be the bad stuff, like anything else in life, you know, and so I just think -- I just think there needs to be a lot more, and that's all. That's all.

MS. WIEGAND: So we're about at time to wrap this up, and I do want to say I think this was a really valuable discussion. A lot of what you guys are talking about, in terms of, you know, not everyone has time to travel all the way to a council meeting, or listen into a week-long council meeting, and one of the purposes of this is to help build relationships, and build trust, and to meet people in their communities, to make it much more convenient to get engaged, as well as providing the information needed to get engaged, so that hopefully, when people come away with this, they have those quick bullet points that they know, and that can encourage them to get involved in another capacity.

I will also say, for AP members, for anyone in your community, you all have my contact information, and you have -- Contact information is online for all council staff members, as well as council members, and reach out. We are here to provide information.

If there's a meeting that you weren't able to attend, but you want information on what happened, give me a call, and we'll talk about it. You can give one of your council members a call, and they will happily talk to you about it, and so don't hesitate to reach out to any of us, and pass our contact information along to anyone in your community.

We're going to take a quick break, and then, when we come back, we're doing a very informal session, and so we're going to have about thirty to forty minutes, and we've got different stations set up around the room. Over there where Nick is sitting, you can exceed see the exploring management and getting involved station. Over where Julia is, there's a station about released fish, and then, over where Myra is sitting, over there, there's a station about how to get involved in fisheries management.

If we were doing this at an actual meeting, we would be providing information to attendees about those different topics, gathering information from them about those topics, and what we want for you all to do, over the next, you know, thirty to forty minutes, is take a break, grab a snack, but then come and go and talk to everyone that is at these different stations about what information you think we should be providing to stakeholders, what information you feel like they would be interested in, what information you feel like stakeholders are going to want to provide about these different topics, and so you can just mill around, and go talk to staff that's going to be stationed at each of these areas for the next thirty to forty minutes, and so grab a snack, grab something to drink, and chat with some of your council members and staff.

(Whereupon, the AP went into a Lines of Communication session that was not transcribed.)

MS. WIEGAND: All right, guys. If we could head back to the table, it's time for the feedback portion. Thank you, guys, for participating in that informal feedback session, and so, to give some context, one of the reasons we set it up is because the other two activities we did were a little bit more structured, and, with the informal session, we were trying to capture what we had sort of noticed at public hearings was really valuable.

At public hearings, we would hear council members talk about it, and stakeholders talk about it, how what they felt was really valuable were just like those side conversations that they were able to have with council members outside of the formal public comment process, and so what we were trying to do here is sort of set up in an environment that would allow for those informal discussions, but also have some specific topics that people could go to to get information and provide information.

We have selected, for this coming round of meetings, that will happen later this year and early next year, the topics of fisheries management, releases, and citizen science, and so I'm curious to get your all's impression on what it was like, if you thought it was effective to be able to just sort of mill about and talk to staff and council members about these topics, or if you felt like it wasn't quite structured enough for you to get the input and provide the input that you wanted to.

Then there are some other questions I have, and I also encourage other staff that was sort of actively at the tables to come up ask questions and have a free-flowing discussion, and, Kevin, I saw your hand up.

MR. AMAN: I was just going to say it was -- I really enjoyed it, and it was very informative, and I feel like hopefully I helped a little bit, in getting, you know, some ideas and things, and hopefully it will, you know, help things.

AP MEMBER: Are the sticky wall and the topical session and the informal session all going to be used? Are you thinking about implementing all of them, or are you picking between the three? Just for clarification.

MS. WIEGAND: So the plan is to do each of the activities at a meeting, and so the meetings would last about two hours. We've done this whole process for three hours, but that's because we've been putting in these feedback sessions. The hope would be to have just a two-hour meeting, where we would be able to work through all three activities with attendees. It would be interesting feedback, because do you think these three activities -- Is that too much for a two-hour meeting?

AP MEMBER: No, and I think, because you're doing all three of those, that makes each one of them more effective, because you're doing them in conjunction, and so I think it was great.

MR. NEWMAN: Yes, and I think it was good too, and I was just wondering, and like you're going to staff manning these booths, because I think there like needs to be a booth with the council members, kind of, because, yes, I mean, I get more out of these one-on-ones than anything else, really. I mean, you kind of get to see who the person is, and you get to know their personality, and, like you said, you make that personal connection, and that's something that people need with the people that are voting and making these decisions.

MS. WIEGAND: So I'll say it will be both. It's going to be primarily council members, and so like you saw Myra and Nick and Julia do the sticky wall session, and it will actually be council members, at an actual Lines meeting, who will do that, and the same with the trip satisfaction discussion, and the same with manning the booths. We will have a large amount of staff there also helping sort of facilitate the process and available to answer questions, and so I guess both is the answer to your question.

MR. NEWMAN: Okay. Yes, and that's good, and so you'll kind of like have one council person at each station, with maybe one or two staff members helping them, and that's perfect. I think that would be great, to have them broke out. That way, nobody gets singled out, you know, and nobody gets put in a corner.

MS. HARRISON: I kind of -- I don't know if anyone else feels this way, but I almost feel like I wish that we could have done the little -- What are you calling this last session? Booths? That one first, kind of to like break the ice and kind of -- You 4 Then kind of get your gears going, and then sit down for the word wall, or the -- I don't know what you're calling it. The sticky wall, and then what was our second session that we did?

MS. WIEGAND: The topical.

MS. HARRISON: The satisfaction, and, yes, I don't really like that one so much, and that was just a personal opinion. I think that that would kind of get derailed quickly with a big group.

MS. WIEGAND: So I'm curious, and what was it that you didn't -- You didn't think trip satisfaction was a good topic, because it could get derailed too quickly, or the format of having people in like sort of small breakout groups to talk about a specific topic, and that's not effective, or both?

MS. HARRISON: The trip satisfaction just kind of felt too much like a question like you would ask on first date, you know, and I just like -- I don't know, and it didn't feel very substantive to me, like, or really like really why that impacts management, but I do think, if you rephrased it to season satisfaction, and asked people to reflect on how successful their businesses are, and how successful they deem their fishing, then that would be better.

MR. MALLETTE: Alana brought up something that just popped in my mind, and I like the idea of being that it is an informal session, and I'll go back to some things that we do with some of the dinners we hold to promote North Carolina seafood, and we have the dinners before, and let's say it starts at five o'clock.

Well, from 4:30 to 5:00, people can come in with their drinks, and mingle around, and do stuff like that, and be kind of informal, before it actually starts, and that kind of gets the people thinking, and going, and stuff like that, and so I think that would be a good thing to have beforehand, before the actual -- That you get into the true meeting.

It's a way -- It's kind of a way to introduce and break the ice, and the information you're giving each section is all going to be stuff that's going to help you come up with more things for the actual meeting later, and so I like the idea of it being a true informal thing, and maybe have it thirty minutes before the actual meeting starts, and it's kind of almost like a meet-and-greet, but informative at the same time.

MS. LEONE: The different questions that were asked, when you were writing it down there and at the stations, are these just sample questions, or are these the questions that you're planning to use at these meetings?

MS. IBERLE: So I think the -- At least from the exploring management, it was kind of more of what you think people would resonate with at that particular station. You know, obviously, from, you know, getting people to -- You know, increasing understanding in management and getting involved, and I think the goal of that station is really more to have conversations with people and kind of acclimate people to the management process.

I think maybe having some take-home materials that's, you know, providing you flow charts, and references, and where to find what, and who is who, can help, you know, keep that information, and, you know, when you're not at a meeting, and you're not actively participating, and it's been a minute, you can go back and reference those things, but, if you think of any questions that you feel like we missed, or questions that you think that we should be asking Lines participants, throw them at us.

MS. LEONE: No, and, I mean, are these the three -- Are those the three topics? Initially, I thought, when you did the sticky wall, like that developed three topics that could become the booth topics, and then you can get the feedback, and the people who gave you the sticky note options would all go to, obviously, the topic that was on their contribution, and you would follow-up with more info, and so maybe use the booth twice, once during the informal meet and mingle and then again after the sticky note, to elaborate on the sticky notes.

MS. WIEGAND: I think that's something we can definitely consider and talk about, and so we did pick these topics in advance, and these are the topics we sort of intend to -- Though, based on input that we get at this AP, and we're doing this at the Snapper Grouper and Dolphin Wahoo APs, we might change how we're deciding to do things, or change the topics.

We wanted to make sure we had information prepared and ready to go, and so I guess I would say one of my concerns, as staff who would be helping run these, is I don't necessarily know, going into a meeting, what is going to end up on the sticky wall, and so I would be concerned about then taking those topics, if it's a topic we're not necessarily prepared to talk about right away, and we don't have materials to give away, and then having a booth about that, and so I guess my thought is how comfortable --

If we were to do something that's a bit more on the fly like that, do you think anglers would be comfortable not having like a takeaway material to take home with them with information about the topic, because, if so, then that that does make it a little bit easier for us to adjust on the fly, but one of the reasons for putting set topics here was so we could have prepared materials in advance to give people.

MS. IBERLE: Do you think it would be helpful to maybe relate those topics that we are creating on the sticky wall and say these items relate well to what's at this station, and so, at the conclusion of the sticky wall, say, you know, I'm seeing a lot of themes of transparency, and just using this as an example, and like transparency in management, and, if you're wanting to dig more into that topic at the informal session, that would be a good place to go? Okay. Bringing it full circle, and trying to, you know, tie those two items together would be helpful.

MR. NEWMAN: I was just going to kind of piggyback on what John said. I mean, we recently had the blue crab meetings in North Carolina and staff at DMF opened the doors an hour early for informal, you know, talk before the official meeting. That way, people got -- People warmed up, and a lot of these crabbers have never been to a meeting before, because this is one of the first times they've had really big management impacts, and so they got to kind of meet the staff, and they got to feel more comfortable, because, even with me, when I first sat in that corner over there, it took me a minute to warm up, and, if we had a little -- If we had a talk -- If they were able to talk to you guys, they would be more warmed up, and I think they'd come in with better ideas for the sticky board.

Then, with the ideas around the room, I mean, I think these two are like super important. I mean, these are like barebones things that people need to know, and the third, about how to, you know, release fish, you know, maybe you could transition that into more of a fluid booth that kind of focused more on what you had on that on the sticky board for your third subject.

MS. BYRD: I think it's interesting that a couple of you guys have said do the informal kind of stuff first, and I think that's how we -- We've kind of put this agenda together and mixed kind of what we were doing around and around, but I think that's what we first kind of started with. Do you think, if we had an informal session like that, and it's like thirty or forty minutes, would people leave before we did the activities? No? Do you think people would stick -- Okay.

MR. MALLETTE: Well, like I said, if you already have a formal meeting, or something that people already are planning on coming to, let it be known that that will be thirty minutes beforehand, like a like meet-and-greet with questions, things like that. That way, they're already coming, and so they're not going to leave after it, because they're coming for the main thing, and, once they have that meet-and-greet, so they got more questions, and they're not going to leave, because now they got a lot of things in their head they're going to want to get out, and so they're definitely going to stay now, even if somebody might have said that I might leave early, or just come for a few minutes. With that meet-and-greet part, okay, and now I'm going to stay the whole time, because I've got more I want to say.

MS. HARRISON: I think that you all forget how much fishermen like to talk about fish, and like you could make this thing like six hours, and they would stay with you all the time, and maybe a snack break, but, yes, like all night.

MR. NEWMAN: I feel like you're going to talk about some good ideas in that informal session, and you're going to kind of -- You're going to want to repeat them with the group, you know, as far as -- Once you once you break up, then you're kind of already separating, but, if someone brings something up good in the first thirty minutes, you can kind of keep talking about that as you keep circling back to it.

MS. WIEGAND: Any other thoughts on -- Alana.

MS. HARRISON: Just one more.

MS. WIEGAND: No, and go right ahead.

MS. HARRISON: From like the mackerel port meeting, the only thing that I noticed, that I didn't think like went really well, was when you all asked like to -- When you were trying to make the two groups, and you asked -- Like I don't recall like what the question was, and it was like someone like raise your hand, or like, if you're thinking of an odd number, stand up, but like nobody did it, and then like we felt bad, and so like we stood up, but then it kind of like -- It seemed like people went with whoever like was going with that group, and I kind of felt like it kind of got divided.

Maybe there would be a way like to have a stack of stickers for like names, and you could write names on them, and have half of them with like a red dot, and half with a blue dot, and be like, if you got like a whatever dot on your name, you're on that side, but that was my only thing I noticed.

MS. WIEGAND: The dots is a great idea, and I don't know, and so North Carolina was our first round of port meetings. At the first few port meetings, we broke people up by giving them a king or a Spanish mackerel sticker, and it turns out people were very particular on whether they were going to be a king mackerel or a Spanish mackerel. We found it not an effective way, which is why, by the time we got to Manteo, I think I said like if you were born in January to June, you're

over here, and so I agree that we're going to need a way to split people up, and I like your idea of just, on name tags, putting colored dots to split people up. I think that's great.

MS. HARRISON: Yes, because I noticed that kind of got like recreational and commercial, and I wanted to hear what the recreational side had to say, and I didn't -- Because I already know what my side has to say, and I hear it all the time, but I was more -- I found myself leaving my side of the room to go to the other side of the room to listen more to what they said.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Any other feedback? I'm also looking around the room at staff. Any other questions about the informal session, and then I'll talk a little bit about next steps for the Lines. All right, and so thank you, guys, for participating in the practice run.

I did want to sort of talk about, at an actual Lines meeting, that we're going to be holding later in the year, what will happen afterwards, and so, first, we're going to send an email, immediately following, to all of the attendees that provide their email address, just a bullet pointed list of some of the things we learned at their specific Lines meeting, and then provide them information on upcoming council meetings and other opportunities for participation, be that AP meetings, public comment opportunities, et cetera.

Then, at the next council meeting following a Lines meeting, at the very start of the meeting, the council members that were present at each meeting will talk to the other council members about their biggest takeaways and the things they learned from the Lines meeting. Then there will also be sort of detailed, more detailed, information presented before each relevant committee or topic, and so say one of the things that came out of the meeting was, you know, something about the spiny lobster fishery, for example, and we saw that pop up during the sticky wall, during other conversations. Before the Spiny Lobster Committee were to meet, we would review that information that was provided in more detail.

Then, finally, there will be a summary report put together by staff, that will be provided in the briefing book as a reference, but what we really wanted is for council members to be providing their takeaways verbally at the meeting, and so that's what you'll hear, and then, of course, in order for Lines to be successful, we need stakeholders to show up and participate at these meetings, and so we have a sort of -- We're working on drafting a full communication plan, but these are our broad ideas for outreach, sort of siloed in three different areas, the first being the council website.

Nick Smillie is working on developing a website that will be dedicated to Lines. It will have background information on why the council is doing this, goals and objectives, upcoming dates and locations, and then we'll have all the summaries from the past meetings to go back in reference, and then we'll conduct outreach through our normal council channels, putting together flyers that we'll email out to tackle shops, send with any of our staff that are out working in the community, share with all of our state partners, their outreach staff as well, and we'll pump out news releases, and we'll also ask other groups, you know, other councils, the commission, and states, to send news releases.

We'll write feature articles, and we'll do social media posts and stories on all our platforms, but, in addition to all of this outreach, and this is outreach that the council usually does for a lot of our meetings, we're really going to be working with communities, and working with you all, to help get the word out, and so, advisory panel members, if any of you have participated in Ashley

Oliver's Best Fishing Practices Master Volunteer Program, we'll be working with everyone who has participated in that, and some of the Release participants that Julia was talking about earlier.

We will be asking you guys to talk to people in your communities, to help get them out to the Lines events, and we'll work with industry groups, be that CCA, NCFA, ASA, sort of any industry group that is willing to share information about Lines, and we are happy to pass on information. We'll work with other mailing lists and media outlets, like Saving Seafood, and then media outlets that we've worked with in the past. There are a lot of newspapers, magazines, and websites that have generously published information on citizen science and best fishing practices for us, and we would be leveraging those connections to also get the word out about Lines meetings, and so trying to do as much as we can to get people engaged and in the door at these Lines meetings.

This was true for mackerel port meetings, and I think it's true for a lot of the meetings that we hold, and it's always nice to have it come from me, but you guys are leaders in your communities, and it often means more if it's coming from you, and so we will be relying heavily on our advisory panel members to help get people in the door.

What are we actually doing to get this implemented? Like I said, we're doing practice runs with this AP, and we're doing the Snapper Grouper practice tomorrow, and then practice with the Dolphin Wahoo AP in a few weeks, and we'll be working on getting locations for the 2025 and 2026 meetings as soon as possible, and getting all of our outreach materials ready, so we can start doing outreach sooner, as opposed to later.

Then finalizing all of the plans and materials based on the input that we're getting from this AP and the other APs, and then, boom, we're starting our first round of Lines of Communication, and we will be doing two states, a given sort of fall and winter time period, and then we'll switch to the other two states the following year, and so first up is Georgia in November and North Carolina in February, and then, around the same time next year, we will be doing South Carolina and Florida, and so that is where things stand with Lines.

I want to say thank you for participating in this process. It is genuinely very helpful to have you guys walk through it with us, so we can get feedback and make sure that it is as effective as possible by the time we're out doing it with the rest of the public, and I will pause. We've got about five or ten minutes before we need to move on to election of chair and vice chair and Other Business, and so, if there are any sort final thoughts, anything you felt like you didn't get to say earlier about this, and any and all feedback is welcome.

MR. NEWMAN: I just want to say, when you get their emails, go ahead and sign them up for the South Atlantic Bite newsletter. You all are doing that? The AP members all need to be on the South Atlantic Bite newsletter, too.

MS. WIEGAND: If you guys are not all on the Bite newsletter yet, we can absolutely make sure you are, and that is a good suggestion about attendees, signing them up for that. Anything else? All right. Well, then I will move us to our next order of business, election of a new chair and vice chair. As much as I have enjoyed chairing this meeting, and it's my first time chairing a meeting, and it is not customary for staff to chair a meeting, and it's meant to be someone on the advisory panel, and so I would be looking for -- We'll start with a chair, a nomination for a chair.

How we typically do this is via a motion, and I've gone ahead and drafted motions. It seems this document didn't update, but I will draft a motion now for you. We typically do it by motion, and you would motion to nominate someone. We can only do one motion at a time.

AP MEMBER: (The comment is not audible on the recording.)

MS. WIEGAND: Let me -- All right, and I will get a motion on the board. It seems like a motion from Tony to nominate Thomas Newman as Chair of the Mackerel Cobia AP. Did get a second for that motion? Robbie? Okay. Give me one second to get that up on the board. If there's any discussion, you all can have that now.

Okay, and so the motion is to nominate Thomas Newman as Chair of the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel for a two-year term, or a two-year period. Is there any discussion on the motion?

MR. NEWMAN: I mean, I appreciate the motion. I would do my best to chair the group.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Is there any other discussion? All right. **All those in favor of the motion, raise your hand; any opposed.** All right. **The motion passes with one abstention.**

We also need a motion for a vice chair, and I will note, as there -- I see some hesitation, and, while I may not chair the meeting, I am here to help support the chair, as their chair the meeting, and the vice chair, and you're not just going to be sort of thrown to the wolves of the AP. You will still have staff support in doing all of this.

AP MEMBER: Are you saying we can nominate you for vice chair, Christina?

MS. WIEGAND: No, sir.

AP MEMBER: How about one of the people that didn't come?

AP MEMBER: **I'll nominate Kevin to be the vice chair.** Do you second, John?

MR. MALLETT: I do.

MS. WIEGAND: **All right, and so we have a motion to nominate Kevin Aman as vice chair of the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel for a two-year term.** Is there any discussion? **With that, all those in favor; oppositions; abstentions.** All right. **The motion passes.** Thank you to Thomas and Kevin for stepping up and being willing to help lead the Mackerel Cobia AP.

That is all of the business we had for the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel, and so is there any other business that would like to be brought up? We still have a half an hour of time, and I know a couple of you mentioned some other business, and so I'll look for hands. Is there any other business to come before the Mackerel Cobia AP before we adjourn? Kevin.

MR. AMAN: I know there -- I just wanted to mention that I noticed in one of the -- I think it was one of the things we talked about yesterday, about there being a shortage of, you know, lengths and otoliths for Spanish and king mackerel, and I was just going to -- I do a lot of the sampling

for, you know, both of those species in North Carolina, and I've noticed, the last couple years, the -- You know, the charter boats that I normally sample have spent a lot of time at the dock, and I've still tried to make up for that.

We have other avenues, and we have lots of other sampling that occurs, but, you know, I tried to do the best I could, and I guess it was maybe -- You know, maybe there was still a little shortfall, but, you know, I'll continue, you know, those efforts, and try to improve that. I mean, I guess I'm just a small part, but --

AP MEMBER: Didn't you say it was possibly because of a lack of -- Or a decrease in the amount of trips ran by the for-hire guys, the six-pack guys?

MR. AMAN: Yes, and it seems like there has been a big decrease. A lot of those, you know, six-pack folks would, you know, just primarily do Spanish mackerel trips. They would do -- A lot of them would do, you know, two or three trips a day sometimes, you know, when things were really, really good. You know, this was back two or three or maybe more years ago, but, you know, just just having one trip or, you know, maybe two trips a week has seemed like a lot for, you know, the general fleet in the Morehead City area, which is a lot less than many years previous.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Kevin. That's really helpful insight into sort of what's going on with the otolith collection. All right. Any other -- Sorry, and did you have a comment to that, John? Okay, and so other business? John.

MR. MALLETT: Yes, and I'm just asking the question, because I think it's something that this committee should look at, and what are the steps to get a fish that isn't already managed, but it seems being -- Possibly vote or something to get one added, and so I'm using specifically Atlantic bonito, and they are technically a mackerel, and so it's already a mackerel, and it's highly fished for now. It has become a lot more popular in the south, and, just like how we were talking about with the water temperatures moving up the Mid-Atlantic, it's kind of the opposite.

That's their summertime nearshore fish, where we're getting it now in the spring, and now there's been more commercial need for it, more presence, but it's kind of just been a freefall, and, even on the commercial side, even though we're not really wanting more regulation, having something there can actually balance a price point for the fish, because, commercially, it's just -- It's all over the place, and nobody knows what to pay for them, and nobody knows anything, even though we send them off, and, on the recreational side, it's become very big.

A lot of people doing it, and people are just literally going out and catching as many as humanly possible, and, honestly, they're wasted, and I think that's something that should come up as a fish for management, and especially since it's technically a mackerel, and I think that would be something that should be added to the CMP.

MS. WIEGAND: So, to provide some context on how that often works, is there are sort of ten criteria within the Magnuson-Stevens Act that a fishery has to meet to be considered what we call in need of conservation and management, and, if a species is in need of federal conservation and management, that's when it would get added to an FMP.

If this advisory panel thinks that Atlantic bonito is something that's worth discussing, whether or not it is in need of conservation and management, that's something that would need to be put on the AP's agenda, so we could have a more thorough discussion than we can have under Other Business, and so this AP, if there seems to be a lot of support for that, can pass a motion asking the council to put time at the next AP meeting to discuss that, or you can also work with council members individually, to get them to add that to the agenda for the next Mackerel Cobia AP meeting, but it would be -- The next step would be to sort of have a discussion about those ten factors, to see where Atlantic bonito fall within those ten factors, in terms of being in need of conservation and management.

MR. JONES: Is that something that we can make a motion for now, or next time or something? **I would like to make a motion to discuss adding Atlantic bonito to the CMP FMP.**

MS. WIEGAND: Okay, and so we have a motion to request the council ask the AP to have a discussion about adding Atlantic bonito to the CMP FMP. Will, does that capture what you were intending to make as a motion? This is how I -- Atlantic bonito are good eating, and Atlantic bonita are not as commonly used for food. All right, and so I hear some discussion going on around the table, and is there any discussion on this motion on the record? Charlie, I see your hand is up. Go ahead.

MR. LOCKE: I was wondering if you were noticing me here. I would just -- I don't even know how to say this, but so this is being pushed by a certain fishing group out of the Northeast, the Saltwater Guides Association. They have these like little pet projects they're doing, and they did it with false albacore. South Atlantic Council member Tom Roller then took it to our state, and, with no science, and nothing to back it up, they implemented rulemaking on the commercial sector.

It did absolutely nothing to curtail recreational harvest, a very liberal ten-fish limit, and we talked about this at the council, and we did our ten criteria, and it didn't meet any of them, and they did it at the ASMFC, and it didn't meet any of theirs, and no council wanted to do regulation, but we got it in our state, and we championed -- By doing that, or by you all voting for this right here, you are championing a pet project by one organization, and with no science behind it.

I'm all for management. In fact, I was the first person to go to the Saltwater Guides Association, because I'm probably the largest harvester of false albacore in the State of North Carolina, and I have a directed fishery for them that I started and I said, hey, what you all looking to do, and what can we do, let's look into it, and, when it when it appeared that there was no need by the council, or they didn't see a need for it, then we approved a two-year -- You know, every two years, we would look at the landings, and we would discuss trends, and I thought that's about where it was going to end, but it didn't end there.

It went right to my state, because he's on the marine fisheries commission in my state, and he pushed this through, just a couple weeks ago, and it voted, and it was voted through, and so, you know, before you guys start motioning and seconding, there's an ulterior motive to all this, and they're going right down the list.

They started with a false albacore, and Atlantic bonita has been on their radar, and now jack crevalle is going to be next. I mean, I see them on social media, what they're touting, and they're going right down the list of unregulated species, and it's just a wish list, and so I'm all about

science. If the science says we need to regulate it, by all means let's regulate it, but, if we don't know what the total allowable catch could be, what the stock could be, what the quota could be, then implementing regulation against commercial fishermen, which is really where it's aimed at, is very dangerous.

I would caution everybody on this. You know, like you're really pushing an agenda by one group, so that they can go on social media, and to all their followers, saying look what we did, look what we did, and send us more money, send us more money, and that's what this is about. I mean, bottom line, that's what this is about, and so I'm just going to leave it at that. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Charlie, and so I want to make a clarification about what the AP has done in the past, versus this motion, and so Charlie is correct in that I think, two or three years ago, the AP did walk through those categories for false albacore, little tunny, Atlantic bonita, and I know it goes by a lot of names, and we did -- So we did that for that species.

At the time, the council decided that it was not in need of federal conservation and management, and there was some discussion from all of the states around the table about what, if anything, they were going to move forward with in terms of management for false albacore. What the council asked was that this body, the Mackerel AP, sort of like Charlie said, look at the landings and update a sort of mini fishery performance report for false albacore, little tunny, and bonita every couple of years.

I believe, and please correct me if I'm wrong here, John, what you're talking about here is Atlantic bonito, which is different, and so the AP has not walked through sort of those ten steps for Atlantic bonito specifically, though we did do it for little tunny. Tony, and then John.

MR. BENEVENTO: This motion simply says that we should discuss it, and it doesn't mean that we're going to discuss it now.

MS. WIEGAND: Correct.

MR. BENEVENTO: I can support the motion, because I need a lot more discussion on this thing.

MR. MALLETTE: Right, and, to be clear, like I said, this is just starting the discussion, and what I was thinking is I think it would behoove us to get a head start on it, because I see where this is going. I've been catching these things for years at home, eating them and selling them, and it's not been a big thing, but now, through technology and social media, it's getting huge.

It's getting big, and you know what's coming next, and so I feel like it would be good to just ask the questions, and just see where it stands, before it gets out of hand, because, just like Charlie said, he catches a lot of false albacore, but he can agree with this, that we got more money for false albacore, the last couple years, than I've ever seen, and then, now that we're finally making money catching false albacore, now they're talking about wanting to regulate it, and so all the more reason, and we know this is going to be next.

I feel like, if we just get a head start, and discuss it, and get it kind of in our sights, and it's just a matter of time, especially with the rec side becoming so popular. Tackle shops are promoting it, selling as many jigs and tackle and trolling gear as possible, and charter boats are literally posting

pictures of them literally lying down the entire dock, you know, of one boat going out with three people, and they've got thirty or forty Atlantic bonito laying on the dock. With that being out there, it's only a matter of time before somebody is going to start saying, hey, that's too much of this, and so I'm just thinking we get the discussion started, to just get a head start, before we end up on the wrong side of it, before we had a chance to start.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Jot, I see you have your hand up, and then Will.

MR. OWENS: I totally agree with John. You know, I've been in this for thirty years, and it has gone from, thirty-plus years ago, explaining to a customer the difference of what it is, and recommending that they are really good to eat, and then some of them still fight it, but to them discovering just how good they are, and how much fun they are to catch, and, you know, I just -- There's too many species, and not that this fisheries management takes care of, but I think of all the inshore species that North Carolina deals with, and there's been some almost too little too late, and I just don't want to see that happen with the Atlantic bonito. It's a fun fish, and I do well with them chartering in the spring, and I can see the writing on the wall, like many of the species from the past.

MR. JONES: I just want to echo what John and Jot were saying, and, you know, in Morehead City, off Atlantic Beach and Emerald Isle, and off of New River Inlet and whatnot, it's one of the first fish that show up, first migratory fish that show up, in the spring, that everybody gets excited about now, especially -- You know, it's a growing fishery, as far as participation goes, and it's kind of concerning to see a fish that we have no limit, and people are --

Like John was saying, people are filling up coolers, and catching crazy numbers of them, and keeping them all, and they're actually good to eat, and so they're not like false albacore, where, you know, recreational fishermen pretty much release them all, and so it's just concerning, and this motion is just to start the discussion, and I think, kind of like the false albacore, it then -- We might eventually have like a questionnaire, like we did with the albacore, and one of the things with the false albacore that --

If I remember right, and correct me if I'm wrong, but there was a question about is there really a growing commercial fishery for false albacore, and I think we answered -- We said no, but now we see that there really is a growing commercial fishery, or commercial market, for false albacore, and I don't want to get to the point where we look back at the Atlantic bonito as a fishery that has is gone, because we didn't take proactive steps and management. This is just a discussion to -- This is just a motion to start a discussion, and so I don't really see a problem with it.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so I've got Charlie, and then John.

MR. LOCKE: Listen, I'm all for it, man, and we can discuss it at length, but, when the sole regulation hits the commercial side every freaking time, then this is an agenda, I mean, and it's -- I mean, you all may not be -- I know what the Saltwater Guide Association is doing, and I'll even say that I know what Tom Roller is doing in our state, and they are pushing an agenda, and so I'm all for management, and I'm all for proactive management, but that means recreational, too.

I hear you all saying recreational, and I see the pictures of down there in Wilmington right now, and guys love to spread their fish out on the bow of their boat, and like that's their big selling point

for their charters, and, yes, dude, there's like freaking a hundred Atlantic bonito, and it's like holy crap. You know, I get it, but regulate the recreational as well as the commercial.

I only ever see it going one way, guys, and it's always the commercial guy that gets regulated, and that's why I said, dude, that I'm cautioning you all doing this, because, if the science said it, then, by all means, let's regulate it, and, when we have a good stock assessment, and we have good data from the recreational side, and we have good release mortality from the recreational side, and we didn't have any of that with false albacore, none of it.

In fact, the Saltwater Guides Association had done a tagging -- A whole tagging program, that they were just starting to get tag return data from released false albacore, and we didn't wait until none of that came out, and we just went ahead and implemented a rule on the commercial side, and you can call it guardrails, and you can call it all you want, and I'm a commercial fisherman. I'm looking out for commercial fishermen, and that's why I'm on this AP.

I'm looking out for my livelihood, and the few of us that are left, because there's very few of us left, while the recreational side grows freaking out of control, with no accountability, and so I caution, when you do something like this, that you're not pushing an agenda by a sportfishing group that really only wants to regulate the commercial side, and that is what I'm cautioning you all to do. If the science says we can do this, then let's follow the science, but let's not follow an agenda, and I really caution against that.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so I've got John, and then Thomas, and then, in the interest of -- Then Mike, and so John, Thomas, Mike. Is there anyone else who would like to speak that hasn't spoken? Then, after those three comments, I think we're going to vote on the motion, and then I know we have a little bit of other business that Melissa would like to bring up as well, and so I want to make sure we have time to get to that before 5:00, and so John, Thomas, Mike.

MR. MALLETTE: Okay, and I know Charlie is listening, and I just want to clarify that, when I talk about this discussion, and I think this might have got missed by -- When I'm talking about this discussion of regulation, I'm actually looking at regulation towards the recreational fishermen, because the recreational fishermen are the ones that is catching the majority of them.

Commercially -- I'm fishing for them commercially, but we're making a very, very small percentage of them right now commercially, and I've actually been trying to build a commercial market for them, through the restaurants I sell to, as an alternative to, you know, smaller tuna-like species, before the small yellowfin show up, and the restaurants have been very receptive of it, and so not only am I trying to build a commercial market for it, but I'm also saying that we need to explore this, because the more regulation needs to be towards the commercial, or -- Excuse me. Towards the recreational side, where the majority of these fish are being caught, just with no -- Just pretty much free will, and just loading boats up unnecessarily.

Understand, and make sure I'm clear, and it's on the record that I'm actually doing this more to be looked at for exploring regulations for management on the rec side, because, as of this moment, there's not a big commercial market for it, for the commercial fishermen to get hit hard. However, I would like to, as a commercial fisherman, build that up, just to give us some other source of income that's good for us.

MR. NEWMAN: I just want to say, I mean, you know, we've got good intentions, wanting to do the right thing, but this this is really similar to what we did with false albacore, and with little tunny. You know, funds are limited, and we're taking -- We're taking species off of the stock assessment list right now, and, I mean, we're trying to juggle which species we have time to manage and whatnot, and we're also in the reality of we're losing funding for a lot of things that are happening, and so the likelihood of this actually having an FMP developed, and a stock assessment done, is pretty low. It's -- We're well-meaning, but I just don't know that the South Atlantic has the capacity to manage this species.

MS. WIEGAND: Mike, did you have anything to add? Okay, and then Councilman Tom Roller would like to add something, and so go ahead, Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Christina. You know, I'm not going to weigh-in on what the AP wants to do here, and I just want to kind of give some food for thought here. You know, Charlie, I appreciate your comments here. You know, you and I have debated this at length, though I would encourage you to go back and read the rule that North Carolina put forward, because I don't think you understand it. You didn't really explain it adequately, or accurately, to this advisory panel.

I would point out to the advisory panel that the regulation of false albacore and bonito is pretty much a hot topic up and down the east coast right now, through a lot of states, and not just in North Carolina. The State of Massachusetts passed regulations, or, you know, started their final approval of regulations for commercial and recreational for false albacore and bonito just last week, and I believe they're going with a five-fish aggregate bag limit, with a sixteen-inch fork length, for both species combined. Most importantly, that's recreational and commercial, which I find very interesting.

You know, if this is something that the AP wants to discuss, I think, you know, one way to think about it is this is an opportunity for fishermen in the Southeast to discuss this fishery, and what it looks like to you guys, and what regulations could look like, particularly in the absence of science, because that's what a lot of this discussion has been about, throughout the east coast, is that there isn't enough science to manage them. The fishery looks pretty good, and how do you keep it this way, and so there's just some things to think about, and some things to consider, but I appreciate the discussion here. Thank you, guys.

MS. WIEGAND: Tony.

MR. BENEVENTO: It looks like we're having a discussion, and so I move that we vote on the motion. I want to cut off questions, and move to vote on the motion that the AP direct the advisory committee to have a discussion on this issue.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so it seems like everyone on the AP is good with calling the question and voting on the motion. It does seem like this is a more controversial motion than some of the others, and so I'm going to start with everyone in the room. Everyone online, don't worry. I will call on you individually for your vote, and so, everyone in the room, if you are in favor of this motion raise your hand, and raise it high; anyone opposed in the room; any abstentions in the room. Okay, and then I'm going to go down the list of individuals online, starting with Charlie. What is your vote?

MR. LOCKE: No.

MS. WIEGAND: Jot.

MR. OWENS: Yes.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve. Steve, are you voting in favor, against the motion, or abstaining? It looks like you're unmuted on your end, but we can't hear you. If you want to --

MR. SAUNDERS: I'll abstain on this one. I'm kind of on the fence on this one.

MS. WIEGAND: I'm sorry?

MR. SAUNDERS: I'm kind of on the fence on this one.

MS. WIEGAND: So abstaining?

MR. SAUNDERS: Yes.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you so much. **All right, and so the motion passes with eight in favor, one opposed, and two abstentions.** All right, and so, with that, any other other business to come up? Melissa.

MS. LEONE: So this thought goes back to the for-hire and the getting the compliance up for the recreational fishermen, and it seems like us for-hire are kind of grouped in with the recreational, and so, even if we have these professional for-hires, and you get some validation there, there's still a huge percentage of recreational fishermen that -- They don't even have a permit to do this fishing, but, just because someone has a recreational fishing license, it doesn't mean they're out in federal waters doing any of these three permits that we're talking about, the snapper grouper or any of those three charter-headboat permits that the for-hires are reporting, or even how the commercial are doing.

I know, in Florida, you can purchase a recreational boaters license, and put that on your boat, and that might create some accountability, or it might actually just -- Like everybody who holds a fishing license isn't all going out into federal-water fishing, but you're using -- You're getting a number of recreational fishermen that are not compliant, and not reporting, and that number is just coming probably from everybody who has a fishing license, maybe, and I don't know where you're getting the head count of recreational fishers, but we have a lot of boat clubs in our area, particularly Freedom Boat Club.

It's everywhere up and down the coast, and it's in a bunch of countries, and all of those boats have GPS trackers already on them, because they're a boat club, and the club keeps track of where the boats go, and they all have a dockmaster who is issuing these boats to the club members, who are renting them for the day, and so you may be able to work with the Freedom Boat Club and direct them to put this federal permit on those boats that go offshore, or just a recreational boat that goes offshore, having to have a permit.

Then, when those boats return, the dockmaster, or the guy who rents the boats out, can be that validation source, or can take a picture, or do some sort of reporting to create a system of checks and balances for these recreational people that are unaccountable currently, and you may find that you get some more compliance just by using some of those resources, because that Freedom Boat Club, just in our area alone, has four locations that go offshore, and they probably have twenty boats in maya marina alone that go offshore, and so you might be able to increase some of your figures, with undisputable info, at least about their location, and using the dockhand as maybe a secondary, but they're also --

When those dock intercepts are there -- It's the same marina where the for-hire guys are going out of, and so that person who is there doing some of the validation that's about to happen for the for-hire people -- They can kind of double up on what they're getting some validation on, and it might help to separate the for-hire, that's a an educated, and can identify their fish kind of sometime more than the recreational, who doesn't even use the fishery as much.

They might go out there three times or something, compared to the for-hire, and so it might be some option for how to find some compliance for the recreational people that is a problem, and then for our for-hire permits, and I don't know how many people are going to hate me for this one, but, right now, all the permits expire on your birthday, and they're good for a year, and so depending on who -- Or your company's inception date or whatever, but it's not like your fishing license, that starts in July and ends in June, and it's all over the place.

If the permit was just maybe every two months or something, and it would expire upon incomplete reporting, that would urge compliance, kind of like Alana was saying about when, commercially, the logbook wasn't filled out, and we had nice weather, and the commercial boat couldn't go fish for it, because he wasn't in compliance, and so if these -- If the for-hire didn't do their reporting, they would have to reapply for a permit, which would essentially tie them to the dock, and they would have to cancel charters, because they would probably be pre-booked.

You could urge some compliance by maybe not making it a limited-entry permit, but make it like a like a month-to-month lease, or kind of like a rental agreement, where you're like every three months or something, and I don't -- You don't want to add too much burden, like reporting every twenty-four hours, but, if they knew that there was going to be a consequence, and even if it was a small fine, and just the fine alone wouldn't do it, but the paperwork, and the effort involved in renewing the permit, is a pain, and that might create some compliance beyond just the no-fish report, because, if I report no fish, but FWC pulls me over out there, and sees me out there -- They already know who has got permits on what boat.

As soon as they run an FL number, they know if the permit is active, or inactive, or what's on the boat, and so maybe doing some of that would contribute to creating some better compliance, and that's all I had to think, but to use the Freedom Boat Club for some of the recreational people that have no kind of reporting requirements, and that is they don't have a permit, and I don't know how you get your -- Who is even fishing for some of these fisheries, and is it just because they have a fishing license?

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Melissa. That's great feedback, and some things that we hadn't thought about before as a group, and I know I'm taking notes, as well as Hadley, and I'm sure council members as well. Thomas, I saw your hand up.

MR. NEWMAN: Yes, and I just had a quick thing for other business as well, and I've talked to Myra outside about it, but the commercial e-logbooks, and we've got to get those going. I mean, the council needs to prioritize commercial e-logbooks, especially in our CMP species. They are gapping the management zones, and this logbook is -- The one we were using for beta testing was reporting to the Northeast Science Center and the Southeast Science Center, and we're going to have to start collaborating our data from the Southeast with the Northeast anyway, and so we might as well go ahead and start getting to where we can file that stuff electronically permanently.

I mean, it's going to be an important part of the process from here on out, especially with climate change, and a lot of these species shifting further north, and so, the more we can group our data together, without having to recalibrate everything, the better management will be in the future.

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, and I know the council approved the commercial e-logbook amendment, and I believe, and I'm looking at Myra, that it's with the agency, undergoing their rulemaking process, right now, but, Myra, go ahead.

MS. BROUWER: Just a quick update, and so we submitted that amendment to National Marine Fisheries Service last February. The council gets updates at every meeting, and it's a lengthy process, because, even though the council can say we want the system to work this way, then NMFS has to go and make the -- Create the system, right, and, if there's going to be an app or whatever platform that's going to be the one that fishermen used to report, NMFS has to issue specifications, and then vendors can then, you know, develop a product that then becomes what NMFS uses, and that's how VESL, the app that, you know, charter fishermen use, and the eTRIPS software, and they all go through the same kind of process, and so it's just a lengthy process, but it's in the works, and it's out of the council's hands. We just -- We're going to be waiting and hoping that it'll get implemented soon.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. We are at the wire. Is there any other other business to come before the Mackerel Cobia AP? All right. I'm seeing no hands, and we have one last opportunity for public comment. There are no members of the public in the room, but, if anyone online would like to make public comment, we ask that you raise your hand, and I can recognize you. Okay.

I'm not seeing any hands jump up online, and so, with that, the last thing I want to do is just thank you all for taking the time to attend this meeting and have what was a really productive discussion on a whole host of topics relevant to the Mackerel Cobia AP. I don't often like to speak for council members, but I know that I do when I say really appreciate the time you give to participate in the process, and the input you provide truly is invaluable, and so thank you for taking the time, and, with that, I will adjourn my first and last meeting as chair of the Mackerel Cobia AP. Thank you, guys.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on April 1, 2025.)

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Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
June 17, 2025

Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel

| First | Last | Suffix | Position | Affiliation | Seat | Expertise |
|----------|-------------|--------|------------|-------------|-------------|----------------------|
| | | | Chair | | | |
| Stephen | Donalson | | Vice-Chair | | | Recreational |
| Kevin | Aman ✓ | | | NC DMF | | Researcher |
| Tony | Benevento ✓ | | | | | Recreational |
| Stanford | Carter | | | | | Recreational |
| Charles | Griffin | | | | | Charter |
| Alana | Harrison ✓ | | | | | Commercial |
| William | Jones ✓ | | | | | Charter |
| Melissa | Leone ✓ | | | | | Commercial/Charter |
| Charles | Locke ✓web | | | | | Charter/Commercial |
| Chris | Ludford | | | | Mid-Atlanti | Commercial |
| John | Mallette ✓ | | | | | Charter |
| Thomas | Newman ✓ | | | | | Commercial |
| Butch | Olsen | | | | | Commercial |
| Michael | Oppegaard ✓ | | | | | Charter |
| Jot | Owens ✓web | | | | | Charter |
| William | Palmer | | | | | Recreational |
| Steve | Saunders | | | | | Charter/Recreational |
| Benjamin | Shepherd | | | | Mid-Atlanti | For-Hire |
| Robbie | Waddick ✓ | | | | | Commercial |
| Bill | Weeks | | | | | Recreational |

mc AP
Tue 4/1

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
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Judy Helmey
Kerry Marhefka
LT Tom Pease
Staff contact: Myra Brouwer

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Amy Dukes ✓
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Charlie Phillips
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Andy Strelcheck
Mid-Atlantic: Skip Feller
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Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel

| First | Last | Suffix | Position | Affiliation | Seat | Expertise |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------|------------|-------------|-------------|----------------------|
| | | | Chair | | | |
| Stephen | Donalson | | Vice-Chair | | | Recreational |
| ✓ Kevin | Aman | | | NC DMF | | Researcher |
| ✓ Tony | Benevento | | | | | Recreational |
| Stanford | Carter | | | | | Recreational |
| Charles | Griffin | | | | | Charter |
| ✓ Alana | Harrison | | | | | Commercial |
| ✓ William | Jones | | | | | Charter |
| Melissa | Leone | | | | | Commercial/Charter |
| Charles | Locke | | | | | Charter/Commercial |
| Chris | Ludford | | | | Mid-Atlanti | Commercial |
| ✓ John | Mallette | | | | | Charter |
| ✓ Thomas | Newman | | | | | Commercial |
| Butch | Olsen | | | | | Commercial |
| ✓ Michael | Oppegaard | | | | | Charter |
| Jot | Owens | | | | | Charter |
| William | Palmer | | | | | Recreational |
| Steve | Saunders | web | | | | Charter/Recreational |
| Benjamin | Shepherd | | | | Mid-Atlanti | For-Hire |
| ✓ Robbie | Waddick | | | | | Commercial |
| Bitt | Weeks | | | | | Recreational |

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mon 3/31

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Report Generated:

04/04/2025 08:57 AM EDT

Webinar ID

642-711-755

Actual Start Date/Time

03/31/2025 12:31 PM EDT

Duration

4 hours 28 minutes

Staff Details

Attended

Yes

Interest Rating

Not applicable for staff

Last Name

Council

Last Name

Belcher

Bianchi

Brouwer

Byrd

Curtis

Davis

Foor

Foss

Hadley

Harrison

Horn

Huber

Hudson

Iberle

Iverson

Lee

McMahan

Murphey

Newman

Oliver

Pate

Roller

Sanders

Seward

Silvas

Stephens

Thomas

Webb

Withers

First Name

Carolyn

Alan

Myra

Julia

Judd

Bill

Brandon

Kristin

John

Alana

Calusa

Jeanette

Rusty

Allie

Kim

Jennifer

Trevor

Trish

Thomas

Ashley

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Tom

Steve

McLean

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Greyson

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collier
laks
walsh

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jason

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First Name
South Atlantic

March 2025 Mackerel Cobia

Attendee Report: AP Meeting

Report Generated:

04/04/2025 09:05 AM EDT

Webinar ID

642-711-755

Actual Start Date/Time

04/01/2025 08:16 AM EDT

Duration

8 hours 51 minutes

Staff Details

Attended

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Interest Rating

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Bonura

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Dukes

Floyd

Foor

Foss

Hadley

Hemilright

Hudson

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Locke

McMahan

Murphey

Newman

Oliver

Owens

Roller

Sanders

Seward

Shultz

Stephens

Thomas

Turley

Wiegand

Withers

First Name

Carolyn

Alan

Vincent

Myra

Julia

Amy

Brad

Brandon

Kristin

John

Dewey

Rusty

Kim

01Kelly

Charles

Trevor

Trish

Thomas

Ashley

Jot

Tom

Steve

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Chris

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Suz

Brendan

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walsh

chip
lra
jason

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